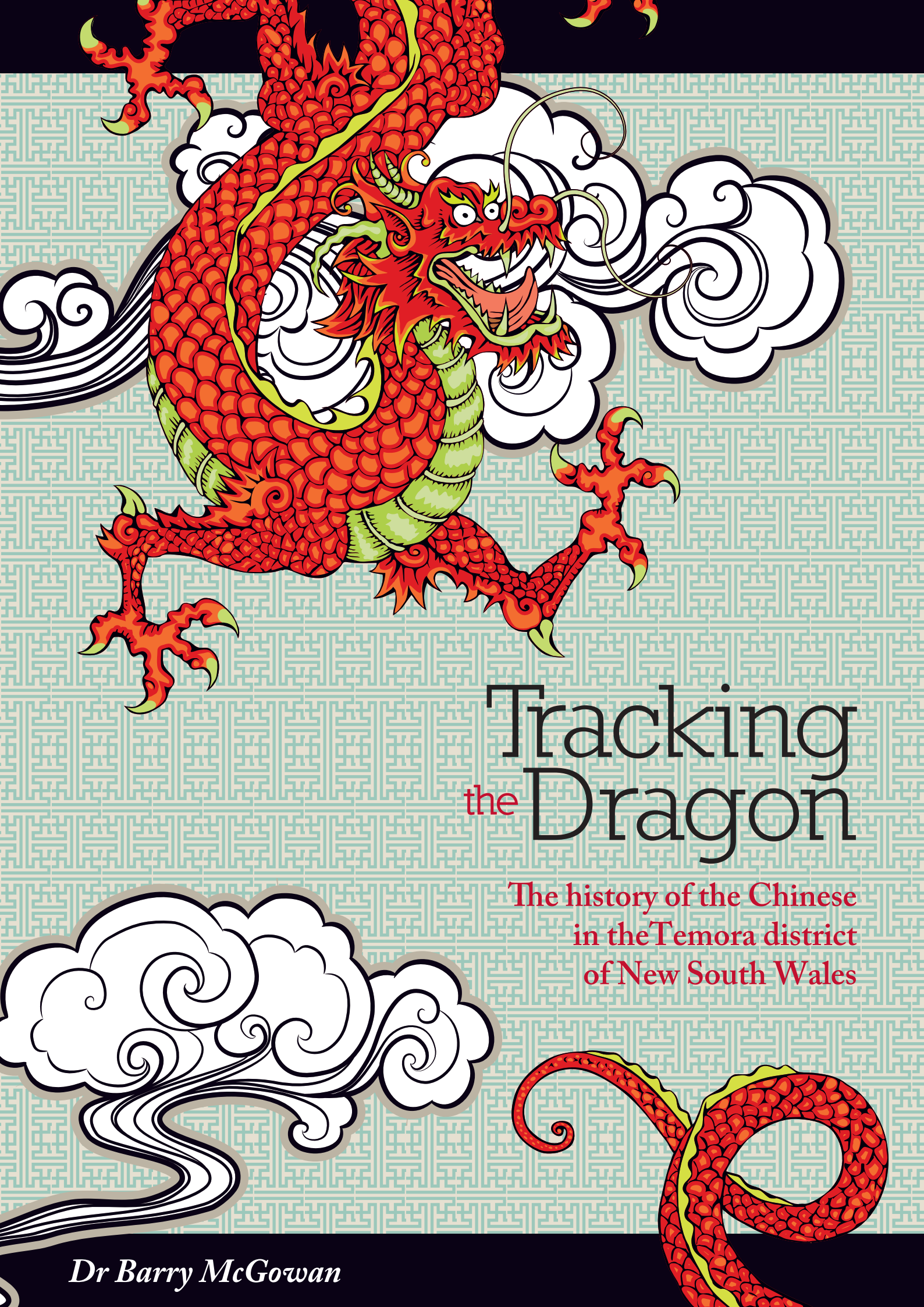

Tracking the Dragon

The history of the Chinese in the Temora district of New South Wales

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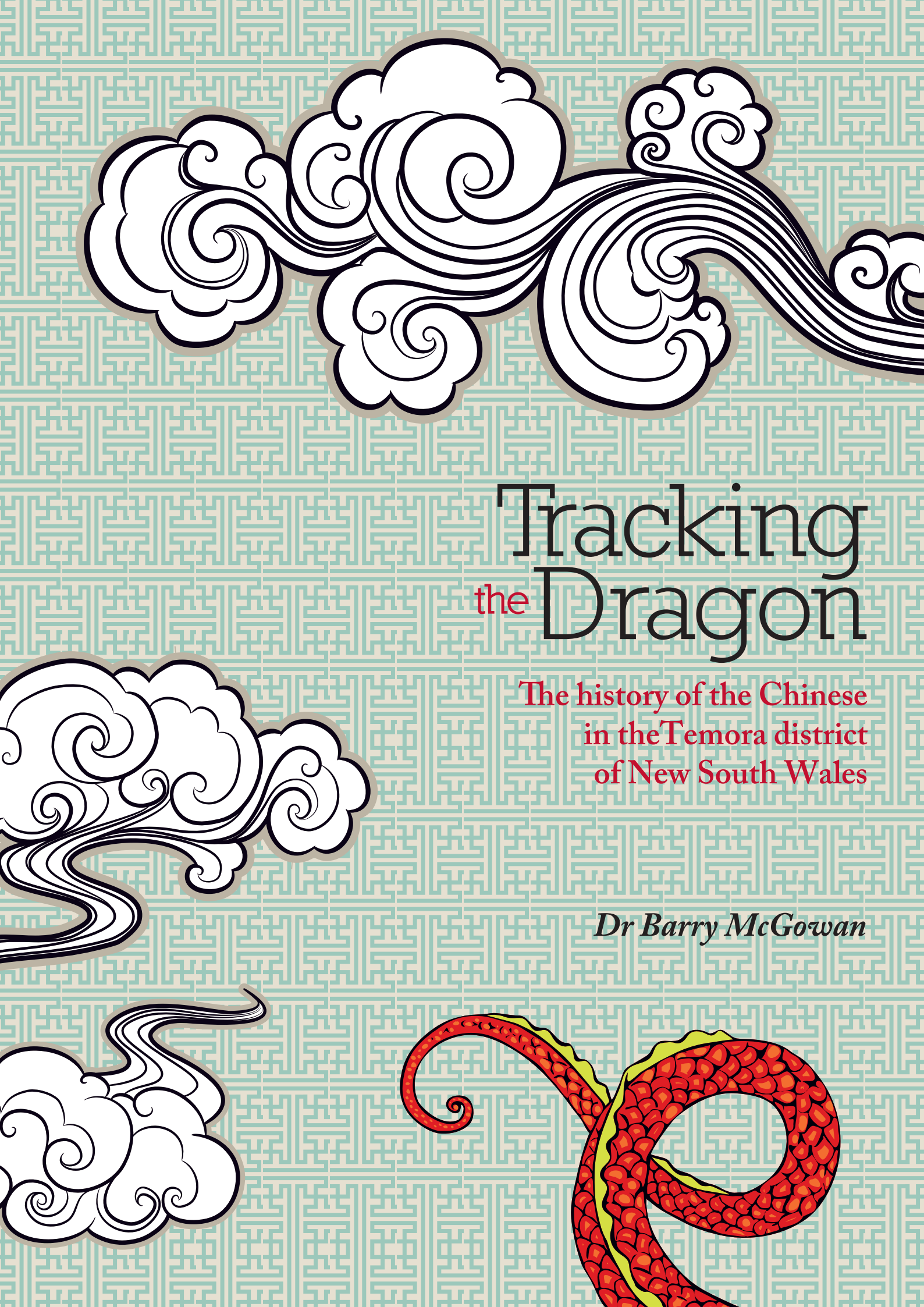

Tracking the Dragon

The history of the Chinese in the Temora district of New South Wales

Dr Barry McGowan

Wagga Wagga
Museum of the Riverina

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Contents

Introduction

This essay complements 'Tracking the Dragon: A History of the Chinese in the Riverina', exhibited by the Museum of the Riverina, Wagga Wagga, NSW, from December 2010 to March 2011. The exhibition was funded by the Wagga Wagga City Council, Arts NSW and the NSW Migration Heritage Centre. Work commenced in November 2008 with the task of research, artefact and photographic assemblage, and the writing of the catalogue and captions undertaken by Dr Barry McGowan, a Canberra-based historian, heritage consultant and Visiting Fellow at the ANU School of Archaeology and Anthropology. Geographically, the scope of the exhibition was very broad; it stretched from Hillston, Booligal and Balranald in the west, to Temora in the north, Tumut and Adelong to the east, and south to the Murray River. The time span was also very broad, from 1850 to the present day, with the themes illustrating all aspects of Chinese life in the region, such as work, leisure, family life, religion and race relationships. The exhibition travelled to Albury in May 2011.

This essay is one of a series outlining the lives of the Chinese people in selected Riverina districts.

From the outset it should be noted that there is some overlap between the essays. Put simply, the Chinese people were very mobile, readily moving to where employment and kinship could be found. Hence Temora's Chinese history will include references to families and businesses in, say, Wagga, Narrandera, Hay and elsewhere. For some districts the sources are silent over certain time periods, for there are often gaps in the press reports. In these instances, examples of incidents, functions and institutions from other districts will be used to give a broader picture of Chinese life in the Riverina.

Significance and Provenance

The first known mention of Chinese people in the Riverina was in the early 1850s, though some may have arrived in the late 1840s, the circumstances of their arrival and the nature of their employment in distinct contrast to later, more populous flows. These early arrivals came as indentured labourers. They were indentured in Amoy (Xiamen) by signing a contract which set out their terms of service and period of indenture, five years, and specified the type of work. Shepherding was specifically mentioned. The contracts were legally enforceable under the *Master and Servants Act*, which was heavily weighted in the employer's favour, many of whom were also magistrates.

In the mid 1860s, after the gold rushes, Chinese people assumed a more visible profile in the Riverina, their numbers growing rapidly with the spread of settlement, farming and pastoralism north of the Murray River and out west to the arid fringes of New South Wales (NSW). Their presence was unique and significant, for they were not, as in so many other parts of Australia, dependent on gold mining (apart from Black Range near Albury and Adelong in the late 1850s and early 1860s), but on agriculture and pastoralism. The significance of this population shift can be gauged by the wide range of occupations that the men had and the length of time they stayed in the region. They were not sojourners, but rather settlers and pioneers and a vital part of the community fabric, with many of their descendants still living in the region. Large self-contained Chinese camps or Chinatowns were located in the main Riverina towns, with smaller camps and enclaves in towns such as Adelong, Booligal, Gundagai, Tarcutta, Junee, Tumut and Temora, and on many of the large pastoral stations in the region. The largest camp was at Narrandera and the second largest at Wagga Wagga (Wagga).

Meaningful population figures are difficult to obtain, for the peak numbers did not coincide with the Census dates, and it was a moving population, with many men shifting between the towns and pastoral stations. But a combination of Census results and other reports gives some pointers. In the 1871 Census the total Chinese population in the region was 777, with the largest concentrations near Tumut and Albury. 150 Chinese lived in the five main Riverina towns of Albury, Deniliquin, Hay, Narrandera and Wagga. In an 1878 report a total of 1466 Chinese people were recorded in the towns and villages of the Riverina District. A subsequent report on Chinese camps in the Riverina prepared by Sub-Inspector Martin Brennan and a prominent Chinese entrepreneur, Mei Quong Tart, recorded 869 Chinese as residents or frequent visitors to the Chinese camps in the five main Riverina towns in 1883, an increase of 298, or 34 per cent, on the 1878 total for these towns. Using a simple method of extrapolation the total Chinese population in the Riverina in 1883 could have been about 2200. This figure may well be an understatement, for many Chinese lived on the pastoral stations, which were akin to small villages. A comparison with the predominantly rural Cairns, Atherton and Innisfail districts in North Queensland is instructive. The Chinese arrivals in these districts post-dated the Chinese presence in the Riverina, and by 1901 the Chinese population was 2,550.[1] The only other comparable region in NSW was the New England district, which in 1878 had a Chinese population of 2,134. However, in distinct contrast to the Riverina, over 90 per cent of the Chinese men in New England were miners.

Between 1878 and 1883 Narrandera and Wagga were the key destinations for the Chinese, the Chinese population of Narrandera leaping from a mere 27 to 303 and Wagga's from 123 to 194. In 1883 there

[1] Cathie May, *Topsawyers: The Chinese in Cairns*, Studies in North Queensland History, No.6, James Cook University, Townsville, p.14.

The Riverina district of New South Wales, Australia showing some major pastoral properties.
Barry McGowan and Clive Hilliker, Australian National University

were 100 Chinese in Hay, 113 at Deniliquin and 90 at Albury. Population figures for Temora in 1878 are unavailable, as the town was barely in its infancy. However, 37 Chinese lived there in 1891 and 14 in 1901, with some Chinese living on nearby pastoral stations. Although the number of Chinese in Temora was much less than in Narrandera and Wagga, their presence was still important.[2]

The number of Chinese people in the Riverina may not seem large, but it must be remembered that this was rural and outback Australia, not Melbourne or Sydney, or for that matter Bendigo or Ballarat.[3] Chinese men constituted a very large proportion of the adult male population in the Riverina towns. The late historian, Geoffrey Buxton, estimated that the presence of 300 adult male Chinese in a town such as Narrandera with a total population in the early 1880s of 1400 meant that every second man in

[2] Edmund Fosebery, Inspector-General of Police, 'Chinese (Information Respecting, Residents in the Colony)', *Votes and Proceedings*, New South Wales Legislative Assembly, 1878-1879, Sydney; Sub-Inspector Martin Brennan, Chinese Camps, *Votes and Proceedings*, New South Wales Legislative Assembly, 1883-1884, vol 2, Sydney; Census, *Votes and Proceedings*, New South Wales Legislative Assembly, vol.2, 1872, pp.324-429; *Eleventh Census, New South Wales, Taken on the night of the 5th April 1891*, Government Printer, Sydney, 1894, pp.435-498; *Results of a Census of New South Wales, taken on the night of the 31st March, 1901*, Government Printer, Sydney, 1904, pp.265-354.

[3] C. Y. Choi, Chinese Migration and Settlement in Australia, Sydney University Press, Sydney, 1975, pp.28–33.

town was Chinese.[4] The Chinese were not the only immigrant or non-European group in the Riverina. Large populations of Aboriginal people lived, like the Chinese people, on the fringe of the towns or on the pastoral stations, and people from other ethnic backgrounds included Indian hawkers and German settlers. This large and varied population, each with its own cultural traditions, gave a distinct multi-cultural flavour to the Riverina.

But who were these Chinese immigrants, where did they come from and why? Almost all Chinese immigrants to NSW were from Guangdong Province in southern China, in the area surrounding the Pearl River delta, and abutting present day Hong Kong. They were predominantly from the Sze Yap (See Yap) district (counties of Kaiping, Xinhui, Taishan, Heshan and Enping), although the Sam Yap district (counties of Nanhai, Panyu and Shunde) and Zhongshan, Gaoyao and Gaoming counties also contributed emigrants. The vast majority of the Sze Yap people in Victoria came from only two of its counties (Xinhui and Taishan), but in NSW there was a far wider representation of Guangdong districts, although this did narrow over time.[5] These differences notwithstanding, overall the population was relatively homogeneous. In overseas countries such as the USA many more Chinese provinces were represented and the scope for fragmentation and division within these migrant communities was much greater.[6] It was also an overwhelmingly male population. As historian Michael Williams has remarked, the primary role for a Chinese woman in marriage was not to care for her husband but to support his parents, this attitude virtually guaranteeing that Chinese emigration before the 20th century was almost exclusively male. In 1861 there were two Chinese women compared to 12,968 men in the colony and in 1881 64 to 10,141. The ratio had improved somewhat by 1901 when there were 675 Chinese women to 10,590 men, but it was still an overwhelmingly male society.[7]

A combination of powerful push and pull factors lead to an unprecedented rise in Chinese migration to other parts of Asia, the Americas and Australia in the mid to late 19th century, and it was no coincidence that the principal source of migrants was Guangdong Province, and in particular the Sze Yap district. The delta area was the heartland of the province, a collection of islands, ever changing natural channels and man-made canals, enormously fertile and productive, but also with an extraordinary population density. Parts of the Sze Yap District (in particular Taishan County) were hilly, rocky and barren. To compound these natural pressures were a series of man-made disasters. For many centuries the city of Canton (Guangzhou) had been exposed to outside influences through trade and commerce, and was notorious for its independence. Fierce opposition to Manchu rule saw the formation of secret societies pledged to its overthrow. The countryside was devastated by a succession of highly disruptive events such as the Taiping rebellion and its fierce suppression. Also disruptive were

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[4] Geoffrey Buxton, *The Riverina, 1861-1891*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1967, p.224.

[5] Michael Williams, *Chinese Settlement in NSW: A Thematic History*, report for the NSW Heritage Office, unpublished, September 1999, pp.9-14; Kathryn Cronin, *Colonial Casualties. Chinese in early Victoria*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1982, pp.16-40; Arthur Huck, *The Chinese in Australia*, Longmans, Croydon, Victoria, 1968, p.16; Jane Lydon, *Many Inventions. The Chinese in the Rocks, 1890-1930*, Monash Publications in History, Melbourne, 1999, pp.88-91.

[6] Cai, Shaoqing, 'On the Overseas Chinese Secret Societies of Australia', *New Zealand Journal of Asian Studies*, 4, 1, June 2002, pp.41-42.

[7] Williams, *Chinese Settlement in NSW*, p.10; Janis Wilton, *Golden Threads: The Chinese in Regional New South Wales 1850-1950*, Powerhouse Museum, Sydney, 2004, pp.55-56.

Map showing where the majority of Chinese in this essay originated from in Guangdong Province and where they came to in Australia.
Clive Hilliker and Barry McGowan, Australian National University

uprisings by clan and secret society members, feuds and the Opium Wars.[8] As historian Cai Shaoqing has commented, many Chinese immigrants were sympathetic to these rebellions and came to Australia, not only to make their fortune, but to flee persecution.[9]

Perhaps there is no better illustration of the importance of these political pressures than the near fatal circumstances of the father of Junee businessman, Clarrie Leslie. Clarrie's father entered Australia under the assumed name of Phillip Chun. He had been a member of the 'One Hundred Days of Reform' movement, a failed national cultural, political and educational reform movement, which lasted from 11 June to 21 September 1898. Chun fled to Australia when, allegedly, the Dowager Empress (Tz'u-hsi or Cixi) tried to poison the reformers at a banquet, though more likely it was the other way around. The movement was headed by the young Guangxu Emperor (the Empress Dowager's nephew), but was strongly opposed by the Empress Dowager and her conservative supporters, many of whom were on the Grand Council. According to historian Peter Zarrow, the Guangxu Emperor issued a stream of decrees and edicts, but they were opposed by many who saw them as a threat to their own status quo and to their livelihood, and the bureaucracy made few, if any, efforts to implement them. By the summer of 1898 the Guangxu Emperor had begun firing important officials and replacing them with his own men. The Empress Dowager began to fear for her own position and probably believed court rumours of a plot to overthrow the Manchus. She staged a counter coup, putting the Guangxu Emperor under house arrest, cashiering his appointed officials, revoking almost all the reforms and executing six reformers without trial. According to Zarrow many more would have killed, but some escaped with the help of the foreign legations, and perhaps Clarrie Leslie's father was one of these men. [10]

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[8] Sucheng Chan, *This Bitter Sweet Soil. The Chinese in California Agriculture, 1860–1910*, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1986, pp.7-31; Iris Chang, *The Chinese in America*, Penguin Books, New York, 2004, pp.1-19; Cronin, *Colonial Casualties*, pp.16-40; Haiming Liu, 'The social origins of early Chinese immigrants: a revisionist perspective', in Susie Lan Cassell, *The Chinese in America. A History from Gold Mountain to the New Millennium*, AltaMira Press, Walnut Creek, 2002, pp.21-36.

[9] Cai, 'On the Overseas Chinese Secret Societies of Australia', pp.35-37.

[10] *Junee Southern Cross*, 4 November 1999; Peter Zarrow, *China in War and Revolution 1895-1949*; RoutledgeCurzon, New York, 2005, pp.13-29; Rebecca E. Karl and Peter Zarrow (eds), *Rethinking the 1898 reform period: political and cultural change in late Qing China*, Harvard University Asia Center, Cambridge, Massachussets, 2002; Luke S. K. Kwong, *Mosaic of the hundred days : personalities, politics, and ideas of 1898*, Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachussets, 1984.

As suggested by the foregoing, the new migrants were not coolies, but rather free or semi-free, most entering the Australian colonies on the credit-ticket system, sponsored by merchants in Hong Kong and Australia or family and lineage associations, to whom they were indebted for their passage. Headmen or bosses, most likely clan members, in association with fraternal organisations such as native place associations or secret societies, monitored the migrants until their debt was paid.[11] After the debt was paid they were free to go where they pleased. As Haiming Lui, an American historian, has pointed out, Guangdong Province was characterised by a diversified economy, the prevalence of lineage organisations and a competitive social environment. The rural population was skilled in a wide variety of occupations, most migrants belonging to the middle or lower middle social classes, rather than the lowest. Most were also literate, for education was highly valued. Going to America and Australia was a 'rationale choice' for they were a 'highly motivated people'.[12]

[11] Lindsay Smith, 'Hidden Dragons. The archaeology of mid-to late-nineteenth-century Chinese communities in south-eastern New South Wales', PhD, ANU, 2006; 'Cold Hard Cash, a study of Chinese ethnicity and archaeology at Kiandra, New South Wales', MA, ANU, 1988, p.40; Jill Barnard, Mary Sheehan, 'The Chinese discovery of gold and settlement in Ararat', National Estate Program Grant No. 542, 1991, pp.11-12. Instances of exploitation and kidnapping to destinations in South America and Cuba are recounted in Elizabeth Sinn, *Power and Charity. A Chinese Merchant Elite in Colonial Hong Kong*, Hong Kong University Press, Hong Kong, 2003, pp.101-113; Report of the Select Committee on the Subject of Chinese Immigration, quoted in C.M.H. Clark (ed), *Select Documents in Australian History*, Vol. III, Angus & Robertson, Melbourne, 1977, pp.69-70.

[12] Haiming Liu, 'The social origins of early Chinese immigrants', pp.21-36.

Work

INDENTURED LABOURERS

The first Chinese people to arrive in any number in Australia came as indentured labourers in 1847. According to historian Maxine Darnell, the number of indentured labourers would reach 3,500 over the next six years. Their arrival in Australia was the culmination of many years of agitation by the larger pastoralists in response to the difficulties of obtaining free labour on the stations, the loss of convict labour and the refusal of the Indian Government to allow Indian labour to be contracted to the colony. The 19th century saw a mass movement of thousands of Chinese under contract to countries such as Peru, Cuba and the British Caribbean. By contrast, the numbers going to NSW were very small. However, as Darnell has pointed out, the use of Chinese indentured labour was important in colonial history as it represented the period between the end of the convict period and the beginning of 'supremacy of free labour'. Chinese labourers brought to NSW were indentured in Amoy (Xiamen), China, by signing a contract, which set out the terms of service, including the period of indenture, five years, the amount of advance, rate of wages and rations and the type of work. Contracts with the Chinese were very specific in stating the type of work, such as shepherding. Legislative amendments to the *Master and Servants Act* in 1847 meant that contracts with Chinese labourers were enforceable, but the Act was heavily weighted in the employers' favour. Labourers could be fined for unacceptable behaviour, and were often in debt through the purchase of goods from station stores at inflated prices. The fact that many of the magistrates were drawn from the ranks of the squatters served to increase this imbalance, as did the lack of provision in the contracts for medicines, sick leave and a suit of clothes for the passage out, unlike the contracts applying to labourers going to Peru and the West Indies. Rice was often precluded from the rations, and the *Vagrancy Act* worked alongside the *Master and Servants Act* to ensure that any wandering labourers, not just Chinese, could be forced back into the work-force.[13]

In the Riverina, some indentured Chinese worked on pastoral properties, such as William McLeay's Kerarbury Station near present day Darlington Point, and at properties owned by pastoralists such as Church and Peters. The circumstances surrounding the importation of Chinese indentured labour into Australia were often controversial, and perhaps nowhere more so than in McLeay's case. The arrival of McLeay's Chinese labourers in Goulburn in March 1852 on their way to Wagga Wagga, and from thence to his property, caused a major scandal. John Stewart, a horse driver in the employ of McLeay, was charged with assaulting Loo Suck (or Laoo Seuh?), who was one of a group of 30 Chinese engaged by McLeay. The Chinese men were despatched from Sydney under the charge of Stewart. After leaving Sydney Loo Suck accidentally scalded his foot with hot water, which meant he had difficulty walking and keeping up with the party. Stewart beat him and when that cruel act did not inspire Loo Suck to greater endeavours, tied him to the dray with hobbles, dragging him along the road. In addition, for three days prior to their arrival in Goulburn the men had lived on reduced rations, a pint pot of flour being the only allowance for every three men. As soon as they reached Goulburn the party split up and went to different houses asking for food, Stewart repairing to a public house where he became drunk. He was afterwards found by the Chinese men, who were about to commit 'summary justice'

[13] Maxine Darnell, 'Law and the Regulation of Life: The Case of Indentured Chinese Labourers', in *The Overseas Chinese in Australasia: History, Settlement and Interactions*, Henry Chan, Ann Curthoys, and Nora Chiang (eds), National Taiwan University and Australian National University, Canberra, 2001. pp.54–69.

on him when Captain Howell intervened and persuaded Stewart to go to a butcher and baker to get food. As Stewart was unknown in Goulburn and had no order from McLeay the request was refused. The men were, however, later fed by other means. Subsequently, three men, including Loo Suck, made their way to a place owned by a Mr Thorn, and when found later by McLeay stated that they had no intention of continuing the journey to Wagga. Another five absconded to Captain Edenborough's property; their fate is unknown. The three men were charged by McLeay under the *Master and Servants Act* and brought before the Goulburn Bench. They were assisted in court by a Chinese man, Zuan Sing, a Christian convert (baptised into the Roman Catholic faith by Rev. McGinnis from Yass), who had been in the colony for three years, and could read and translate Chinese into English fluently. They were also assisted by a lawyer named Hamilton Walsh, who viewed his task as a 'labour of love'. It was noted by a correspondent that it was unusual for the case to be investigated in Goulburn as the parties did not reside in the district. However, because of the state of his feet Loo Suck could not travel to Wagga, and even if he did go, he would have been without an attorney or interpreter and before a bench of magistrates, the main members of which were now the employers of the men.[14]

In the court proceedings McLeay admitted to the shameful treatment by Stewart and agreed to provide the men with the sugar. However, the three men were unmoved, and continued to refuse to go to Wagga, stating that they afraid of being treated badly again. One of the men, Le Swa (or Le Soy?), said that he had been told in Sydney that he had only one day of travel to come to McLeay's property. The men were reminded by the Bench that if they refused to proceed to Wagga then they would be sent to gaol for two months and still have to serve out their period of indenture. One version has it that all three men indicated that they would rather cut their throats or in some other way do away with themselves than go up country again. Another version has only one of the men, Yass Pian uttering intentions of self harm, stating that he would rather cut himself in two than proceed to Wagga, and that if the going became too hard in gaol he would cut his throat. It also transpired in the proceedings that their hardships had begun well before their arrival by boat in Sydney. Of the 225 Chinese on the 137 day voyage out from Amoy, 13 died. They only had rice once once a day instead of the three times a day agreed upon, and were 'shamefully beaten'. All three men refused to comply with the Bench's orders, and were duly sentenced, despite the injuries to Loo Suck and the above-mentioned discrepancies. The case against Stewart was withdrawn on the understanding that McLeay would proceed against him in Wagga.[15]

McLeay's role in the use of indentured labour was to haunt him for several years, for in the lead up to the NSW Legislative Assembly elections in 1855 he was described as 'the great Coolie and Chinaman importer into the south — the 'Fancy Man' of that very pretty lot of "would-bes"— the Australian Club'. To what extent this opprobrium concerned or hindered him is unknown. But it does not seem to have had much effect on his career. A magistrate from 1841, he sat on the Wagga bench from 1847 and was a member for the Lachlan and Lower Darling in the Legislative Assembly in 1856–58 and the Murrumbidgee in 1859–74. He was appointed to the Legislative Council in 1877 and served on many Parliamentary committees. Over the years he built up large pastoral holdings in the colony, particularly in the Riverina, and owned a 16 hectare vineyard at Lake Albert near Wagga in the 1870s. He was also a patron of science, accepting the first presidency of the Linnean Society of NSW in 1862, and was himself an active and serious researcher in subjects such as entomology, ichthyology and other areas of zoology.[16]

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[14] *Goulburn Herald*, 24 February, 10 April 1852; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 March, 12 April 1852.

[15] *Goulburn Herald*, 24 February, 10 April 1852; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 March, 12 April 1852.

[16] *Goulburn Herald*, 3 February 1855; Michael Hoare and Martha Rutledge, 'Macleay, Sir William John (1820-1891) in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, Volume 5, 1974 or http://adb.anu.edu.au.biography/macleay–sir-william-john-4125.

GOLD MINERS

The gold rushes had profound consequences for the Australian colonies, many historians seeing them as one of the singularly most important events in Australian history, an event which reshaped the demographic, political and economic contours of the country.[17] The Chinese miners were integral to this success story, and because some of them eventually migrated to the Riverina, most of them to work in the pastoral industry, their involvement in mining is recounted here in some detail. Over 18,000 Chinese people arrived in Victoria between 1851 and 1855, and a further 24,000 arrived over the next five years. The significance of this immigration flow can be measured against the population of Victoria, which on the eve of the gold rushes was only 77,000; three years later in 1854 it was 236,000.[18]

While Chinese miners also worked on the NSW goldfields, the main wave of immigrants did not arrive until 1858, over 10,000 arriving in that year compared to a few hundred the year before. This population surge was not a coincidence, but largely a reaction to punitive taxes and immigration restrictions imposed on Chinese immigrants in Victoria and South Australia, and the opportunities provided by a substantial reduction in the licence fees in NSW (now named the "miner's right") to 10 shillings a year, one twelfth of what it had been. Armed with a miner's right, men could also pasture stock and obtain water supplies on Crown Land.[19] Their main destinations in the Riverina were the Black Range goldfields near Albury, and Adelong. Elsewhere in southern NSW they arrived in large

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[17] C.M.H.Clark, *Select Documents in Australian History 1851-1900*, Vol.II, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1979, p.2; Geoffrey Serle, *The Golden Age. A History of the Colony of Victoria 1851-1861*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1977, p.369; R.M. Crawford, *Australia*, Hutchinson & Co.,1963, London, p.117; Geoffrey Blainey, *The Rush that Never Ended*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1963.

[18] Cronin, *Colonial Casualties*; Serle, *The Golden Age*, p.382.

[19] Serle, *The Golden Age*, pp.324-31. An entry (poll) tax and ship tonnage restrictions were introduced by the Victorian Government in 1855. In response, the Chinese traffic was diverted through South Australia, but by 1857, and under pressure from the Victorian Government, immigration restrictions had been introduced in this colony as well. In that year the Victorian Government also introduced a residence tax. For NSW legislation see Barry McGowan, *Dust and Dreams, Mining Communities in Southern New South Wales*, UNSWPress, Sydney, 2010, pp.29-30.

Chinese gold mining cradle from Adelong, New South Wales.
Private collection

numbers on the Braidwood, Kiandra and the Lambing Flat goldfields (near present day Young). Introduction of the *Chinese Immigration Regulation and Restriction Act*, following the Lambing Flat riots in 1860 and 1861, interrupted the flow of Chinese miners to NSW. It imposed a £10 poll tax, tonnage restrictions and prevented any Chinese person from becoming naturalised. However, by 1861 the main wave of Chinese immigrants into NSW had already arrived, and many mining fields were soon to enter a period of decline because of the exhaustion of the more easily won alluvial deposits. The legislation was repealed in 1867.[20]

Most Chinese miners in the Riverina were located on the Adelong goldfields. Speaking of the Adelong miners in June 1860 a local correspondent stated that:

> These industrious Mongolians that hang upon the skirts of European miners like jackals, seem to be reaping some reward for their incessant labours at the lower end of Golden Gully if we are to judge from the constant rattle of their cradles, the increased number that appear to be working, and the claims that they have taken up.[21]

Soon the Chinese miners were using their new wealth to buy up claims from the European miners, and obtaining all the valuable claims on the Adelong Creek, the correspondent also stating that 'Notwithstanding all prejudice and all that has been said to the contrary, John is not half so bad as some people would have us believe, whilst their sobriety and cleanliness in this district are worthy of imitation'.[22] In October 1862 a correspondent spoke highly for the 'systematic way Chinamen have of working ground, by which they live like kings whilst Europeans are starving'.[23]

Serious gold mining began at Temora in 1879, and was fundamental to the town's economy from thereon. However, the Chinese were not welcome at this activity, and their anticipated arrival on the goldfields soon aroused hostility. Many alluvial claims had been deserted because of the exhaustion of the leads, and with the onset of severe drought conditions many claims, even if payable, were difficult to work profitably. Very few Chinese were on the field, and those that did persevere were reduced to fossicking around the older diggings before turning to more profitable activities such as market gardening.[24] Opposition to Chinese miners led to the calling of a roll-up meeting in April 1883. Prior to the meeting the editor of the *Temora Star* expressed some sympathy for the white miners stating that:

> We can well understand that the European diggers, who have stood the brunt of the past three years' prospecting at Temora, should take the alarm. The fruitless labour of numberless Europeans has shown where the gold is not, and the diggers remaining on the field think it hard that their failure should serve as a guide to Chinamen looking for it.[25]

Indeed, in the very early years there were no Chinese miners at all. Without surprise, for apart from the ill-feeling of many European miners and the ever-present potential for violence. The authorities had informed the principal Chinese in the colony that it would be advisable if their countrymen were to keep off new goldfields, and a custom had become established 'which many look upon as the

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[20] Andrew Markus, *Fear and Hatred. Purifying Australia and California 1850-1901*, Hale & Iremonger, Sydney, 1979. pp.14-34.

[21] *Adelong Mining Journal and Tumut Express*, 25 June 1960.

[22] *Wynyard Times*, 2 April, 5 October 1861.

[23] *Wynyard Times*, 14 March, 21 October 1862.

[24] Temora Centenary Committee, *Temora Yesterday and Today*, Temora Historical Society Inc, Temora, 1992, p.250; R.H. Webster, *The First Fifty Years of Temora*, reprinted by Temora Heritage Committee, Temora Shire Council, Temora, 2001, p.73.

[25] *Temora Star*, 7 April 1883.

established law of the land'. [26]

There were other reasons as well, for mining conditions were anything but favourable, and were an indication of how hard life was for people in the Riverina in the 1880s, regardless of race or occupation. In 1881 the Warden referred to the 'rarely unparalleled [sic] season of drought'. Few of the old residents could remember 'so especially a dry season as the present'.

> A very minimum of rainfall, coupled with unusually excessive heat, have so parched up the country that the larger portion of the miners have been completely disheartened, the result being that one after another has left, until now we can barely muster a population of 2,000 on the whole field, of whom about half are miners.[27]

There was little improvement in 1882, the Warden stating that 'the period of decadence has set in sooner than usual owing, first to the arid nature of the country, and next to the limited area within which work has been prescribed'. The only ones left were those with poorer dirt who could not afford to "puddle" (wash dirt for ore) it until better times came, when water was more plentiful and puddling cheaper. Owners of the richer claims could afford to pay the high price of puddling, and washed up their dirt and left the field.[28] 1883 brought little improvement, for the gold yields had fallen considerably. A large number of claims had been worked out and unless new discoveries were made returns would diminish further. The only positive note, and an important one, was that the town itself now seemed to have a 'degree of permanency'. [29]

1884 appeared to herald new hope, for many old abandoned claims had been taken up afresh and had paid good wages. 430 miner's rights had been issued for those undertaking alluvial mining, four by the Chinese (presumably included in the 430) and the rest by quartz miners and those holding allotments and residential areas.[30] Many people held miner's rights so that they could legally hold the land on which they lived (the right gave a number of privileges, including the right to build a house and use the timber on the land).

According to the mining statistics, in 1885 there were 300 European alluvial miners and 25 Chinese miners on the field, though the Warden stated that there were between 350 and 400 miners, of whom 12 were Chinese. He commented that the town and district showed marked signs of improvement. Many original buildings built in the rush had been removed, some were unoccupied and the old bark humpies 'remarkable for their number and ugliness' were almost 'a thing of the past' and had been replaced by more substantial buildings of stone and brick.[31] In 1886 13 Chinese miners and 250 European alluvial miners were on the field, but in contrast to previous years, heavy rains had impeded work in low lying areas within the drainage course of the watershed, and shafts and drives had been destroyed. With heavy rain the workings were soon flooded and work was suspended until the diggings could drain.[32]

By 1887 the alluvial diggings were clearly on the wane, and the old ground was getting more and

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[26] *Temora Star*, 7 April 1883. Temora Centenary Committee, *Temora Yesterday and Today*, p.250; Webster, *The First Fifty Years of Temora*, p.73

[27] New South Wales Department of Mines, *Annual Report*, Sydney, 1881, p.52.

[28] New South Wales Department of Mines, *Annual Report*, 1882, p.55.

[29] New South Wales Department of Mines, *Annual Report*, 1883, pp.71-72.

[30] New South Wales Department of Mines, *Annual Report*, 1884, p.83.

[31] New South Wales Department of Mines, *Annual Report*, 1885, p.44, 62.

[32] New South Wales Department of Mines, *Annual Report*, 1886, p.49, 64.

more exhausted, though some old claims still yielded gold in payable quantities. Over the next few years the returns became progressively poorer, with an average yield of only 2.5 dwts ("dwts" is an abbreviation of a "Pennyweight" which is 1.552 grams) to the wash load in 1888 and 1889. The number of European alluvial miners fell dramatically and no Chinese miners were recorded on the workings. The future of the town and district was nevertheless assured, with the Warden commenting in 1890 that there was magnificent land surrounding the town, and suitable for any purpose; pastoral, agricultural and horticultural.[33]

In the 20th century race was not an issue, and although no record is to hand of Chinese men working in the Temora diggings, it is noted that at West Wyalong several sons and grandsons of William Flood Sam, a West Wyalong resident, were employed as miners, almost certainly in the larger quartz claims. The men were James Francis Sam, Norman Sam and George Thomas Loolong.[34]

[33] New South Wales Department of Mines, *Annual Report*, 1887, p.66; 1888, p.55; 1889, p.50; 1890, p.56.

[34] War records for William Loolong, George Flood Sam, Henry Herbert Sam, James Francis Sam, Norman Sam, George Thomas Loolong, Series B2455, National Archives of Australia (NAA); Sydney http://chineseaustralia.org/archives/258.

PASTORAL WORKERS

After the early gold rushes in the 1850s and 1860s the main occupations for the Chinese in the Riverina were in the pastoral sector. Chinese men were a vital source of labour for pastoralists, who used Chinese contractors to engage large groups to ringbark trees and clear their properties of timber. According to historian, Geoffrey Buxton, ringbarking involved cutting a continuous ring of chips around the trunk, which eventually led to the death of the tree, and avoided the work involved in cutting down trees and grubbing stumps immediately afterwards. It was very effective in improving grass growth. Generally, where ringbarking was practiced, up to double the number of stock could be carried. Scrubcutting and "suckering" were sequels to ringbaking and were considered the most expensive items, for the "suckers" had to be cut annually for five to six years after ringbarking. Throughout the 1880s newspapers advertised thousands of acres of ringbarking and "suckering", almost all of which was done by the Chinese gangs.[35] A report in 1881 stated that 'perfect armies of Chinamen were going about ringbarking every tree at the rate of 9d per acre'. This work was not without controversy. The reporter commented that squatters could regard ringbarking as improvements to their property, thus discouraging free selectors from going onto their land, as long as useful timber such as pine and ironbark was excluded. However, these exemptions were often ignored and pastoralists were accused of ringbarking indiscriminately[36] The Chinese were also employed for many other tasks on the pastoral stations, such as fencing, dam construction, wool washing, market gardening, shearing and cooking.

Accounts of the Chinese ringbarkers and pastoral workers are rare. George Gow, a station manager and later a stock agent, wrote a comprehensive account of Wong Gooey, one of the Narrandera contractors. In the 1890s, and almost certainly before, many Chinese came to Temora from Junee and the Chinese camps at Wagga and possibly Narrandera, working in gangs of 10 to 20. Their working methods and contracting and living arrangements would have been very similar to those described by Gow. One account of the labourers in the Temora district is by historian, R. Webster. He recalled the reminiscences of Mr I. C. Fisher of Ariah Park, who remembered as a boy seeing their 'neat camps of tents, complete with flies, and a brush wind break.[37] Another account is by historian, Bill Speirs, who has commented on the use of Chinese labour by James Fong, a Chinese farmer and storekeeper at Broken Dam, and other landowners in the area. Some of these gangs began work in the 1880s, but it is not clear from which town camp the men came, or who the contractors and team leaders were.[38]

In his account Gow stated that:

> If a station owner wanted some ringing or scrubbing done he sent to an agent in Narrandera who, in turn, informed Wong Gooey. He would come out on his old grey horse, inspect the proposed contract and then start haggling for terms, usually asking very much more than he was really prepared to work for...These contracts were sublet to a body of Chinese, who gave Gooey five per cent for organising the job. Sometimes he had several jobs going at once, extending into thousands and thousands of acres, and he would move to and fro inspecting them, but he never did any manual work himself. Europeans would perform all kinds of bush work...but did not care for ringing and scrubbing; they called it

[35] Buxton, *The Riverina*, pp.247-248.

[36] *Riverine Grazier,* 11 June 1881.

[37] Temora Centenary Committee, *Temora Yesterday and Today*, p.250; Webster, *The First Fifty Years of Temora*, p.73.

[38] Bill Speirs, *The Beehive and the Broken Dam*, J.A. Bradley & Sons, Temora, 1987, pp.12-43.

"Chinamen's work", and it was usually left to the latter.'[39]

> After making a deal he would return to Narrandera and interview Sam Yett, a Chinese storekeeper and financier, who supplied the rations and delivered the men on the job. It being a community matter all the men shared in the contract, tuckered and worked together as one man. Sam Yett would load up his two horse caravan, collect the men (sometimes as many as twenty), and all would take to the road, the baggage waggon bringing up the rear. As they generally walked along the road in single file, all about 12 to 20 feet apart, they were rather a peculiar sight. They yabbered away in a sort of sing-song, sometimes in a high voice, sometimes a low, so that they all appeared to be talking together.[40]

Gow remarked that 'their dress was after the style of loose pyjamas, and their heads were adorned by large hats something like a cross between a pith-helmet and frying pan without a handle — some of the hats had curved rims like the verandah of a suburban villa. The march might take days, and if Gooey accompanied it he led the procession on his old grey horse while the others walked. When the men arrived at the property 'the tents and bark cooking galley would arise as if by magic, with a pallisade built around them. Everyman knew his job, and there was no overlapping; in method they could run rings around Europeans'. Local informants have advised that while the men were on the stations, contact was maintained by the use of carrier pigeons, and a pigeon loft was erected at the Narrandera camp and possibly at the Hay camp, for this purpose.[41]

According to Gow the Chinese men on the stations, be they cooks, gardeners or scrub cutters, would be moved like pawns by the ruling Chinese, who always had another man ready to replace the one leaving. Sam Yett, who controlled the Narrandera Chinese camp, very often did so through Wong Gooey. Ah Hem and Ah Sam, two other contractors, were rivals of Gooey, the latter mainly responsible for organising the gardeners and cooks. In his study of the Narrandera Chinese, Kelvin Maxwell stated that the contractors rarely worked on the stations, as they were busy supervising the various contracts, and appointed gang leaders to oversee the men in their absence. Contractors such as Wong Gooey had several gang leaders working for them. According to Maxwell the 1891 Census shows that the Narrandera labourers were widely dispersed and working on a number of properties in the district. 24 Chinese were working on Holloway's Mumbledool, of whom 21 were scrub cutting, six were working on Bygoo, also "scrubbing", 14 were working on Nariah, one on Conapaira,11 one at Ballantry, one on Barellan, and 21 on North Barellan. At North Barellan, two Chinese men were mentioned, Ah Chak , who was one of a party of 10, and more than likely the gang leader, and Ah Looey, who was one of a party of 11, and also the likely gang leader. At Kerabury, two Chinese men were mentioned, Youm Foo, who was one of a party of 12, and Ah Lim, who was one of a party of 14. Youm Foo and Ah Lim were also the likely gang leaders. At Tubbo 19 Chinese were recorded, including Ah Gan, who, along with seven others was located at the fencer's camp, and Ah Slam, who, along with nine others, was located at the burr cutter's camp. Ah Gan and Ah Slam were the likely gang leaders. [42]

Buxton commented that as the years passed the contracts gradually grew smaller, and the pine forests were killed by the chopping down of the small pine scrub and the ringing of the larger timber. The

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[39] Barellan Progress Association and Improvement Society, *Early Days in Barellan and District*, publisher unknown, Barellan, 1975, p.36.

[40] Barellan Progress Association and Improvement Society, *Early Days in Barellan and District*, pp.36-38.

[41] Barellan Progress Association and Improvement Society, *Early Days in Barellan and District*, pp.35-40; local informants, Narrandera, 2009.

[42] Barellan Progress Association and Improvement Society, *Early Days in Barellan and District,* pp.22-23; Kelvin Maxwell, 'The Chinese in Australia, with particular reference to Narrandera', unpublished research paper, Riverina College of Advanced Education, Wagga Wagga, 1980, no page numbers available.

box trees were also ringed, the work often followed up by subsequent grubbing of the shoots or suckers. Seedlings also had to be dealt with repeatedly.[43] Historian R. Webster lamented the 'tragedy of their employment', which resulted in the total destruction of great areas of valuable timber for they 'razed good and bad in a face and millions of magnificent old pines, free of knot and pith, fell before their relentless axes'.[44] However, it is unfair to blame the Chinese for what was essentially a European transgression; the Chinese were just doing their job, and if not them, then someone else,.[45] According to Gow the last large contract of any kind taken by Gooey was on Barellan station at the end of 1910. A Mr F.R. Clayton had sold the property to a syndicate, who intended to subdivide it. Messrs. Grant, Forsyth and Thorpe were the committee for the syndicate, and before the place was handed over to the syndicate Clayton was asked to arrange a contract to clear 6000 acres (2400 hectares). Gooey took the job on, using 11 men to start work. Gow commented that 'if eleven Europeans took a clearing job of this size there would be internal dissensions, and at the completion of the job, the personnel of the camp would be entirely altered. Not so with the Chinese; only one man fell out, and that was because he died'. [46]

The land clearing contracts could be strongly contested, for the Chinese workers were not a servile labour force and did not work for a pittance.[47] C.F. McDonald, the manager of Wantabadgery station (near Wagga) in the early 1880s, recounted the instance of the Chinese labourers refusing to work at the prevailing rates and bargaining for higher ones.[48] Gow recounts the attempt by Gooey to obtain a better paying contract from John Holloway, the owner of Moombooldool Station. He had decided to ringbark 60,000 acres (24,000 hectares) of box trees and had let the contract to Gooey at one shilling an acre. At the appointed time Gooey rode up and said that the men wanted one shilling and one pence an acre or they would not do the job. This angered Holloway and he told Gooey to leave. The next day another Chinese man rode up and said that he would take the ringing contract at one shilling an acre without inspection as he knew the country. He had a gang of men coming along the road so they could form a camp and start work at once. When Holloway rode into the camp he saw Gooey and with some relish told him that he had lost the job to another man, to which Gooey replied that it was ok for the other man was his cousin. The incident illustrates the lengths the contractors would go to in bargaining for a better price, and the close interconnectedness of the men, almost all of whom would have been residents of the Narrandera camp, and members of the same clan, district and fraternal association.[49]

By all accounts the Chinese labourers lived very well. According to Gow:

> Each man seemed to take his turn at cooking, and weird and wonderful were the dishes they concocted. Preserved ginger, all kinds of dried fish, and pork were on the menu; rice of course figured largely, but it was of a specially prepared kind. I have often heard it said that Chinamen could live on the smell of an oil rag, but it is a fallacy, they live exceedingly well – much better than Europeans under similar circumstances.
>
> They are fond of fish, either fresh or dried – I remember once Gooey had a camp on a dam on Warri,

[43] Buxton, *The Riverina*, pp.247-248.

[44] Webster, *The First Fifty Years of Temora*, p.73.

[45] *Riverine Grazier*, 11 June 1881.

[46] Barellan Progress Association and Improvement Society, *Early Days in Barellan and District*, pp.22-23.

[47] Temora Centenary Committee, *Temora Yesterday and Today*, p.250.

[48] C.F. McDonald, Wantabadgery Station, *Diary, 1879-1881*, A33/20, Mitchell Library, Sydney.

[49] Barellan Progress Association and Improvement Society, *Early Days in Barellan and District*, pp.20-23, 50-54.

> which was swarming with minnows, (a small kind of native fish, which seems to have disappeared now). They netted these, and put about a quart of them straight from the dam into the frying pan....[50]

Mrs Ruth Genat, the daughter of Walter, the second son of James and Margaret Fong, recalled that:

> Walter and his brothers were always welcomed by these men and plied with food. It seemed that only the man in charge had any English and there was not much communication with the wood-cutters. Their cleanliness deeply impressed the boys, who thought is a bit strange to see men bathe themselves so thoroughly and often. Especially [sic] when water was so scarce and only tin dishes available in which to wash.
>
> Grandfather Fong imported much food from China for the local Chinese workers and Father could still remember seeing the split and flattened carcases of duck as they were unpacked, and the ricepaper packages of Chinese rice and tea.[51]

Mr I. C. Fisher made similar comments, stating that 'they lived well, their diet being mainly soup drunk out of a bowl, with chop sticks to handle the solid pieces. They were especially fond of pig's cheek and salt fish'.[52]

By the 1880s the ringbarking frontier had moved further north, following the copper then gold mining boom in the Mt Hope, Nymagee, Cobar and Mt Drysdale areas. However, a significant number of Chinese remained in the Riverina district for decades to come. The last known record of large scale ringbarking and root grubbing in the Riverina was in 1920 on Tubbo Station, near Narrandera. King Fan, who lived at the Narrandera camp, was the main labour contractor. In 1919 he was paid £436 10s 9d for this work and in 1920, £466 1s 8d.[53] King Fan's obituary writer stated that he had a lucrative business as a clearing contractor and employed gangs of as many as 20 or 30 men, his contracts taking him to practically all the district and as far away as Rankins Springs.[54]

Information on the Chinese labourers and contractors may be found in court reports and station ledgers. The Tubbo ledgers reveal that Chinese men were engaged in a variety of labouring tasks, particularly ringbarking, and as market gardeners and cooks from at least 1866 (the earliest known record) to the 1920s, after which their activities were confined to cooking and market gardening. The contract labourers were paid through the headman or contractor, and workers such as cooks and market gardeners were paid individually at rates comparable with European wage rates. Twenty five Chinese men were engaged in 1868, though their occupations are unknown. In 1876 Ah Goon was engaged as a wool picker, Men Sing as a cook and Ah Foot as a scrub cutter. Ah Foot was paid £61 18s 2d and must have had several men working under him. In 1891, Ah Sam and party and Ah Goon and party were engaged on wire netting. Ah How and three men were engaged as fumigators.[55] In 1895 Mack Goon was employed as a cook at the house. The turnover rate for the cooks and gardeners was high. In 1896 and 1897 Lee Chew was employed as a gardener; in 1898 the gardener was Lee

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[50] Barellan Progress Association and Improvement Society, *Early Days in Barellan and District*, p.38.

[51] Speirs, *The Beehive and the Broken Dam*, pp.44-45.

[52] Webster, *The First Fifty Years of Temora*, p.73.

[53] Tubbo Station, *Ledgers, 1866-1930*, Charles Sturt University Regional Archives, Wagga Wagga; Barellan Progress Association and Improvement Society, *Early Days in Barellan and District*, 20-23, 50-54; Buxton, *The Riverina*, pp.262-263, 280.

[54] *Narrandera Argus*, 19 August 1954.

[55] Tubbo Station, *Ledgers, 1866-1930*, Tubbo Station, *Letter Book*, Boxes 21-24, Charles Sturt University Regional Archives, Wagga Wagga.

Chinese sucker cutters' camp on Moroco West *near Deniliquin 1921-25. Much of the land clearing in the Riverina was undertaken by Chinese contract labourers, most of whom were recruited from the Chinese camps in the larger towns. Ten to fifteen men lived in this camp.*
Deniliquin and District Historical Society

Lay and in 1899 Ah Ling.[56] The Tubbo Station letter book is also revealing. The correspondence was mainly between the station manager and the contractor, care of Sam Yett or George Hock Shung (Sam Yett's nephew and successor), who was sometimes referred to as George Sam Yett. In 1903 several letters were addressed to Ah You, contractor, care of George Sam Yett and in October several letters concerning a scrubbing contract were addressed to George Quing Moon, care of George Sam Yett. In a letter dated 25 July 1904 the manager stated that the men had arrived without their mattocks and that they would not be paid until the tools arrived. On 29 July the manager commented that their work was 'done satisfactorily', but to get the contract done in time he would need to engage 10 more men.[57]

In commenting on the way in which the Chinese ringbarked the trees, Mrs Ruth Genat recalled that the men used a heavy axe, chipping away at the bark with short, quick blows.[58] Historian, Max Leitch, has also commented on their working methods. He stated that a Chinese gardener employed on Berry Jerry station near Wagga had most of the contracts for ringbarking, clearing scrub and burning off, and would have up to 50 Chinese men on the job.

> They worked in pairs-each pair had a pole with a piece of chain in the middle which they used by putting the pile across their shoulders and hooking the chain around a log to be moved. One, two, four or more pairs, according to the size of the log to be moved, were used and the timber stacked in this way for burning...They always used a large heavy axe which was too big for them, and in consequence put an uneven and untidy ring around each tree. Looking at a paddock ring barked, it was very easy to see if it had been done by Chinese or Europeans.[59]

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[56] Tubbo Station, *Ledgers 1866-1930.*

[57] Tubbo Station, *Ledgers, 1866-1930*, Tubbo Station, *Letter Book*, Boxes 21-24.

[58] Speirs, *The Beehive and the Broken Dam*, pp.12-43.

[59] Leitch, Max, unpublished memoirs, supplied by Ms Jenny Taylor, Wagga Wagga.

Wicker baskets such as these were used with shoulder yokes to carry loads of dirt in dam construction as well as for market gardening purposes.
Parkside Cottage Museum, Narrandera

Chinese workers also constructed earthen built dams (tanks). According to local historian, Ada Trevaskis, 20 or more Chinese built the large dams, breaking the soil with picks and shovels, and carrying it away in wheelbarrows or baskets.

Those using baskets carried two on each end of a yoke across shoulder, and when one carrier returned with empty containers, others were filled and ready for transportation. She commented that the dams had two steep sides, with two ends sloped for transporting the soil, though many dams do not have steep sides and are gently sloped.[60]

Sometimes the dams enclosed a swamp or natural drainage area, or trapped the water from the creeks. Examples of the latter exist at present day Brailong and Grubben stations in the Yerong Creek area, south of Wagga Wagga, the large embankments damming the creeks, and in the case of Brailong forming small lakes. The top of the embankment at Brailong was wide enough to serve as a road. At Grubben some of the water was channelled into a small dam for market gardening, and a stone packed causeway built along the main road to mitigate the effects of flooding.[61]

Many labourers in the Riverina came from Victoria, in particular the Chinese camp at Wahgunyah. One of the contractors was Chen Ah Kew, a well-to-do Wahgunyah-based merchant. Writing in 1945, His eldest son, George Wing Dann, tells the story:

> My father came to Australia by a sailing boat, which took over six months to get here. He settled in Wahgunyah and opened up a general store and commenced importing all his merchandise from China. Very soon he had the largest store in Wahgunyah and employed many hands.
>
> He became very friendly with Mr. MacFarlane [Patrick McFarland] and a Mr Hay, who lived 12 miles from Corowa. Mr MacFarlane suggested that he go in for contracting, so he arranged for about 500 laborers [sic] to come to Australia and soon began clearing the surrounding country. Mr. MacFarlane's property was the first one he cleared and then on to Mr. Hay's place until eventually he had travelled as far as Deniliquin. He used to send out gangs of 20 to 40 men with twenty horse teams, working relays of 10 and they used to carry enough stores to last them up to six months. The gangs used to dig around the roots of the big trees, and then set a fire in the hole until the tree fell, when it was cut up and either burned or carried away. My mother cannot remember the names of the stations he cleared, but she says

[60] Ada Trevaskis, *A Schneider Family History 1849-1979*, the author, 1979, p.87.

[61] Black Mountain Projects, *Lockhart Heritage Inventory*, 2008, p.21.

Chinese made dam on Brookong Station near Milbrulong, New South Wales.
Photograph Barry McGowan

that he went as far as100 miles away and was often away for two and three weeks at a time.[62]

There are some caveats to this story. For example, it is questionable if as many as 500 men were recruited simultaneously, given the daunting logistics of transport and supply, though that may have happened over time. A 500 strong labour force would have been almost unmanageable. Also it is likely that the men began with Henry Hay's Collendina station near Corowa, given its proximity to Wahgunyah, before moving onto Patrick McFarland's Barooga station, then, as stated in the *Border Morning Mail* of 13 August 1945, one station after another to Coreen, Daysdale and Deniliquin. The method of clearing also sits at odds with the more common practice of ringbarking. Burning was used, however, to get rid of cut timber, tree roots and suckers. Whatever the exact details, it is, however, an invaluable account and further evidence that Chinese labour was used extensively for land clearing.[63]

Another curious and unstated detail of George Wing Dann's letter is the timing of this activity. According to his account and the account of a granddaughter of Chen Ah Kew, Elizabeth Chong, Chen Ah Kew did not come out as a gold miner, but an indentured labourer, and that he hired some of the men whom he had overseen. The great wave of land clearing in the Riverina was definitely post gold rush from the 1860s on, and many Victorian Chinese would have crossed into the Riverina before the NSW immigration restrictions of 1888, which included a prohibitive poll tax of £100.

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[62] George Wing Dann, letter to Mrs Eileen Brown, 23 July 1945, Doris Schofield Collection, Federation Museum, Corowa.

[63] *The Border Morning Mail*, 13 August 1945; Barry McGowan, *Tracking the Dragon. A history of the Chinese in the Riverina*, Museum of the Riverina, Wagga Wagga, Powerhouse Museum, Sydney, 2010, pp.9-40; Cora Trevarthen, 'Chinese Communities in northeast Victoria, 1861-1914', *Journal of Chinese Australia*, Issue 2, October 2006, pp1-15; Rod Lancashire, 'European-Chinese Economic Interaction in a Pre-Federation Rural Australian Setting', *Rural Society*, Vol.10, No.2, 2000, pp.229-241.

Although, as will be discussed later, many men used illegal methods to avoid these restrictions, it is difficult to contemplate that a man of Chen Ah Kew's standing would have done so. Historian, Rod Lancashire, suggests, that Chinese labour from Victoria may have been used in the Riverina after 1888. He cites a *Rutherglen and Wahgunyah News* report of 24 July 1891 that 20 free shearers had been smuggled to MacFarland Brothers Barooga station. At a pastoralist's meeting in Corowa on 7 July 1891, the 'free labourers' were described as the 'riff-raff from Little Bourke Street', a euphemism, according to Lancashire, for Melbourne's Chinese district. Other evidence for the use of Wahgunyah and Rutherglen-based Chinese labour, both pre and post Federation, in either Victoria or the Riverina is provided by several newspaper advertisements.[64] For example, in 1892, Ah Lun, a storekeeper in Wahgunyah, announced that with a staff of 50 men, he was open to undertake contracts for grubbing, scrub cutting, ringbarking and all other station work. Further particulars could be obtained from Sun Cheong's store, Wahgunyah.[65] In 1903, the Rutherglen storekeepers Sen Loo Kee and Hin Wah advertised a large number of men available, up to 100, for ringbarking, scrubbing, clearing and burning off. [66]

According to historian Mona Terry, Chinese labour from the Rutherglen area was used extensively in the Oaklands District near Jerilderie. She has commented that when the Rutherglen mining ceased, the Chinese miners sought work on the stations, clearing timber, lining wells and digging post holes. The Tyson Brothers, including James Tyson, were the first owners of Goonambil Station, which William Wilson bought in 1875. Duncan Rankin was Wilson's bookkeeper and was on Goonambil for 35 years. In his diary he stated that the Chinese were remarkable in the assessment of the money due to them and were very accurate and truthful. They used an abacus for all their calculations. James Tyson also employed Chinese labour on his Tupra property, west of Hay.[67]

As in the case of the Wahgunyah Chinese, over time, some Chinese labourers in the Riverina were recruited directly from China, under arrangements between Chinese merchants in Australia and recruiting companies in Hong Kong and elsewhere. In this process family and fraternal associations were critical, with the recruitment focusing on specific villages. The late William Liu OA, a prominent Sydney merchant, recalled that the Hong Kong based Sam Yick Co was the contractor for land clearing in Narrandera (though there were probably others). They hired labourers from the village of Hor Chung Hong Li Toon, in Taishan County, Guangdong Province, and his father had been one of these recruits.[68] Willie Ah Kinn (or Kin), originally a market gardener in Deniliquin and Urana, later diversified into labour contracting, recruiting men from his home district, and forming them into gangs to work in the Urana area.[69] In percentage terms the increase in the Chinese population in the Riverina between 1878 and 1883 was large, and more than likely the bulk of the new arrivals came direct from China. It stands to reason that this be so. Land clearing was hard work, and many of the gold mining fraternity would by the early 1880s have been well into their 40s, if not 50s. This was no country for an old man!

But the Chinese workers excelled at more than ringbarking. In 1887 a correspondent for the *Melbourne Argus* reported on the large numbers of Chinese labourers engaged in wool scouring in the Hay

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[64] Lancashire, 'European-Chinese Economic Interaction in a Pre-Federation Rural Australian Setting', pp. 239-240.

[65] *Corowa Free Press*, 26 February 1892.

[66] *Corowa Free Press*, 13 March 1903.

[67] Mona Terry, *The Light Shines On: A History of Oaklands*, the author, Oaklands, 1985.

[68] "From Manchu to Mao. The Life story of 'Uncle Bill' Liu", *The Asian*, November 1977, p.5.

[69] Shire of Urana, *Commonwealth Jubilee Celebration 1901-1951, Shire of Urana, Jubilee Carnival, Saturday 21 April 1951*, Souvenir booklet and programme, publisher unknown.

district. In answer to the question, 'why not employ whites?', he was told, 'the Chinamen do the work better; they neither waste the wool nor damage the plant; there is in fact no bother with them at all; they do their work faithfully and well and earn higher wages than the ordinary white workmen'. Observing the amount of wool barged down river from Burrabogie Station, he lamented that the 'best of the work was passing out of the white men's hands, and simply because of their inferiority or idleness'. Chinese labour would scour all of Burrabogie's wool clip for the year. They did not work for a 'low wage', but had 'organisation, industry, carefulness, thrift which the available white work men lack'. Between 20 and 30 of them were busy on the washing punts and it was described as 'nice, cool, comfortable, pleasant work'.[70]

The economic value of Chinese pastoral labour was undisputed. In 1890, a *Sydney Morning Herald* correspondent stated that nearly all the pastoralists to whom he had spoken had the same opinion of the Chinese people. It was not so much that their labour was cheaper, for in many cases they received the same wages or even more than the Europeans; it was because they were steadier and more reliable. He stated that as cooks and gardeners they were invaluable and produced nearly all the vegetables grown in the bush. They also worked as rabbiters, and were willing to do nearly all the rough work on the stations.[71] One squatter criticised the European labourers, saying that:

> They can't do it at the price, and if they take a contract they only do so to get a draw of rations and then clear out and take the tools with them. Its quite different with the Chinese; we only deal with the head man and whatever price he accepts the work is always done, even when they can't earn tucker at it, and then they don't get drunk, and kick up rows.[72]

Some Chinese men worked as shearers, some as wool classers and others as drovers or general rouseabouts. Andrew Learmonth, the owner of Groongal station, was reported to be experimenting with Chinese shearers (date unknown but perhaps the 1890s) since his white shearers had previously attempted to strike for better wages.[73] However, in the late 19th century the Chinese were not welcome at such work. Thomas Booth worked as a station-hand in the late 1870s on Corrong station near Booligal, and remembered when a group of rouseabouts and shearers attacked 20 Chinese who were offering to work for James Tyson on Tupra station at 15s a week, as against the general wage for workers of one pound a week.[74] By the 20th century such antagonism had faded, and Chinese-Australians worked in the pastoral industry as wool classers, shearers or general hands, so long as they were members of the union, the Australian Workers' Union. Alex Pack from Hay worked as a groom at Daisy Plains before he began shearing at the station. In 1945 he commenced shearing professionally on O. J. Smith's and Ray Congdon's teams until 1955, when he returned to Daisy Plains. In 1970 he recommenced shearing on a freelance basis, averaging about 160–170 sheep a day, his highest tally being 228. He was always a union man, remarking that the union made the job a lot safer and more comfortable. In the early years the living conditions were often primitive, and the shearers were given two chaff bags to fill with straw for use as mattresses. Alex estimated that he had shorn almost 200,000 sheep during his lifetime. [75] Another Chinese-Australian shearer was Clarrie Leslie (formerly Clarrie Chun) from Junee. At first an expert farm hand, he was befriended by a gun shearer, who got him a learner's pen with a big shearing contracting firm. Later, he became a gun shearer, reputed for his

[70] *The Argus*, 22, 29 October 1887.

[71] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 30 December 1890.

[72] *Town and Country Journal*, 19 May 1888.

[73] www.daao.org.au/legal/eula.html

[74] Hay Historical Society Web-Site Newsletter, February 2006, No IV.

[75] *Riverine Grazier*, 6 November 2002.

40 years among the wool

Mervyn Shung (centre) pictured at Uardry, Hay, with (from left) sheep classer Tom Limburne, shearing contractor Cec Kem, former contractor Ron Smith and Uardry manager Rod McCulley.

This year's shearing was the 40th at Uardry for Mervyn Shung of Narrandera. He estimates that he has classed well over a million fleeces on this board.

In his long and highly respected career as a wool classer, Mr. Shung has worked in over 40 sheds, from Booligal to Goulburn and south to Holbrook.

He believes that he has classed fleeces from over five million sheep in that time.

Mr. Shung said he had worked with three shearing contractors at Uardry, in the past 40 years.

The first was Fred Brown and the last Cec. Kem, both for very short periods. However, for the vast majority of the time the contractor in the shed had been O. J. Smith and Co.

Mr. Shung was high in his praise of the improvement he has seen in Uardry wool over the years. He said the fleeces are now brighter and their weight has been dramatically improved. He also commented on the seasons he had experienced in the wool "game", seeing a lot of properties through good times and bad.

Looking back over other changes he has observed, Mr. Shung said that the new objective measurement of wool has been one of the most important.

Uardry is now classing on a modified scale, using three main fleece lines.

However, Mr. Shung can remember when he classed the clip into ten lines.

His other comment was on the wool output. He said the number of bales at any particular shearing is a difficult yardstick for comparison as the "old days" saw bales going out at 320 pounds, whilst they are now pressing 400 pounds into a bale. However, the top shearings Mr. Shung can remember at Uardry would produce around 1100 bales.

Cutting from the Narrandera Argus, May 28, 1984 describing Mervyn Shung's woolclassing career.

clean, fast shearing. His team shore in sheds such as Glen Iris, Merbindinyah, Yamatree, Caragabool, Brindabella, Wantabadgery, Ballengoarrah, Dollar Vale and Cooba station, travelling as far as western Queensland. Later, in partnership with Jack Neighbour, he went contract shearing himself. With a two stand portable shearing plant they shore in the open in the Snowy Mountains for many years.[76]

One of the best known Chinese wool classers in the Riverina was Mervyn Shung from Narrandera. He began work as a qualified sheep and wool classer in 1932, working in the industry for about 60 years from as far north as Moree to Seymour in Victoria, to Bredbo in the east and Deniliquin and Ivanhoe in the west. Mervyn estimated that he had classed about eight and a half million fleeces in his time in the industry. The stations he worked on included Boonoke, North Moonbria, Uardry, Goolgumbla, Brewarrana, Coonong Poogninook, Wonga, Gala Vale, Stud Park North, Cooinbil, Bundidjarie, Cowabbie, Booberoi, Bringagee, Benerembah, Nulabor, Yamma, Tooma, Yarabee, Kerarbury and Buckingbong, where he classed the clip for over 40 straight general shearings, and Neylona, the largest Corriedale stud in Australia. He worked at Uardry for 40 years, which placed him as among one of the longest serving persons to be associated with a particular wool clip in the Hay district. He was made a life member of the Woolclasser's Association of Australia in 1986, making him only the sixth life member in NSW since the association's formation in 1933.[77] Eric Doon from Tumut was also a wool classer.[78]

Walter Clarke (Fong) from Broken Dam worked for a time as a drover's boy. He had resented the heavy-handed treatment of his stepfather, Millington Clarke, and at age 13, in about 1899, left home. Part of his duties was to ride ahead to find a suitable place where the sheep could be held and shepherded during the night. He spent much of his time in the Snowy Mountains in the Talbingo area.[79] On his army recruitment form in 1915 William Loolong, from Marsden (near West Wyalong), a grandson of William Flood Sam, described himself as a bushman. A son, Henry Herbert, from West Wyalong, described himself as a labourer.[80]

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[76] *Junee Southern Cross,* 4 November 1999.

[77] Mervyn Shung, 'Probis Address. My Life Story by M.W. Shung', undated; *Narrandera Argus*, 28 May 1984, 1 September 1987.

[78] Recollections from Grace Ching, Melbourne, September 2011.

[79] Speirs, *The Beehive and the Broken Dam*, p.44.

[80] War records for William Loolong, George Flood Sam, Henry Herbert Sam, James Francis Sam, Norman Sam, George Thomas Loolong, Series B2455, National Archives of Australia (NAA); Sydney http://chineseaustralia.org/archives/258.

MARKET GARDENERS

Shoulder yoke and watering can. The Chinese market gardeners were meticulous in their care and attention to individual plants, using techniques that differed little from those used in China for centuries. The gardeners carried water to the plants in large cans, one on either side of a shoulder yoke.
Parkside Cottage Museum, Narrandera

The economic value of the Chinese as market gardeners on the pastoral stations and in the towns was equally appreciated. Market gardening and fruit growing could be highly profitable, for it was relatively inexpensive to set up a garden, often on leased land, in partnership with other Chinese men, and stock such as pigs were often raised as well. The gardening was very labour intensive work, and some of the methods and technology differed little from that used in China for centuries past.[81] Equipment included hoes, shovels, rakes, harrows, ploughs, and heavy wooden shoulder yokes for carrying the watering cans.

However, sometimes the water was raised from the creeks and rivers by using engines powered by wood-fired boilers or by petrol, but the task of watering the plants was mostly done with watering cans. Almost all town gardens were located near waterways, usually on the fringe of towns near the camps. The gardeners lived in small huts usually built of timber and galvanised iron, similar to shepherd's huts and some shearer's quarters. On the pastoral stations small market gardener's huts can still be seen at Tupra Station, west of Hay, the Homestead Station (formerly Kerarbury) near Darlington Point, and Tubbo Station west of Narrandera. At Tubbo the hut measures six metres by two, and contains a bath tub and three bunks either side of the walls.

An account of market gardening at Hillston by Tom Parr in 1900 provides a glimpse into the technology employed in some of the gardens. The men raised water from the river by small buckets holding a little over two litres, which were fastened to an endless chain, with the buckets completing the circle, thus circulating a continuous stream of water. The chain was driven by a blindfolded horse going around continuously. Some of their vegetables such as potatoes and pumpkin, and their fruit trees were flood irrigated. But much of the water was pumped into a drain and into small holes dug in the garden holding about 1350 litres. A plank ran into the water hole on one side and out the other. Each of the Chinese gardeners 'had two huge watering cans on a bamboo stick across their shoulders, one can, one each side, and as he jogged through, he dipped both cans into the water, the cans

[81] F.H. King, *Farmers of Forty Centuries. Organic farming in China, Korea, and Japan*, Dover Publications, New York, 2004 (original publication 1911).

having a spray nozzle on the spout'.[82]

Market gardening was a major activity in Deniliquin, perhaps more so than in any other Riverina town. A favourable climate and adequate water meant that three crops could be harvested each year, and a major destination for the crops was the Bendigo goldfields. A report in November 1864 referred to a market gardener by the name of Cooey, who had sent up dray loads of vegetables from Bendigo to Deniliquin for a good price and had by then leased three acres in Deniliquin for a market garden. A later report mentioned the extensive use of night soil, which was mixed in two pits and applied periodically, the garden being watered three times daily, with the plants grown on long ridges about 22 centimetres high. The garden was described as 'a perfect oasis in the surrounding desert', the first dray load of vegetables leaving for the Bendigo area in April 1865. Other gardeners soon followed suit, a correspondent in that year commenting favourably on their industry, sobriety and general good conduct. At Ah Guy's garden the aphids were controlled by the application of a strong solution of soda to each young plant. He referred to the Chinese as the 'coming man' of the Riverina.[83] In 1870 the editor of the *Pastoral Times* remarked that the local population was 'greatly indebted' to the Chinese for a cheap and good supply of vegetables all year round.[84]

Chinese market gardening soon spread to other towns. At Hay in 1867 the *Pastoral Times* correspondent waxed eloquent on the industry and thrift of the Chinese gardeners, commenting that 'for industry and sobriety he is a pattern to the whites'. He referred to the Chinese as 'the universal cabbage grower in the sunny land of Australia', and referred to six Chinese gardeners living well on less than an acre of Crown land. The correspondent also referred to the Chinese practice of taking all the town refuse, 'the scrapings of our streets, the refuse of our stables, the debris of our back slums' and converting 'them into cabbage', and the meticulous way they looked after their plants, ridding them of aphids by brushing the plants individually with soapsuds. He stated 'that no whites would do this for they did not have the patience'.[85] In 1892 the Chinese established a market garden on land leased from the Council, and erected an engine and pump at a cost of £280. The correspondent remarked that 'The enterprise of our Chinese friends merits the success which their indefatigable industry will no doubt command'.[86]

Chinese gardens were soon established at Hillston and Mossgiel, north of Hay. In 1876 the local correspondent spoke very highly of the Chinese gardeners at Hillston, of whom there were about 20 working in a cooperative arrangement, distributing vegetables around the district in half a dozen carts. He commented that the district 'would suffer materially without the aid of our Asiatic friends'.[87] The garden was owned by Chong Lee and Company.[88]

At Darlington Point the first Chinese market garden was established in 1880, when the town was still an infant settlement; a year later the garden was described as 'fearfully and wonderfully irrigated' and a 'spectacular success'. The garden was 'washed by the Murrumbidgee River, watered by two wells,

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[82] Tom E. Parr, *Reminiscences of a NSW South West Settler*, Heatherstone Book, Carlton Press, Inc., New York, 1977, pp.14-16.

[83] *Bendigo Advertiser*, 14 November, 20 December 1864, 15 April, 8 September 1865.

[84] *Pastoral Times*, 16 July 1870.

[85] *Pastoral Times*, 6 April 1867.

[86] *Riverine Grazier*, 24 June 1892.

[87] *Riverine Grazier*, 2 February 1876.

[88] *Riverine Grazier*, 7 April 1899.

The Brewery market garden at Deniliquin under the floodwaters of the Edwards River. The location of Chinese market gardens near water sources made them vulnerable to frequent flooding.
Deniliquin and District Historical Society

A Chinese gardener at Merowie, Hillston, New South Wales.
Hillston Historical Society

and traversed throughout by canals'.[89] By 1896 two Chinese market gardens had been established at Booligal, west of Hillston. Both were irrigated by windmills, which pumped water from the Lachlan River.[90]

At Wagga, the most extensive area of market gardening was in the lagoon area known as North Wagga Island, although some gardens were located at the Chinese camp in Fitzmaurice Street and on Tarcutta Street. Most of the Albury gardens were located between the camp area and the Murray River. But the largest was at Mungabareena, where it extended over several hectares, and included pumps, brick and concrete lined water channels and concrete piping. Most of the better known Deniliquin gardens were next to the camp (the Brewery garden), and the Edwards River, (the Butter Factory garden). The latter garden is still in situ, with water canals, mounds and barrow ways still visible. Almost all the Chinese gardens at Junee were located in the wet land area behind Broadway, through which ran a drain excavated by the Chinese gardeners to provide a regular supply of water. Among the Junee gardeners in the 1900s were Tommy Ah Wah and Georgie or Tommy Ah Yeck. The last gardener was Gordon Wee.[91] At Narrandera most gardens were located near the Chinese camp, on the banks of the Murrumbidgee River, virtually surrounding the camp on all sides. One of the legendary Narrandera gardeners was Harry King Fan, who had a market garden near the camp for almost 40 years.[92]

At Temora many of the market gardens were located along Trungley Hall Road on land formerly used for gold mining. One of the main market gardeners was Thomas Wah Sue, who sold his produce by wagon, buying skins, hides and fleeces in return. He was also a green grocer. Not long before he died he transferred his business to his daughter Kathleen, with whom he had lived since his wife's death in 1942. Kathleen was married to Andrew Mee Ling. Albert Mee Ling's wife, Edna Kitt, had a part-Chinese father who ran a market garden at Goulburn.[93]

Other gardeners were He-Lim and Charlie Wong Lip.[94] Wong Lip had earlier been a market gardener at Jerilderie.[95] Historian, R. Webster recalled that, 'their little irrigated patches were a picture of green in the tortured waste of puddlers' dams and multi-coloured mullock dumps. They proved beyond doubt that with proper attention the land here would grow anything in its climatic range.'[96]

Because the Chinese market gardens were almost always located near the waterways they were very susceptible to flooding, and many of the accounts of the market gardens come from the flood reports in the local press. One of the most devastating floods in the Riverina was in May 1870. At Wagga many residents were stranded, Chinese and Europeans, and dependent on an 'unlikely armada' of assorted boats for their rescue. *The Daily Advertiser* correspondent commented that the 'Chinamen from Brown's Island have also a boat; or, rather, a sort of punt, a most unwielly [sic] looking craft, admirably handled, however, by the celestials, who, in boating as in other matters, if they have a strange way of doing things, generally do them well'. While other rescues were under way in the town and at North Wagga:

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[89] *Wagga Wagga Daily Advertiser* (hereafter, *Daily Advertiser*), 25 December 1880, 12 May 1881; *Riverine Grazier*, 4 May, 8 June 1881.

[90] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 May 1896.

[91] Sherry Morris, *Junee: Speaking of the Past*, Vol.2, Junee Shire Arts Council, Junee, Section 12, Migration/ethnic influences, Junee, 1997.

[92] *Narrandera Argus*, 19 August 1954.

[93] *Temora Independent*, 3 February 1942; information from Meredie Mee Ling, June 2012.

[94] Temora Centenary Committee, *Temora Yesterday and Today, 1880-1980*, p.250.

[95] Series SP 42/1, C21/5853, NAA, Sydney.

[96] Webster, *The First Fifty Years of Temora*, p.73.

Market garden in flood, Darlington Point, New South Wales.
Deniliquin and District Historical Society

> the Chinamen's boat had been busy amongst the celestial portions of the community. From the roof of the Chinese boarding-house [in North Wagga] eight men were taken. They had passed the night in darkness on the rafters, but in the morning broke their way through the bark roof[97]

The 1900 floods were equally ruinous. At Darlington Point, the gardeners were 'swamped out' and their gardens 'utterly ruined', the police having considerable difficulty in persuading the Chinese to leave their dwellings.[98] In the 1925 flood the council and townspeople assisted the Chinese gardeners in walling in their garden, thereby saving a large crop of vegetables.

At Gundagai, Kim Lip, a Chinese gardener on True's Flat, had to be rescued from the top storey of his home by a boat party led by Constable Ryan.[99] The 1931 floods affected almost every market gardener in the Riverina. At Gundagai, True's Flat was again submerged and the vegetable gardens completely destroyed.[100] The Chinese gardens and homes at Narrandera were also flooded, while at Wagga Constable Norrell had his work cut out rescuing Willie Chong, a Chinese gardener at North Wagga. While persuading Willie to leave, he was bitten on the leg, though not severely, by Willie's dog.[101] At Hay, the Chinese market gardens 'near the bridge', 'which had a splendid show of vegetables', was 'to a great extent, under water', as were many other gardens, both Chinese and European. In 1950 floods again ravaged much of the Riverina. King Fan, a leading Chinese market gardener in Narrandera, remarked that the flood was the highest he had ever seen in the town. He expected to be a heavy loser, as the whole of his vegetable garden would be ruined, and expected other market gardeners along the river to also suffer. The floods in June 1952 again caused the evacuation of the Narrandera market gardeners. Floods were not an issue at Temora. [102]

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[97] *Daily Advertiser*, 4 May 1870.

[98] *Narrandera Argus*, 27 July 1900; *Narrandera Ensign*, 13, 20 July 1900.

[99] *Daily Advertiser*, 13 June 1925; *Gundagai Times*, 29 May 1925.

[100] *Gundagai Times*, 26 June 1931.

[101] *Daily Advertiser*, 26 June 1931; *Narrandera Argus*, 19 June 1931.

[102] *Narrandera Argus*, 31 March 1950; *Daily Advertiser*, 21 June 1952; *Riverine Grazier*, 26 June 1931.

FARMERS AND GRAZIERS

In the early 1870s the Chinese turned their attention to other forms of cultivation – tobacco and maize. Little, if any, tobacco was grown in the Temora district. However, tobacco growing was an important industry in the Tumut district and an excellent example of Chinese initiative and entrepreneurship, and is recounted here for those reasons. On 23 November 1889 a correspondent for the ***Sydney Mail*** stated that the first attempt to grow tobacco in district in 1875 was by three Chinese men. They had no previous experience in tobacco growing but having heard that some of their countrymen had started the industry at Albury resolved to try it, and were rewarded with a first crop of three tons, which they sold to a Sydney factory for a very good price of 8d a lb. Other Chinese soon followed.[103] Almost certainly the first farmers were originally from the King Valley and Yackandandah areas of north east Victoria, where farming for tobacco, maize and hops had been commonplace for some time.[104]

The Chinese were tenant farmers, renting the land from European land owners and paying an annual or quarterly rent, usually at a higher rate than most Europeans.[105] They were financed by Tumut-based entrepreneurs, of whom the main one was Dang Ah Chee. He helped them set up their farms, taking a share of their crops as payment, and bargaining with the landowners and the tobacco buyers on their behalf. The growth of the industry was rapid, and by 1885 the Chinese were regarded as the most successful growers in the Gundagai, Tumut and Adelong districts. They had also 'taken a hold of the hops industry'.[106]

In 1887 a correspondent remarked that large quantities of tobacco were on road to the market, and that the growers were doing well. Production was entirely in the hands 'of the almond eyed, your white not being possessed of the patience absolutely necessary to the successful production of this well paying, but delicate crop'. The correspondent commented that the 'colonial farmer leaves it to struggle as best it can and with consequent failure', for, if not scorched up, caterpillars devour it.[107]

By 1888 the Chinese tobacco growers were firmly established in the Tarcutta area, at Hillas Creek and Lacmalac. Although, in other respects these were not happy times for the Chinese tobacco growers, for anti-Chinese feelings were running high in many parts of the colony and an Anti-Chinese League was established in Tumut in late 1887. One of the League's main aims was to discourage European landowners from leasing land to the Chinese farmers. 1889 was perhaps the high point for the Chinese tobacco growers, for by the 1890s a depression in the tobacco industry had forced many Chinese growers to leave.[108]

Jack Bridle, in his reminiscences, remarked that the tobacco industry revived in 1904 when British American Tobacco persuaded growers to erect kilns to cure and dry leaf rather than sun drying it in open sheds. He commented that in the 1920s twenty or more Chinese tenant farmers were growing tobacco and maize on the Tumut Plains at Wermatong. He worked for them as a young man in the

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[103] *Gundagai Times*, 14 January 1876.

[104] Jocelyn Groom, *Chinese Pioneers of the King Valley*, Centre for Continuing Education, Wangaratta, 2001; *Sydney Mail*, 23 November 1889.

[105] *Town and Country Journal*, 13 April 1889.

[106] *Gundagai Times*, 30 June 1885.

[107] *Goulburn Herald*, 18 January 1887.

[108] *Gundagai Times*, 21 September 1888; *Sydney Mail*, 22 September 1888, 23 November 1889, 7 July 1890; *Narrandera Ensign*, 26 August 1898.

Chinese men carrying harvested tobacco.
National Library of Australia

Depression days of the late 20's and early 30s', mainly cutting and carting wood for their kilns.

> They were good to work for...they were never known to try and cheat anyone, which is more than I could say for many of my own countrymen at the same time. He remarked that the Wermatong owners were very happy with the Chinese as tenants because they were 'industrious, honest, and above all, because of their system of banking with their local storekeeper their rents were always paid on time.[109]

Some Chinese men were also wheat farmers and graziers. According to historian Bill Speirs, one such man in the Temora area was James Fong (Yie Zhan Fang) of Broken Dam near Ariah Park. He was originally a hawker. In 1876 he married Margaret Smith from Wagga, arriving in the Temora district in the same year, at first camping at Quondary station. Not long after he selected 40 acres [16 hectares] near the Broken Dam, where there was a hotel, but little else. James purchased his selection by 'Conditional Sale Without Competition' at Wagga, but because he had inadvertently selected land which partly encroached on a new stock route, legal complications arose, and he found himself joining many other selectors whose applications were in limbo because of similar, or other, discrepancies in the selections. It needed special legislation, the ***Crown Lands Purchases Validation Act 1881***, to finally resolve these irregularities in favour of the selectors. His selection was surveyed in 1881, by which time he had improved it by building a house and store (which also acted as the receiving office for local mail).

With the idea of augmenting his income from the store he selected a 320 acre [128 hectare] block between his property and the northern boundary of Samuel Harrison's 'Ariah Park' in 1884. The new property was called 'Wattle Farm', and he soon began improving the land. Over the next 18 months the boundary of the block was fenced and divided into three paddocks. He erected a substantial

[109] Jack Bridle, 'Memories and information of the Chinese', *Memories of Tumut Plains*, residents and ex-residents, Wilkie Watson, Tumut, 1993, pp.12-14; *Tumut and Adelong Times,* 6 August 1935.

house, shed and kitchen, and sank an underground rainwater tank for domestic use. An earth tank (dam) to provide stock water was added, and ringbarking and grubbing on the timber began using Chinese contract labour. James Fong obtained imported Chinese products for the men from connections in Sydney. Lack of finance was a problem for James, as it was for many other selectors, so he mortgaged his store block to Uh Chong and Ser On of Sydney on 25 May 1886.[110]

James Fong of ***Broken Dam,*** *Ariah Park, New South Wales.*
Temora Historical Society, Inc

James died suddenly on 15 October 1885, and in 1894 his wife Margaret married Millington Clarke. When Clarke died in 1897, Margaret was left to tend to the property and store on her own. By 1906 she owned over 1000 acres (405 hectares) of land at Broken Dam, including the store block, 'Wattle Farm', and Bill Sanderson's 1884 selection, which adjoined 'Wattle Park'. Later she sold the property, except for the 40 acres on which the store was located. Bill, the second youngest of her sons also farmed at Broken Dam, marrying Ellen Cuddy and living at the old store. Prior to this time the main improvements on his mother's homestead block were four buildings, an orchard and vegetable garden. The store was a weatherboard building with three rooms, the most eastern of which was the shop and post office. A cellar was excavated under this room. Bill and Ellen Clarke had five children. But his 900 acre (360 hectares) holding comprised several small dislocated blocks and it was not practical for him to expand his farming interests at Ariah Park to provide for his sons. He later sold out at Broken Dam and purchased a large holding at 'Dungary', to the west of Dubbo. When sold, the blocks of land comprising 'Wattle Farm' were largely absorbed into neighbouring holdings.[111] Several other sons also became farmers. Walter Fong left Broken Dam as a young man and began sharefarming for Mr I. Fisher at Beckom.

Walter then sharefarmed on the Thompson Brother's 'Murrill Creek' holding, 16 km south of Ardlethan, and when 'Murrill Creek' was eventually subdivided, he purchased a block and farmed there on his own account until 1947. Later, Walter moved to Mornington Peninsula in Victoria, where he settled on a small block adjoining the farm owned by his daughter and son-in-law. Harry Fong established himself as a farmer on 'Jasper Woods' at Mirrool.[112]

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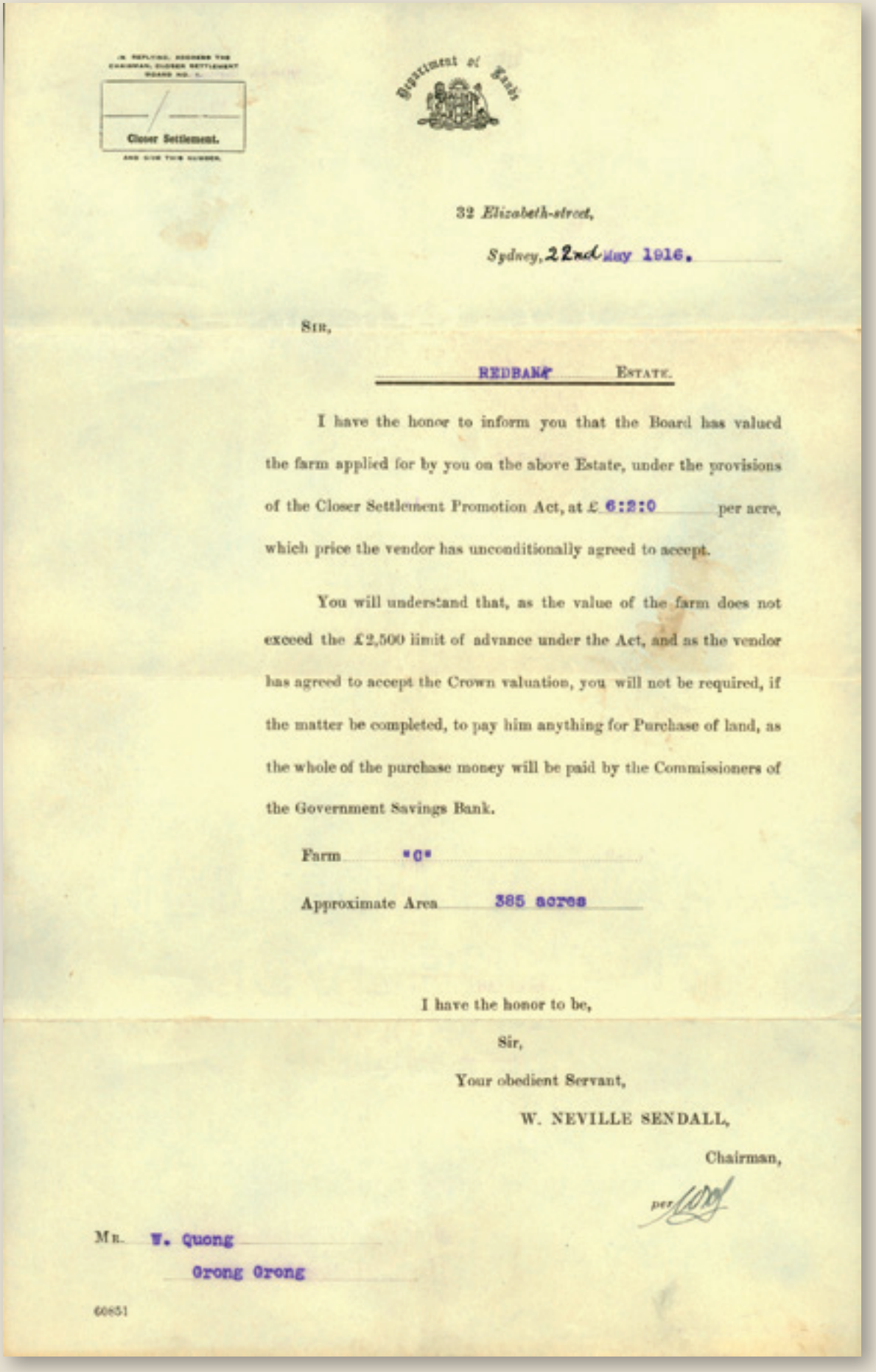
[110] Speirs, *The Beehive and the Broken Dam*, pp.12-36.

[111] Speirs, *The Beehive and the Broken Dam*, pp.70-71.

[112] Speirs, *The Beehive and the Broken Dam*, pp.66-71.



IN REPLYING, ADDRESS THE CHAIRMAN, CLOSER SETTLEMENT BOARD NO. 1.

Closer Settlement.

AND GIVE THIS NUMBER.

Department of Lands

32 *Elizabeth-street,*

Sydney, 22nd May 1916.

SIR,

REDBANK ESTATE.

I have the honor to inform you that the Board has valued the farm applied for by you on the above Estate, under the provisions of the Closer Settlement Promotion Act, at £ 6:2:0 per acre, which price the vendor has unconditionally agreed to accept.

You will understand that, as the value of the farm does not exceed the £2,500 limit of advance under the Act, and as the vendor has agreed to accept the Crown valuation, you will not be required, if the matter be completed, to pay him anything for Purchase of land, as the whole of the purchase money will be paid by the Commissioners of the Government Savings Bank.

Farm "G"

Approximate Area 385 acres

I have the honor to be,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

W. NEVILLE SENDALL,

Chairman,

per

MR. W. Quong

Grong Grong

60851

In 1916, William Quong purchased a farm property in the Grong Grong area, subsequently purchasing a number of other farms in the area
Private collection

The Temora-based Mee Ling family also had extensive farm property holdings in the Temora district.[113] Another farm owner in the Riverina was William Quong from Grong Grong, near Narrandera. He purchased a number of farm properties, 'Redbank', east of Grong Grong, 'Hillview', north of Gong Grong, and 'Riverside', south of Grong Grong on the Murrumbidgee River. [114] James Ah (Wong) Chuey, a Junee-based storekeeper, owned a 600 acre [240 hectare] property near Junee, and became a wealthy grazier and wheat farmer.[115]

[113] Information from Meredie Mee Ling, June 2012.

[114] Recollections of Betty Menzies (née Choy), Wagga Wagga, 2010.

[115] C. F. Yong, *The New Gold Mountain. The Chinese in Australia*, 1901-1921, Raphael Arts, Adelaide, 1977, p.161; *Braidwood Review*, 8 August 1916; Sydney Szue Yup Kwan Ti Temple, *Sydney Szue Yup Kwan Ti Temple 100 year Centenary*, 1998, p.21.

STOREKEEPERS, TRADERS AND RESTAURANT OWNERS

The Man Sing Store at Temora with the Mee Ling Family outside.
Private collection

Chinese stores were located in the Chinese camps and the main town area. They were mostly general in nature, selling not only Chinese goods, which invariably included Chinese tea, but an increasingly wide range of goods and produce of European manufacture, including ironmongery, drapery, groceries, hardware, furniture, galvanised iron, fencing wire, boots, shoes, picks, shovels, stationery, earthenware and 'fancy goods'. Some also bought and sold skins and hides, and were labour contractors. The store owners ran advertisements in the local papers from the early 1870s on and were not backward in offering lower prices or large reductions in prices. In 1882 John On Wah, who owned the Hong Kong store in Hay, advertised, 'Still greater reduction in prices. All summer goods at greatly reduced prices.'[116] In December 1888 Dang Ah Chee stated that, 'Ah Chee is no stranger to the Gundagai public; they know he is a square man and a fair dealer, and he will not forfeit the confidence placed in him'. In August 1900 the Narrandera merchants, Sun Hong Shing, advertised themselves as, 'The poor man's friends. Patronise the poor man's firm. All at Bedrock Prices.'[117]

The Man Sing store at Temora was established in 1882 by George Mee Ling senior and his brother. After George's death in China the store was run by his daughter Annie, and her brothers, Albert, Andrew and George Junior.

The Mee Lings frequently ran large advertisements, proclaiming in November 1895 that the store was

[116] *Riverine Grazier*, 20 September 1882.

[117] *Gundagai Times*, 25 December 1888; *Narrandera Ensign* 17 August 1900.

Items from Mee Ling's Store, Temora.
Private collection

Annie Mee Ling in the grocery section of the store in Temora.
Private collection

MAN SING and CO.,

The Cheapest Store for Everything.

THIS is the close of the Summer Season for the Manufacturers, and consequently they are clearing out all their Samples. This is our opportunity to secure Bargains for our Customers.

We Have a Large Assortment of

Summer Prints, Muslins, Voiles, Jap and Tussore Silks, &c. A nice lot of Ladies' Collars and Plastrons. Extra value in Black Satin Blouses. A large assortment of Ladies' Aprons from 9½d.--worth double. The newest thing in Ladies' Shoes. The choicest thing in Tips and Flowers, Laces, Ribbons, Sunshades and Umbrellas, with many other lines in Manchester and Clothing.

All Farm and Home Requisites at Lowest Prices

MAN SING and CO.,

TEMORA AND WEST WYALONG.

Advertisement for Man Sing's Store, from The Temora Independent *newspaper, Wednesday, January 20, 1909*

'Cheaper Than Ever', and 'Our Prices Cannot be Beaten'. In January 1909 the store was advertised as the 'Cheapest Store for Everything'. By this time a store had also been established at West Wyalong. In January 1912 the Mee Lings advertised 'The Greatest Sale ever held in Temora', with 'Sensational Reductions in Prices'. The Man Sing store was one of the first stores in Temora and one of the most popular. It was later renamed as Mee Lings. [118]

To all appearances it seemed good healthy competition, but as with so many of their endeavours the success of the Chinese provoked resentment. At the monthly meeting of the Narrandera Half Holiday and Early Closing Association in April 1899 the Chinese stores were criticised for selling after recognised closing hours. A deputation was formed to interview the stores concerned and ask them to assist in maintaining the principles of the Association by refusing to sell on the regular half holiday and after 6 pm business days. Members visited Hun Cheong and Sun Hong Sing, who immediately promised to accede to the demand. 'Their readiness to comply with the request was a pleasant surprise to the deputation'.[119] In 1904 the NSW Country Storekeepers' Association launched a campaign to lure customers away from Chinese-owned stores and force their closure. They were criticised for undercutting other storekeepers, paying low wages and sending the profits out of the country. The campaign was unsuccessful and most Chinese stores continued for many years more.[120]

Unlike their European counterparts the stores were multifunctional. Historian, Jane Lydon, has remarked that the Sydney Chinese stores were, 'ideally placed to play an essential role within Chinese-Australian society—to house newly arrived countrymen, providing them with board and lodgings, as well as information, assistance and protection'. These stores acted as conduits, channeling the new arrivals into jobs in the city and country areas. The linkages between the city merchants and the country storekeepers were not just commercial, but had a much wider social importance, particularly if reinforced by district, fraternal, and clan linkages. Like their Sydney counterparts the country storekeepers helped the men to find lodgings and employment, an easy task where the storekeeper was also a labour contractor and/or a market gardener. They also helped in the purchase of travel documents such as shipping tickets, applications for Certificates of Exemption from the Dictation Test (CEDTs), and with translation, letter writing, banking and the remittance of money to China or elsewhere.[121]

There were many such stores in the Riverina. Dang Quong Wing's store at Tumut was one of them. His daughter Josephine Oh recalled that:

> Each weekend the Chinese came in from their farms in horse and dray to collect provisions, mail from home and to socialise with each other. As it was a lonely existence for them, not having their families here, the weekend trip to town eased the isolation they endured for the whole week. They stayed the night, bedding down in the sleeping quarters, or overflowing into the end of the storeroom. There were stables at the back of the house and a vegetable garden behind at the rear of the property. The place was like a trading post.[122]

William Shai Hee's Yee Hing Company store at Tumut was also multifunctional. His father, Hing Gim,

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[118] *Temora Independent*, I6 November 1895, 20 January 1909, 12 January 1910; Temora Centenary Committee, *Temora Yesterday and Today*, p.250; information from Meredie Mee Ling, February 2012.

[119] *Narrandera Argus*, 14 April 1899.

[120] Wilton, Golden Threads, p.26.

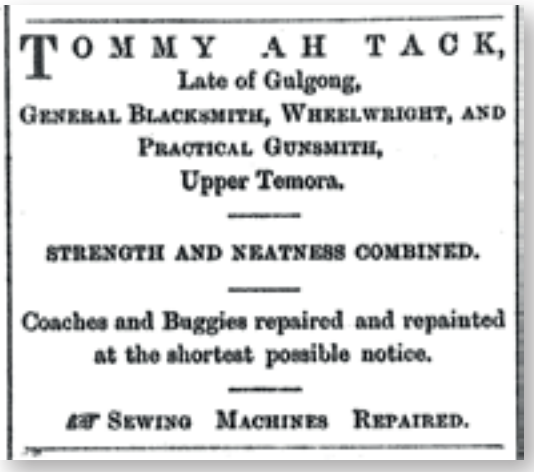
[121] Lydon, *Many Inventions*, pp.83-84; Williams, *Chinese Settlement in NSW*, pp.12, 22, 23.

[122] Josephine Oh, letter to Kate Bagnall, 20 October 2004, courtesy of Pam Archer; letter to Pam Archer, 30 June 1988.

Mee Ling store calender, 1935.
Private collection

was one of the first (if not the first) Chinese storekeepers in Tumut, moving there from Victoria in the late 1850s, early 1860s. At first he specialised in selling gold mining equipment to the Adelong and Kiandra miners. Jean Chin (a daughter of William Shai Hee) stated that by the 1900s it was more of a general store, selling 'everything but the kitchen sink'. She recalled that the store served as a type of headquarters for the Chinese people in the district. It had been a stopping over place for Chinese men en route to and from the Kiandra and Adelong goldfields from the 1860s onwards. Jean remembered that many local Chinese men stayed at the store before returning to China, and that her father looked after them, helping pay their fares back home, if necessary. If they died he attended to all their affairs, withdrawing their money from the banks, and sending it back home to their families. Before sending any belongings or money he would check to make sure they were going to the right family. Joe Shai Hee remembered wooden cubicles at the back of the old shop and some opium containers, which suggests that the cubicles were sleeping quarters.[123] The Mee Ling family's stores, the Narrandera store owned by Sam Yett and his successor George Hock Shung, and James Wong Chuey's store in Junee and other Riverina towns would have also fallen into this multi-functional category.

Storekeeping was not the only form of Chinese business in the towns. Chinese doctors were sometimes referred to as herbalists, for they practiced traditional Chinese medicine. An advertisement indicates Dr Young Lee, late of Tamworth and as of 1883 a resident of Temora, was one such practitioner.[124] Some were more ambitious. In an undated advertisement in the ***Deniliquin Pastoral Times*** (hereafter ***Pastoral Times***), You Kee advertised his skills in curing cancer, consumption, poisonous wounds, broken bones and other diseases. He was visiting Deniliquin for two months and listed his address as the Chinese store, Sun Quong Hie.[125] Others were blacksmiths, wheelwrights and gunsmiths. Tommy Ah Tack, late of Gulgong, but a resident of Temora in 1883, advertised his skills in repairing and repainting coaches and buggies, and repairing sewing machines.[126]


TOMMY AH TACK,
Late of Gulgong,
GENERAL BLACKSMITH, WHEELWRIGHT, AND
PRACTICAL GUNSMITH,
Upper Temora.

STRENGTH AND NEATNESS COMBINED.

Coaches and Buggies repaired and repainted
at the shortest possible notice.

☞ SEWING MACHINES REPAIRED.

Advertisement for Tommy Ah Tack , Temora Star, *March 10, 1883.*

Some of the Chinese merchants and storekeepers were very successful. Dang Ah Chee was a prosperous tobacco merchant and landowner in the Gundagai and Tumut area, but his prowess as a general merchant was no less impressive. At one time a gold miner and carrier, he had a store at the Upper Adelong goldfield, and later established two large stone or brick built stores in Tumut and Gundagai. In 1900, on the eve of his departure for China, his Gundagai and Tumut stores, associated properties and stock, including tobacco leaf, were valued at £50,000, an enormous sum of money for those times.[127] A fellow clan member, Dang Ah Hack, on his death in 1905, was described as one of the wealthiest men in Gundagai. He was considered to be one of the shrewdest produce dealers in the state, and had made enormous profits from trading in maize and tobacco. In the bulk of these business

[123] Information from Jean Chin (née Shai Hee), March 2012.

[124] *Temora Star*, 10 March 1883.

[125] Information from the Deniliquin and District Historical Society.

[126] *Temora Star*, 10 March 1883.

[127] Alan Turner, *Looking Backward. The Adelong Goldfield*, unpublished manuscript, 1998, pp.40-41; *Tumut and Adelong Times*, 20 October 1905; Dang Ah Chee, *Letter Book*, Tumut and District Historical Society. Folio 378.

transactions he had a joint interest with Dang Ah Chee.[128]

Another very prominent Riverina merchant, with businesses in the Temora district, was James Ah (Wong) Chuey, a wool, skins and hides dealer, commission agent, general storekeeper, contractor and wool scourer. He imported his Chinese tea direct from China. In the early 1900s, his main business was at Broadway in Junee, but he also had branch stores in Cootamundra, Tumut, Wagga Wagga, Wyalong and Barmedman. He was also a partner in William Shai Hee's Yee Hing store in Tumut.[129] The Mee Ling family was also very successful in Temora. [130]

Further into the 20th century the Chinese people diversified into many other businesses such as garages, theatres, trucking, dry cleaning, and building. One such man was Dang Charles Doon. Working first as a cook at the Reno goldfields near Gundagai, he later came to Tumut and worked as a market gardener and tobacco grower, and a cook at the Royal Hotel. Later he set up a store and wool, skin and tobacco buying business near the Chinese camp. His company transported skins to Sydney and backloaded other goods like hardware in return. His sons Bob, Eric and John helped Charles on his buying and selling runs around the district. The family also operated Four Star Dry Cleaners, and a trucking company, C. Doon and Sons Transport, which carted pine and hardwood for the local mills and for projects such as the detour for the Snowy Mountain's Scheme and Canberra's Commonwealth Avenue Bridge. But perhaps their best known business venture was a very successful horse syndicate. Horses from their stables won many races in the Riverina district, and no horse was better known or loved than Arwon, the winner of the 1978 Melbourne Cup. [131] Grace (formerly Grace Doon) and Raymond Ching opened a shoe repair business in Tumut in 1955, and later became agents for Clarion Drycleaners (which had bought out 4 Star Drycleaners) and a luggage agency for Myco. Ray also helped A. J. Kain of Railway End Mixed Business, Tumut, to service his black and white TV sets and install all the antennas required by his customers at that end of the town. He soon had customers from Tumbarumba, Adelong and Batlow.[132]

The Choy family played a very significant role in the commercial life of Grong Grong, the sons and stepsons of Charlie Choy, the patriarch, owning a large number of businesses in the town. Bert Choy was the first barber in Grong Grong and owned a pool hall, next to which was the Reliance Garage, opened by Harry and Percy Choy in the 1930s. Harry also ran a garage with his son Bill, which later became an engineering and steel fabrication business. Bill also ran the local school bus service, and by 1976 was transporting 120 children. Harry ran picture shows in the local hall every Saturday night. The shop and deli next door to the Reliance garage was originally owned by Florence Choy. Albert Choy ran a garage in Griffith, later shifting to Narrandera where he opened the Sunshine Dry Cleaners. The Choy family still run the business today. Percy eventually moved to Leeton, where he also opened a dry cleaning business.[133]

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[128] *Albury Banner*, 26 May 1905; see also Kate Bagnall, 'The Tiger's Mouth. Thoughts on the history and heritage of Chinese Australia. A Trove Travelogue.' www.chineseaustralia.org/ Archives.

[129] Yong, *New Gold Mountain*, p.161; *Braidwood Review*, 8 August 1916; *Sydney Szue Yup Kwan Ti Temple 100 year Centenary*, 1998, p.21; information from Joe Shai Hee, February 2012.

[130] Temora Centenary Committee, *Temora Yesterday and Today*, p.250; information from Meredie Mee Ling, February 2012.

[131] *Tumut and Adelong Times*, 28 August 2007, 21 May 2010.

[132] Recollections from Grace Ching (née Doon), September 2011.

[133] Grong Grong History Committee, *Grong Grong. The Spirit of a Small Town*, Grong Grong History Committee, 2003, pp.34-130, 169-170.

The Choy family's Reliance Garage and Eclipse Café, Grong Grong in the 1930s.
Private collection

Another garage operator was Tommy Ah Wah (originally Ah War), who built a garage, service station and boarding house in Junee in 1928. The garage was rented out until 1933 when the family took over, running dealerships for cars, trucks, tractors and all types of machinery, such as dozers, front-end loaders and concrete mixers. In its heyday the garage had a fully equipped panel beating and spray painting shop. From the 1930s to the 1950s the family also owned a garage in Wagga Wagga. Thomas Allan, the youngest son, ran the family taxi business and a newsagency in Junee, and helped run the picture theatre in the Athenaeum, which had been bought by his sister Linda. She funded the purchase from wins in two large lotteries.[134] In the post war years a number of Chinese people opened restaurants, in part a response to a decline in market gardening and traditional storekeeping. One such restaurant owner was George Young, who opened the Dragon Restaurant in Fitzmaurice Street, Wagga in 1952. He later opened a Chinese restaurant in Albury.[135]

In the Temora district, Leslie Fong, the son of James Fong of Broken Dam, and the only boy in the family to retain his father's surname, worked in partnership with Edmond Pratt as a builder. Together, they were responsible for many fine buildings in Ariah Park, including the Presbyterian, the Baptist and the Uniting (formerly Methodist) churches. In a newspaper advertisement in October 1909 they stated that concrete block houses were a specialty.[136] Jim Clarke, the son of Jane, a daughter of Margaret Clarke and James Fong, also settled at Broken Dam, where he worked as a blacksmith and waggon builder, and later bought a small block of land adjoining his wife's 225 acres (56 hectares) near Broken Dam. In the 1940s Jim obtained work as a blacksmith at the tin mines at Kikoira, west of Ungarie. In company with several other local men, he travelled from Broken Dam to the mines and camped there while the work was on, returning home on the weekends.[137]

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[134] Information from Russell Danswan, Junee, 2010; Information from Meredie Mee Ling, June, 2012.

[135] *Daily Advertiser*, 10 June 1992.

[136] *Temora Independent*, 19 October 1909; Information, Dawn and Geoff Haddon, 19 December 2010; Speirs, *The Beehive and the Broken Dam*, p.69.

[137] Speirs, *The Beehive and the Broken Dam*, pp.66-71.

Broken Dam store with Margaret Clarke, formerly Fong and her younger children.
Temora Rural Museum

Not all Chinese storekeepers were prosperous, though they occupied a special niche in the local iconography. They were especially popular with the children, who would be given sweets or, if the occasion presented itself, steal them. One such storekeeper was Louey Wee at Deniliquin, who ran a 'well-conducted store' in the camp. Described as a 'dignified man, well dressed and tall', his front room was set aside as a cafe and was a favourite haunt for the young people who would buy their crackers and consume ginger beer. He became plagued by small boys who asked for unusual items that required him to make a trip to the storeroom, giving them an opportunity to 'knock-off' crackers and lollies within reach. To counter this practice he installed a grille across the counter. He was the 'boss' of the dwindling camp until his death in 1933. Another Deniliquin storekeeper, and labour contractor, was Paddy Hing Gook.[138]

Foo Lee, from Upper Adelong, was another iconic storekeeper. In her reminiscences, Constance Sullivan recalled that 'In the rooms at the back you could sometimes catch glimpses of other Chinamen in long, straight robes and heel-less slippers, and you could not escape the smell of opium though you must pretend not to notice it.'[139] Another popular Chinese storekeeper was Lee Loong, also known as 'Deafy', who lived at Middle Adelong, where he also grew tobacco.[140]

[138] John, E.P. Bushby, Saltbush Country, History of the Deniliquin District, the author, Deniliquin, 1980, pp.276-277.

[139] Constance Sullivan (Kitty Barnes, ed), There's Gold, the author, Mosman, 1986, pp.131-132.

[140] Sullivan (Barnes), *There's Gold*, pp.156-157; Turner, *Looking Backward. The Adelong Goldfield*, , unpublished manuscript, pp.40-41.

Beliefs, fraternities and factions

The Chinese immigrants brought their traditions and beliefs with them. They could hardly have done otherwise, particularly as the majority of immigrants entered Australia on the 'credit-ticket system', and headmen or bosses, in association with organisations such as native-place associations and *hui* or secret societies, provided for them until they could repay their debt. An extensive social network surrounded these men, securing their employment and taking care of their needs. Historian, John Fitzgerald has argued that these arrangements enmeshed the Chinese miners in trust-based networks reinforced by an elaborate system of oaths, rituals and punishments overseen by secret society networks.[141] In every respect, from transport to labour supply and living conditions, these organisations played a crucial role. According to historian, Michael Williams, the homogeneity of the population narrowed over time, for it was influenced by those who had successfully established business and support mechanisms, and who could therefore sponsor and/or give credit to fellow district members.[142]

Native place associations were formed by men from the same district or county, the most common in NSW being the Sze Yap. They differed from the organisations that Westerners understood as secret societies (or *hui*), which were based on sworn brotherhood and could include men from different districts or counties. The associations were primarily benevolent institutions promoting mutual interest among members and doing charitable work, and were important in protecting the interests of new immigrants and helping them become established. Their premises also served as meeting places and lodging houses, and the associations played a crucial role in the transhipment of the dead.[143] The offices of the district associations appear to have been located in metropolitan cities such as Melbourne and Sydney, the main points of disembarkation for Chinese immigrants to Victoria and NSW. The only building in the Riverina associated with the Sze Yap Association was in Tumut. Nevertheless, almost all the Riverina Chinese were from the Sze Yap district, and would have had a strong loyalty to others from the same district, especially when reinforced by clan and lineage ties. All the headmen in the camps such as Sam Yett, for example, would have been members of the Sze Yap Society, and his store would have served as a de facto association premises. James Wong Chuey from Junee was a strong patron of the Sze Yap Society and the Kuan Tia (or Kwun Ti) temple in the Sydney suburb of Glebe, and his stores would have played a similar role. In 1904 James was awarded a gold medal in honour of his work in support of the Temple and the Society. The medal entitled the wearer to travel anywhere in China, and to military protection at all times.[144]

The absence of any buildings in the Riverina erected by district associations, other than at Tumut, perhaps confirms the observations of historian Kuo Mei-fen that in Sydney by the late 1880s early 1890s there was a decline in the influence and importance of clan and district associations. However, as will be seen, in the Riverina at least, district and clan loyalties were still important, as were the

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[141] John Fitzgerald, *Big White Lie. Chinese Australians in White Australia*, UNSWPress, Sydney, 2007, pp. 64-65. See also Lindsay Smith, 'Hidden Dragons. The archaeology of mid- to late-nineteenth-century Chinese communities in south-eastern New South Wales', PhD, ANU, 2006, pp. 1-5, 14-15; Huck, *The Chinese in Australia*, pp. 3-4.

[142] Williams, *Chinese Settlement in NSW*, pp.12, 22, 23.

[143] Yong, *The New Gold Mountain*, pp.3-4, 189-95; Lydon, *Many Inventions*, p. 89; Williams, *Chinese Settlement in NSW*, pp. 15-18.

[144] *Chinese Australian Herald*, 2 April 1904; *Junee Southern Cross*, 6 March 1904.

loyalties to the *hui*. These allegiances would be challenged soon enough by other loyalties, such as the Christian Church, and by the rise of a merchant oligarchy, but they were never entirely dislodged.[145] Traditional Chinese influences were very resilient.

James Wong Chuey.
Anna Lee, Chinese Masonic Society, Surry Hills, New South Wales

In China the *hui* were very much akin to mutual aid organisations, but they were also associated with rebellions and sometimes crime, and secrecy was an imperative. In Australia, and through much of southeast China and Southeast Asia, the best known *hui* was the Heaven and Earth Society (*Tiandihui*, Yee Hing Company or the Hung Men or Hung League), whose activities were centred on the Pearl River delta, the place already noted as the source of the vast majority of Chinese immigrants to Australia. The historian Cai Shaoqing has commented that in the gold rush years Hung membership was widespread amongst the Chinese in Australia, and that probably at least half of the Chinese population was affiliated. In Australia as in China at the time, the Hung League's mutual support activities included arranging jobs, mediating disputes, assisting with everyday difficulties, arranging funerals and making representations to government, if necessary. Cai has likened the League to an unofficial Chinese consulate.[146]

After Australian Federation the League increased its social and political activities, campaigning against the White Australia Policy and supporting Dr Sun Yat-sen's revolutionary programme. The Hung League became the Chinese Masonic Society in Sydney in 1911 and Melbourne in 1914. James Wong Chuey was a founding member of the Chinese Masonic Lodge at Surry Hills, Sydney, and a very strong supporter of the republican movement. In February 1912 the Chinese community in NSW celebrated

[145] Kuo, Mei-fen, Making Chinese Australia: urban elites, newspapers and the formation of Chinese-Australian identity ,1892-1912, Monash University Publishing, Melbourne, 2013, pp.17-23.

[146] The whole notion of 'secret societies' in the mid- to late-nineteenth century is fraught with cross-cultural misunderstanding. The British in Malaya believed that *kongsis*, a form of mining organisation, were simply secret societies akin to criminal triads, even when they were most probably sworn brotherhoods that organised production and distributed rewards to shareholders. See Dian H. Murray, *The Origins of the Tiandihui. The Chinese Triads in Legend and History* ,Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1994, pp.5-115; J. S. M. Ward and W. G. Stirling, *The Hung Society or the Society of Heaven and Earth*, Vols. I-III, The Baskerville Press, London, 1925; David Ownby, "Chinese Hui and the Early Modern Social Order: Evidence from Eighteenth-Century Southeast China", in *"Secret Societies" Reconsidered. Perspectives on the Social History of Modern South China and South East Asia*, eds. David Ownby and Mary Somers Heidhues, M.E. Sharpe, New York, 1993, pp.38-44; Fitzgerald, *Big White Lie*, pp.81-82; Cai, 'Overseas Chinese Secret Societies', pp.36-45.

Albury Masonic Society sign.
Albury Regional Museum, New South Wales

the end of Manchu rule and the inauguration of the new republic by a luncheon and picnic at Clontarf, Middle Harbour.

The function, which was organised by the China Citizens' Committee, was attended by more than 3000 people, both Chinese and European. James Wong Chuey was President of the Young Chinese League and chaired the luncheon, which was attended by several members of Parliament and other notables. Alluding to the existence of political and factional discord between the different Chinese in Australia, he stated that:

> The people in China are now united, and both parties have but one wish, one ambition, and that is to make that peace lasting and devoted to all the arts and advantages of peace. As there is peace now among those who fought desperately in China, there should also be peace among us in Australia. The war is over, and all our strife out here should be also ended, and there should be kindness and friendship among all our people.[147]

The evidence for the Hung Men or *hui* in the Riverina is overwhelming, and indicative of a strong connection between the *hui* and the temple, or as it was commonly called in Australia, the 'Joss House'. In Narrandera, part of the subscription board for the Hung Men Society has only recently been found, having served time as a bookshelf in the late Mervyn Shung's home, following its retrieval from the temple prior to its demolition. The heading at the top of the board reads: 'The subscription for the believers of Narrandera town entering Hong Men as listed below', the per annum subscription being one guinea (21 shillings). A signboard from Albury which reads 'Chinese Masonic Society,' and temple doors with panels inscribed with Chinese characters are located in the Albury Museum. One of the panels reads, 'In the peach garden the foundation is laid for the establishment of the Imperial Kingdom', the peach garden being a metaphor for the Hung Men brotherhood. Historian Kok Hu Jin has stated that the name of the temple was Wu Di Miao, and that the name was inscribed on a wooden tablet above the temple doors. The Hung Men had its office within the temple, and when it evolved into the Chinese Masonic Society the tablet was replaced with the signboard which is now in the Museum.[148]

A rare account of a Lodge in the Riverina, in this instance the Albury Lodge, was provided by a correspondent for the *Burrowa News* on 17 September 1937. The Lodge was described as a small building with its doors always open, and 'Chinese characters and signs ornamenting the portals, and an interesting assortment of Chinese pictures, carvings and regalia within, around the walls and dias'. It displayed an 'imposing' entrance sign, in English characters: 'Chinese Masonic Society'. The reporter claimed that the Society was the first and oldest in Australia, pre-dating the Sydney building in Surry Hills. The Albury Masonic Society was opened by Mr Moy Sing, who also opened the Sydney Society

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[147] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 March 1912.

[148] Kok Ju Hin, *Chinese Lodges in Australia*, Golden Dragon Museum, Bendigo, 2005, pp.28-45; Kok Ju Hin, *Chinese Temples in Australia*, Golden Dragon Museum, Bendigo, 2005, pp.2-7.

building, and most of the other lodges in New South Wales.

According to the writer the Society had 'long since seen its most prosperous and shining days', as far as Albury was concerned. The handful of Chinese men that were left were old; the younger men had left the town and the temple had become 'cold and cheerless'.

> 'There is no fun here,' said Mr. Thomas Chong, the proprietor of the Canton Cafe in Albury. The older men have lost interest; They have no incentive to hold meetings and organise festivals. There is no one to take an interest and there are not enough Chinese left to make a lively gathering. Although the once important temple of the Chinese Masonic Order in Albury still stands, the Society is moribund, though by no means dead. It has its present member ship amongst the few existing Chinese residents, and carries on its principles in the same spirit as ever. Fundamentally, the aims and ideals are much the same as those of the British Masonic Order.

The writer continued that the 'same care and concern for the interests and welfare of 'brothers' of the order was manifested, and no Masonic brother in the Chinese community was permitted to become destitute or 'down and out", while a Mason was on hand to give practical help. Many of the older men were helped, through the Masonic funds, to return to their homeland to spend their last days.

> The call of old China, the land of their forefathers, grows ever stronger as the wanderer in strange lands grows older, and every Chinese Mason is ready to respond to the claims of this appeal on behalf of the elders in their midst. Of the original membership roll of some 400 Chinese Masons in the Albury district, but a handful remain, to the number of perhaps two score, all told. No new officers now come up for appointment in the Albury lodge- and the temple that once knew such frequent and crowded scenes of joyous harmony, solemn and magnificent ritual, and boisterously, hearty brotherhood in banquet, song and oratory, now stands for the most part aloof and silent, alone with its memories. The good work of fellowship still goes on, but the early glories of the temple have departed, and the lights are dimmed around the still cherished shrine of Brotherhood and all that is best in Chinese sentiment. [149]

The business partnership between James Wong Chuey and William Shai Hee in their Yee Hing Company store in Tumut is further proof of the ubiquity of these fraternal associations in the Riverina and the close relationship between these two men. As discussed above, the store was frequented by members of the Hung Men Society, and was a meeting place for them, with William taking a strong paternal interest in the welfare of the men, providing accommodation and looking after their needs, including the despatch of their money and belongings back to China, if deceased.[150]

Despite this seeming homogeneity, and the overarching oversight of the fraternal and district organisations, factional discord amongst the Riverina Chinese occasionally erupted. In 1874 a riot broke out in the Wagga Chinese quarter between members of two rival factions over a gambling dispute in Jimmy Gee's house. According to the local correspondent the shops of Choo Cooey and Jummy Gee were the centres of two rival factions, the wounded men belonging to the Choo Cooey faction. Both groups 'met on the street, where a short but decidedly sharp encounter was waged'. Armed with axe-handles, sticks, and palings, the encounter began with a 'liberal flight of bricks and bottles'. Between 30 and 40 men were involved in the fighting, the attendant police officer splitting his baton from top to bottom.[151] In 1869 factional discord also arose in Gundagai, the Police Magistrate noting that the plaintiff and his witness, who was also an interpreter, were from Amoy, the accused from Macao and

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[149] *Burrowa News*, 17 September 1937; Kate Bagnall, 'The Tiger's Mouth. Thoughts on the history and heritage of Chinese Australia. A Trove Travelogue.' www.chineseaustralia.org/ Archives.

[150] See description of Shaii Hee store, in Storekeeper, Traders and Restaurant Owners Section; information from Joe and Reg Shai Hee, February 2012.

[151] *Wagga Express*, 18 November 1874.

some other witnesses from Canton.[152] In another case shortly after, Ah Shue asserted that he was a Chinaman born within the great walls, and that his opponents, of whom the principal one was Luim Pack He, were Tartars. The reporter remarked that 'the ancient animosities between the Celestials and their stronger and fiercer foes may add some colouring to the legal proceedings we speak of'.[153] In a case at Narrandera in 1892 the local correspondent commented that the local Chinese appeared split into cliques; some 'real Chinamen', and some 'Tartars'.[154]

For white Australians the most visible signs of Chinese traditional life were the New Year's Eve festivals held in either February or March each year, the focal point of which was the temple. Most of the large camps had a temple, which usually had a central room with adjoining rooms, and nearby in the open a pig oven for ceremonial use. The pig oven was built of brick, about one metre in diameter, and a little more in height, and with an opening or fire door at the bottom, and an opening at the top where the pigs were inserted. [155] The temple interiors were richly coloured and elaborately decorated and furnished, and included altars, fabrics, incense burners, stone incense makers, incense sticks ceremonial plates, gongs, bells and statues of the deities.[156] The baking of moon cakes accompanied these and other functions, the dough being placed in the rounded end of a wooden handled cookie maker, which had an engraving of an animal.

Chinese New Year was celebrated very openly. The noise from the fireworks was often complained about, but these grumbles aside the festivals attracted large crowds of European onlookers, the lanterns, coloured streamers, incense smoke, noise and the aroma of cooked pork and other delicacies adding an exotic touch to the otherwise staid surrounds of most towns.

The first account of Chinese New Year in the Riverina was at Wagga in 1869. According to the correspondent there was:

> much slaughter of pigs and poultry, banging of crackers, drinking of grog, and other "sports"...Large numbers of Chinamen came in from the country and made a night of it with their friends. There was a good deal of gambling, a good deal of squabbling and jabbering, and of course, a little stabbing. The peculiar weakness of the Celestials on festive occasions for disembowelling each other or themselves was not exemplified on this occasion, we believe, but one Chinamen found his way to the hospital with an ugly stab in the neck to begin the New Year with. We wish John all the compliments of the season. He is a capital citizen, so long as he sticks to his beans and cabbages, and doesn't smoke too much opium, and mistake a country man for a pig whose time has come.[157]

In 1886 *The Advertiser* correspondent stated that Chinese New Year would

> no doubt be celebrated with all the rejoicings and pyrotechnic displays for which those people are famous. It is but fair to say that our Chinese residents are, on the whole, industrious, sober, and good citizens, and but for the laborious work some of them cheerfully perform in all weathers, vegetables would be unknown to the majority of us. We wish our Mongolian friends a "happy new year".[158]

The following year over 200 Chinese from all parts of NSW were in town to commemorate the opening

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[152] *Gundagai Times*, 6 March, 10 July 1869.

[153] *Gundagai Times*, 17 July 1869.

[154] *Narrandera Ensign*, 2, 9 December 1892.

[155] *Pastoral Times*, 29 October 1898.

[156] Wilton, *Golden Threads,* pp.85-89.

[157] *Daily Advertiser*, 13 February 1869.

[158] *Daily Advertiser*, 4 February 1886.

of the new temple, which was:

> lit up with many candles and lanterns, and Chinese religious devices and symbols, totally beyond our power of description. Several priests clad in silken robes, officiated at the strange services, whilst a tremendous din of gongs, timbrels and sundry musical instruments of Chinese make seemed to impress John, notwithstanding the semi-suffocating atmosphere of burning incense. The Chinese held great feasts in the front buildings, which were lit up with Chinese candles, whilst the Masonic signs and emblems of their country and lodge were hung up upon the walls of the building. A great many townspeople visited the Joss House during the first three days, and during the visit of ourselves and a few others, we experienced the genuine hospitality of a leading storekeeper, who seemed not to resent the prying eyes of the Europeans.[159]

The only account to hand of Chinese New Year's eve festivities at Temora was in February 1883; the end result was not very pleasant.

> The latter part of last week was devoted by the celestials to the celebration of their new year, and in Lower Temora especially the *fetes* were numerous, and celebrated in true celestial fashion. On Saturday evening, however, the festival wound up in anything but a harmonious manner, for Jimmy Jue Ming, the well known *chef de cuisine* at Frewin's Hotel, received a wound from a countryman named Tow Lang which nearly cost him his life. It appears that Tow Lang and his European wife, Mrs Annie McDonald, called upon Jimmy to offer him the usual new year's congratulations, and after a bottle of porter had been drunk, Jimmy consented to accompany the pair in Wood's car to Lower Temora. On the way down, Jimmy was very hilarious , and while singing a song about "Jim Crow and his Sister", Tow Lang struck him a blow over the left orbit, which knocked him backwards out of the car, causing an incised wound 1 1/2 inch long and 2 inches deep. The unfortunate celestial, bleeding profusely, was left on the ground where he was pitched, and the inhuman occupants of the car drove off, quite regardless of Jimmy being dead or alive. The police, on learning of the affair, took him to Dr Crawford who dressed the wound., Yesterday, Tow Lang appeared before the Bench on the grave charge of maliciously wounding Jimmy Jue Ming, and was defended by Mr W.P. De Boos, who called T. M. Fitzpatrick, of Lower Temora, as a witness, Mr Fitzpatrick stating that Jimmy was taking liberties with Mrs MacDonald, and deserved all he got.[160]

Lodge or *hui* functions were much more secretive. In September 1881 a function took place in a new building at the rear of the Squatter's Hotel on the south eastern corner of Fitzmaurice and Kincaid Streets, Wagga. At first it appeared to be a religious ceremony, but upon the correspondent making an inquiry from one of the Chinese men robed in white, and who it was assumed was a priest, he was informed that it was no church rite, but a ceremony similar to that of the Freemasons. The Chinese participants strictly forbad any person to approach the building during the service, and the police provided a plain-clothes constable to see that they were not molested. A lodge function concerning the installation of office bearers in a society of which 'nearly all the Chinese of Wagga are members' was held in 1892. The two sects in the society disagreed strongly on the proposed appointments, and rumours of an imminent fight between some of the Chinese galvanised the town and its police force. Some 200 to 300 persons assembled in the evening near the temple, along with almost all of the local police force. The dispute was, however, settled amicably. Many of the Chinese had come from neighbouring towns to take part in the installation ceremonies. [161]

At Hay a new Chinese Freemason's Lodge was opened in 1902. The two-storey building was described as 'the most elaborate in the locality'. It was opened officially by the Grand Master of the Chinese Freemasons in New South Wales, Mr Moy Sing, who was assisted by Wong Pack, the Grand Master of

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[159] *Daily Advertiser*, 16 June 1887.

[160] *Temora Herald*, 13 February 1883.

[161] *Daily Advertiser*, 20 September 1881, 5 March 1892.

the Hay body. Accounts of Lodge ceremonies and their interiors are rare and for this reason the report on proceedings is quoted in full:

> The hall was fantastically decorated, continuous fusillades of that necessary adjunct to a Chinese demonstration-crackers-were fired of[sic], and the members laid themselves out to do the opening in style. Feasting was the order of the day, and the proceedings opened with a sumptuous dinner tendered by the members to non-members. On the same evening a number of candidates were initiated into the order, the initiation ceremony, it is claimed lasting twelve hours. The walls of the building are adorned with mottos and emblems, some of the former, which are, of course, in Chinese characters, are said to be: 'Be just to everyone", Justice predominates", "Treat others as you wish to be treated", etc. The lodge rooms are luxuriously furnished after the Eastern fashion, a silk covering on one of the tables, on which is worked figures representing a peacock and a dragon, being said to be worth three hundred dollars in China. The festivities in connection with the opening are to be continued for a week.[162]

The relatively small size of the Temora Chinese community would have precluded the building of a lodge. However, a small temple may have been built. As is evident from the account of Chinese New Year in 1883, celebrations were held very openly in the main camp area and in people's homes. Another major Chinese festival was the Qingming or Ch'ing Ming, held in the first week of April and in September each year to honour the deceased. It involved a graveside ceremony, with a festival or commemorative function held afterwards in the camps. The earliest account of such a ceremony took place on Mid'en Station (possibly Lake Midgeon, which was originally Narrandera Station), near Narrandera in September 1875, to honour a Chinese man buried there several years before. The writer commented that the ceremony showed a reverence for the dead, from which some Europeans 'might learn a lesson'.

> About twenty Chinamen were present, and others, who, like myself, were spectators, After arriving at the grave, a board with Chinese characters was placed at the foot of the body. A paper sprinkled with the blood of a pig killed on the night before was thrown on the grave. The pig itself was adorned with pink paper, flowers, and c., and placed on a board on the ground. There were also a fowl, a fish, a bird, some boiled rice, and some small cakes-imported direct from China; plates with knife and fork, and some brandy. Standing before the festive display, one of the number... began to utter what appeared a prayer, for at certain intervals all bowed reverentially, almost touching the earth. At the same time an attendant poured bandy into three pannikins. This lasted a few minutes after which some papers of different colours that had been previously unrolled, and new shirt were burnt and some crackers let off. Some of the brandy was then thrown over the grave, and another grave (of a European) being hard by they did the same good office...to that. The eatables were now carried away, and with brandy were disposed of that evening.

In another account, John Bushby recalled that 'until the 1930s a number of Chinese visited the Deniliquin cemetery at regular intervals to place food and candles on the graves and burn tapers in the brick building (burning tower).

> Three plates containing rice, pork and ginger respectively were placed on the grass, together with up to six candles, according to the rank of the occupant. The ceremony was carried out twice a year and occupied about two hours. When it concluded the food was thrown out and cleaned up by prowling animals and birds. Local taximen – George Renwick and Jim Fitzmaurice – were hired to transport the Chinese to the cemetery and to help in the distribution of the foodstuffs and the lighting of tapers.[163]

But it was not all fun and games. There were obligations as well, as evidenced in a letter written in April 1927 by Foon Kee, a Wagga herbalist, to three brothers, Song Jun, Song Yi and Song Sheng. It

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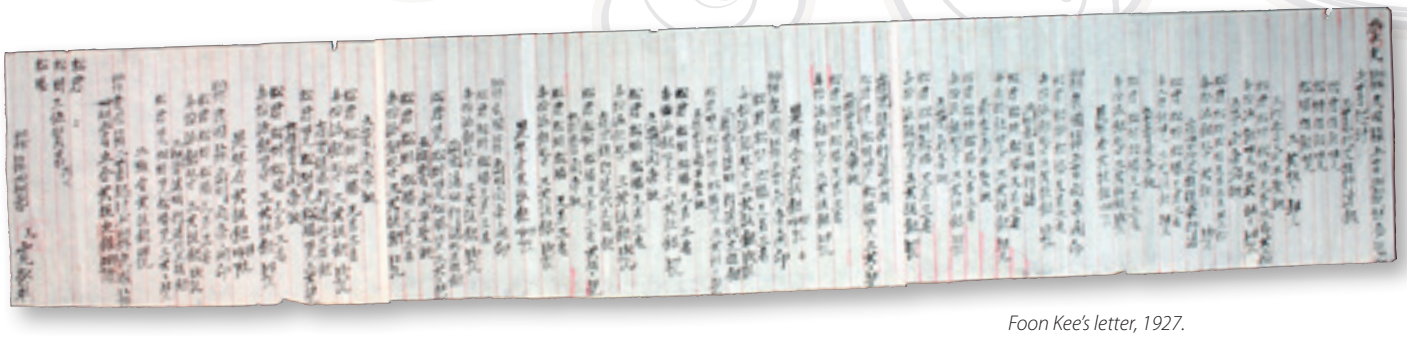
[162] *Riverine Grazier*, 11 July 1902.

[163] Bushby, *Saltbush Country*, p. 269.



Foon Kee's letter, 1927.
Private collection

reminded the three men that they were in arrears over a period of five years in their donations to the temple diety Guangdi, his sons Guan Ping and Jan Guandi, and in their donations to the clothes shop and the Qingming festival. The total value of the brothers' contributions was cited as 1216 dollars; but the currency mentioned is curious for if it referred to Australian pounds, this would have been an extraordinarily high amount; more likely they were Hong Kong dollars. The letter shows the Chinese temple rites in a different light; one that permits of exploitation through various anniversaries. It also gives the hint as to why positions in the temple and lodge were so highly sought after.[164]

An analysis of Foon Kee's letter was undertaken by the author and Dr Tana Li in 2013. The annual wage of a labourer was between 30 and 50 pounds, and that of a market gardener between 50 and 100 pounds. If the denomination of the donations was in pounds, the donations of the three Chinese were around one-fifth to one-third of their annual income. If in shillings, as suggested by Dr Kuo Mei-fen, then the donations, as a percentage of salary, are much less. As the document indicates, these donations were made under various names. These include the day that the deity Guandi opened his seals, his birthday, his son's birthday and, as Guandi had as many as two birthdays, the three brothers were to pay $3–4 for each birthday. To this list was added donations to the Qingming festival and clothes shop (unidentified).

If we compare the final amount for donations of $50 per year with the actual arrears appearing on the account, a huge discrepancy emerges, of between four and six times. This means that the shop owner was charging interest of 400 to 600 percent on the arrears, which were in the nature of a private loan. On average this means that interest rates of about 100 percent per year existed within the Chinese community. The interest rates of the Australian banks at the time could not have been higher than 10 percent, but to obtain a loan required a mortgage of property or a financial guarantor. Both were beyond the capability of the three brothers. Thus to borrow within the Chinese community became the only option. Interest accumulated on interest, so within the four years the arrears was $1216. The evidence for what we believe was usury can be found at the end of the document, the account of the last year, 1927. The donations towards the Day of Guandi Opening His Seal and to the Qingming Festival were consistent with that of the earlier years, but because these two donations were made before the final account, there was no discrepancy between the donations and final arrears, meaning no loan was made. The three brothers were probably about to leave the district, but we have no way of finding out where they were going.[165]

Many Chinese were Christian converts. In the 1890s a number of Chinese churches (or missions) and Sunday schools, were established in larger towns such as Narrandera, Albury, Wagga, Tumut and Hay. At the Church of England Synod in 1891 it was resolved that the church should make some special

[164] Letter from Foon Kee, 3 April 1937, in the possession of Betty Menzies (née Choy), Wagga Wagga.

[165] Barry McGowan and Tana Li: 'An Example of Usury Within the Chinese Community', *Chinese Southern Diaspora Studies*, Volume Six, 2013, pp.172-177.

effort towards the evangelization of the Chinese in the Narrandera Diocese and with this end in mind a Chinese catechist, Samuel Le Ung Bong (or Leong Bong) was engaged. Leong Bong transferred to Hay after a year in Narrandera, coming back to Narrandera on occasions.[166] Obviously this good work bore fruit, for in November 1894, the Anglican Church of St Thomas in Narrandera opened a 'very plain and unpretentious' building in the Chinese camp. The Rev. Charles Eldrid performed the opening ceremony, assisted by Leong Bong. A large and eager congregation attended, most of whom were Chinese, with the building crowded to the doors, and a large number unable to enter.[167] A night school for the Chinese converts was opened in 1900.[168]

The Presbyterians were also active in Narrandera. In August 1899 the Rev. John Young Wai of the Presbyterian Chinese Church, Sydney, visited various off shoots in the country. Arriving from Albury, where several successful meetings had been held, he addressed meetings in the Presbyterian Church on the Sunday, one of which was held for his countrymen, and in the evening service baptised a convert. The church was crowded with an 'interested and interesting congregation'. [169]

At Tumut or Tumut Plains in 1898 the Rev S.E. Owens-Mell established a Chinese mission. Along with other members of the congregation he personally taught the Chinese. A cottage was rented out and about 70 men came under the influence of Andrew Young, a devout catechist. The Christian Missionary Service (CMS) sent him to a training school in China to prepare for Holy Orders, but while crossing from Hong Kong to the mainland, and in company with his wife and the Bishop of Victoria, Hong Kong and three students, the boat was caught in a typhoon and all on board drowned. The CMS later removed the headquarters of the mission to Wagga and the work in Tumut languished and finally expired. [170]

A Church of England Mission was opened at Hay in June 1893 in a special service at the Chinese camp. The Catechist Leong Bong had established himself in a 'neat looking cottage', in which, by the removal of one of the partitions, a room was enlarged for holding services. After these preparations and a thorough house to house visit, the Rev. J.B. Armstrong, Rev. Hetherington, and a considerable number of the town congregation, attended the opening service. The evening service was conducted by Leong Bong to over 40 of his countrymen, and it was proposed that a night school for the Chinese be established the following week. In January 1895 Rev. Armstrong, assisted by Leong Bong and Charlie Why, conducted the opening service in the new mission room. The evening before, a tea had been given to a number of Chinese 'by whom it was much appreciated', the writer stating that the 'sympathy felt in the work was shown by the large number of helpers present'.[171]

At Albury in the 1890s the Presbyterian minister, the Rev. David Smith, assisted by several teachers, established a Chinese Sunday School at St David's Presbyterian Church. Kathleen Price recalled that, when her father was in Albury, 'there was quite a group of them [Chinese] there and he did a one to one teaching of them. At night they had classes in connection with the church.'[172] In her work on the

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[166] Walter J. Fenn, *The Anglican Church of St Thomas Church, Narrandera 1880-1890*, Anglican Church of St Thomas, Narrandera, 1980; pp.12-13.

[167] *Narrandera Ensign*, 23 November 1994.

[168] *Narrandera Argus*, 23 February 1900.

[169] *Narrandera Argus*, 1, 15 August 1899.

[170] Florence Stacey, *History of the Anglican Church in Tumut, 1830-1926*, publisher and place of publication unknown, 1926, pp.51, 63.

[171] *Riverine Grazier*, 16 June 1893, 18 January 1895.

[172] Wilton, *Golden Threads*, pp.100-101.

First Anglican religion class for Chinese men, Tumut Plains, New South Wales.
Florence Stacey, History of the Anglican Church in Tumut, 1830-1926

Chinese Sunday School, St David's Presbyterian Church, Albury.
Albury Regional Museum, New South Wales

Chinese Presbyterian Church in NSW, Wendy Lu Mar has stated that the night schools were seen as an important part of the Church's mission work. The intention was to use education as a vehicle for evangelism to reach those who otherwise would 'not be attracted by the Gospel'.[173]

Where separate Chinese churches or missions did not exist, the converts attended the local church of their choice. Perhaps the strongest expression of this was in Junee, where almost all converts were adherents of the Wesleyan (Methodist) church, and attended church with the regular congregation. Visiting Chinese missionaries sometimes addressed them. On one such occasion in August 1900 the Rev. Moy Ling conducted a special mission service. In the evening about nine or 10 Chinese were present, the proceedings being partly in Chinese. The reporter commented with some disdain on the disrespect of some of the white congregation who seemed 'to think that the service was a pantomime and indulged in unseemly laughter'. He remarked that 'The Heathen Chinee, when he goes to our places of worship, appears to know better how to conduct himself than some of those who pride themselves on being his superior'.[174] At Temora, the Mee Ling and Wah Sue families were Church of England adherents and were buried in the town cemetery with Church of England rites. George Mee Ling Senior was buried in China.[175]

Foremost amongst the Junee converts was James Wong Chuey. At the Wesleyan Church anniversary at the Alhambra Hall in November 1901 he played several selections on the gramophone; and in January 1902 arranged for a banquet at his house on Regent Street on behalf of his fellow countrymen in honour of the Rev. E. J. Piper, who had given a lecture in the Wesleyan Church on China. At the banquet he expressed his deep gratitude for the work done by the Rev. Brown and his predecessor, the Rev. H. Pennington, with his fellow countrymen in Junee. He remarked that the local Chinese had often told him of the great patience and trouble Mr. Brown had taken in teaching them the English language, but most of all he appreciated their conversion to Christianity.[176] The Ah Wah family were also Methodists, and family members buried at Junee were interred with Methodist rites.

Chinese cemeteries were another visible sign of traditional life, and observers sometimes commented upon the burial ceremonies. The Chinese cemeteries, as opposed to solitary scattered tombs, are important evidence of a paternal framework, for they required communal agreement and organisation to set up, particularly if they were to be purchased or leased from European landowners or local government authorities. In China and among diasporic Chinese in South East Asia, funerals, and sometimes weddings, were undertaken by the *hui* and district associations. The largest Chinese cemeteries in the Riverina were located within the boundaries of the European cemeteries, and at Wagga, Albury, Tumut and Deniliquin, the burning towers and offertory tables are still in existence. The importance of traditional Chinese burial customs, including the practice of feng shui, is evident at the upper and middle Adelong cemeteries and in the location and orientation of the graves and the very strong evidence of exhumation.[177]

In 1874 *The Daily Advertiser* reported on the traditional burial ceremony of Ah Long, a hawker who sold vegetables to Wagga residents.

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[173] Wendy Lu Mar, *So great a cloud of witnesses: A history of the Chinese Presbyterian Church , Sydney 1893-1993*, Chinese Presbyterian Church, Sydney, 1993, p.6.

[174] *Junee Democrat*, 21, 23 August, 26 October 1900.

[175] *Temora Independent*, 3 January 1940, 3 February 1942, 5 June 1975, 8 April 1976.

[176] *Junee Democrat*, 1 November 1901, 31 January 1902.

[177] Smith, 'Hidden Dragons. The archaeology of mid-to late-nineteenth-century Chinese communities in south-eastern New South Wales.', pp.146-151.

Chinese section of the Albury cemetery.
Genevieve Mott

> Shortly after one o'clock, the hearse passed through the town followed by several buggies containing Chinese, together with a long train of them on horseback. A relative of the deceased occupied a seat on the box on the hearse and scattered papers along the route. Each of these papers was pierced in two places, but there were no Chinese charges upon it. Upon arrival at the cemetery each Chinaman who entered the gate was presented with a shilling, a cigar and some lollies. In the coffin with the remains were placed a complete suit of new clothes, a pair of blankets, a billy of boiled rice, some tea, sugar, matches, and a candle, together with several China coins. On the coffin was placed a boiled chicken. Around the grave were a heap of paper-ashes, and an immense number of lighted candles, which were thrown in to the grave immediately the coffin was lowered.

Sam Yett, the Narrandera merchant and 'King of Chinatown', also had an elaborate burial, which was conducted with 'all the pomp and ceremony accorded to a Mandarin'.

> The body was dressed in full Chinese costume and encased in a cedar casket, into which were dropped coins etc., to pay his passage to the Flowery Land. Barefooted mourners clad in white walked before the hearse weeping and wringing their hands. Others wore sheaves of wheat and ribbons. Sustenance was lowered into the grave with the body, and confuscian ceremonies performed. A large crowd of spectators watched the interesting rites.[178]

Where the deceased Chinese were Christian converts, both Christian and Chinese rites were performed. The Chinese were buried in the denominational sections of the local cemetery, usually, though not always, with European style headstones. Some whites viewed this blending of Christian and Chinese burial rites with contempt, and others were at best disrespectful. At Junee in March 1903, Ah Yen, a member of the Presbyterian Church in Corowa, was interred in the Wesleyan section of the local cemetery. A large number of Chinese attended from Albury, Wagga, Corowa and other places.

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[178] *Narrandera Argus*, 26 June 1903.

In addition to the Presbyterian service, Sink Quong of Albury, a Mandarin and Chinese Freemason, conducted the Freemason service, the deceased having been a member of that body.[179] Comments from a correspondent for the *Junee Democrat*, however, were strongly prejudicial. He stated that:

> The deceased was an adherent of the Christian faith, but a number of heathen countrymen attended the burial and the corpse was made the subject of heathenish customs prior to being placed in the coffin. At the cemetery the Rev. J. D. Landels...conducted the Christian service, after which the heathens went through their procedures, the Christian converts meanwhile holding aloof. However the religion of their early days was too strongly instilled into their hearts to allow the Christian faith to which they had lately been converted to predominate, and when the last heathen had finished his part of the ceremony, a general secession in the Christian ranks set in, and they reverted to the heathen custom.[180]

A little more edifying was the burial of Ah Nam, a well-known Adelong merchant, whose funeral cortege was described as 'one of largest witnessed in Adelong for some years past'.

> The Rev. G Soares, having read the Church of England service, delivered a short address... Subsequently the Chinese went through their funeral rites; depositing upon the ground near the grave three roast pigs, one goat and a quantity of other eatables. Chinese candles and paper were burnt, the Chinamen the while uttering prayers. Afterwards brandy was served out to visitors, and lollies distributed to the children – who seemed to think that a Chinese funeral was rather a good thing. Some of the Celestials appeared deeply affected by the death of their countryman, and their grief contrasted strongly with the levity indulged in by certain Europeans.[181]

After a time the bones of Chinese buried in Australia according to traditional rites were exhumed and transported to China for reburial. The exhumations were elaborate and painstaking undertakings, and could only be carried out through the *hui* or district associations, in conjunction with local Chinese residents, particularly the wealthier ones. The first shipment of bones back to China from NSW in 1864 was occasioned with much ceremony, a boat with Chinese musicians, firecrackers, food, fellow Chinese and a great deal of noise accompanying the ship out through Sydney Harbour.[182] In 1882 Dang Ah Chee received permission to remove the remains of his countrymen from the burial grounds of Kiandra, Upper Adelong, Gundagai and Tumut, the cost of the exhumations and removals being borne by the local Chinese.[183] The removal of the bones had been accompanied by funeral ceremonies organised by Chinese residents, the remains carefully cleaned, and, after soaking in gin, placed in boxes.[184] Similar ceremonies took place in 1904 when 26 Chinese were exhumed from cemeteries at Cootamundra, Gundagai, Tumut, Adelong, Adelong Crossing and Hillas Creek.[185] In 1917 a permit was issued to the Tumut merchant, Dang Loon, to allow him to exhume remains of 12 Chinese interred in the Chinese cemetery at Tumut. Thomas Chew Ching from Braidwood conducted the exhumations, which took two days. The bones were placed in separate metal cases and securely soldered before being taken out of the burial ground.[186]

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[179] *Junee Southern Cross* 20 March 1903.

[180] *Junee Democrat*, 20 March 1903.

[181] *Gundagai Times*, 6 July 1888.

[182] Ownby, 'Chinese Hui and the Early Modern Social Order', pp.39-41; Hedhuies, 'Chinese Organizations in West Borneo and Bangka: Kongis and *Hui*', pp.80-82; Smith, 'Hidden Dragons. The archaeology of mid-to late-nineteenth-century Chinese communities in south-eastern New South Wales.', pp.67-69; Lydon, *Many Inventions*, p.89.

[183] *Gundagai Times*, 7 July 1882.

[184] *Gundagai Times*, 15 August 1983.

[185] *Tumut and Adelong Times*, 1 July 1904.

[186] *Tumut and Adelong Times*, 4, 10 May 1917.

With the eventual disappearance of much of the Chinese population, and the decline of the camps, the traditional places of worship and burial fell into neglect, and were subject to vandalism. At Albury the burning tower and offertory table and many of the headstones and graves are still intact. However, this has not always been the case elsewhere. In the early 1980s Wendy Hucker, a Wagga resident, wrote to the Wagga Council, pointing out the state of disrepair of the Chinese cemetery and the need for restoration. *The Leader* correspondent visited the cemetery, and confirmed Wendy's observations. Of the 37 graves in the Chinese section, only a few had their headstones intact. At least 18 graves had no markings except for the concrete blocks that once held the headstones. Several headstones were scattered through the area and many were shattered into 'jigsaw puzzle pieces', and the burning tower and offertory table had been vandalised. The Council agreed to redevelop the cemetery, and as a result the cemetery was further tidied up, the burning tower and offertory tables restored, and the border lined with the headstones behind a fence. Further damage occurred in 1994 when the remaining headstones were damaged in a frenzied and 'unexplainable' act of vandalism. With the permission of the Council, stonemasons J. Shephard and Son restored the headstones as a community service project. The work was completed in 1998.[187] More recently, the Wagga Council has reconstructed the lettering on the headstone belonging to Charlie Wong Hing, to help maintain a significant site belonging to one of Wagga's last remaining Chinese market gardeners.[188]

A similar scenario existed at Narrandera. The Chinese cemetery was located within the main cemetery grounds and would have had a burning tower and offertory table, though those had long since been destroyed, and many of the remaining graves had fallen into a state of disrepair or been otherwise vandalised, with some headstones removed. In recognition of the importance of the Chinese to the life of Narrandera and district, a joint effort by the Tidy Towns Committee and the Lions Club removed the remaining intact headstones and placed them in a special garden area.[189] At the Hay Chinese cemetery, very few headstones and graves are left, and there is clear evidence of vandalism. No remains are left of either the burning tower or offertory table. At Deniliquin the burning tower has been restored and fenced in, but although 67 Chinese men were buried there, no graves are left. At Temora local informants have advised that some Chinese graves were located in Lower Temora in the vicinity of the then Chinese camp, but the grave remains have since been demolished or incorporated into the foundations of new buildings.

[187] *The Leader*, 2 November 1983;.*Daily Advertiser*, 4 October 1994, 27 August 1998.

[188] Information, Genevieve Mott, October 2014.

[189] *Narrandera Argus*, 24 August, 7 September 2006.

Camp Life; Food and Leisure

The Chinese camp at Narrandera.
The Parkside Cottage Museum, Narrandera

Much of the predominantly male Chinese population in the Riverina lived in self-contained camps, located on the fringe of the main towns and close to the main waterways. In his 1884 report Sub-Inspector Brennan provided an important snapshot of the five largest camps in the Riverina and many aspects of daily life. He remarked that the camps were indispensable necessities where large numbers of Chinese were located, many of whom could not speak English, for they provided houses of accommodation for unemployed Chinese, and those who were helpless or paupers and who would otherwise be a burden on the State. They were what historian, Pauline Rule, has described as 'contact zones', a source for labour for European pastoralists, a refuge for European women, and a place of entertainment and recreation for others.[190] As noted earlier the main camps were at Albury, Deniliquin, Hay, Narrandera and Wagga Wagga. Smaller camps were located at towns such as Hillston, Booligal, Gundagai, Tumut and Temora. Other Chinese lived in the town proper near their businesses or places of employment, and large numbers resided on the pastoral stations. Some of the camps lingered on into the 1950s, by which time few residents were left, and the camps eventually dismantled.

The largest camp was at Narrandera, on the banks of the Murrumbidgee River. In 1883 it had 340

[190] Pauline Rule, 'The Chinese Camps in Colonial Victoria: Their Role as Contact Zones', in Sophie Couchman, John Fitzgerald and Paul Macgregor (eds) *After the Rush. Regulation, Participation and Chinese Communities in Australia, 1850-1949*, Otherland Literary Journal No.9, Kingsbury, 2004, pp.119-131; Brennan, "Chinese Camps', p.1.

residents, of whom 303 were Chinese, nine European married women, 10 children and 17 prostitutes. When the Chinese employed on the pastoral stations returned from their work assignments, the population was much larger. The village had streets and lanes, stores, a temple, a very large cook shop, two lottery houses and several fan tan rooms.

The Wagga camp was located on the banks of the Murrumbidgee River on either side of Fitzmaurice Street. It had 223 residents, of whom 194 were Chinese, six European married women, one a Chinese married woman, 16 children and seven prostitutes.[191] Deniliquin had the third largest camp. It was located on the banks of the Edwards River, part of the ground belonging to two naturalised Chinese. It had stores, opium and cook shops and sleeping accommodation for three times the number found there on inspection. At the time of Brennan's report the camp had a population of 134, including 113 Chinese, 11 married European women, 17 children and four prostitutes. At Albury the camp was located near the banks of the Murray River and had a total population of 110, of whom 90 were Chinese, five European married women, 11 children and four prostitutes.[192] At Hay the camp was located on the banks of the Murrumbidgee River, and in 1883 it had a total population of 124, including 100 Chinese, five European married women, 14 children, and five prostitutes.[193] According to historian, Bill Speirs, the Chinese camp at Temora was in the area known as Lower Temora, north of Polaris St, and along either side of Trungley Hall Road.[194]

Built mainly of wood, with linings and ceilings of hessian and paper, and mostly shingle roofs, the Chinese houses in the camps were very susceptible to fire. In these situations all thoughts of race or ethnicity were cast firmly aside, with people of all classes, creeds and races assisting the local fire brigade.

At Hay in March 1891 three houses were destroyed by a fire, and another was almost entirely pulled to pieces and removed to prevent the fire's progress. None of the buildings or contents were insured, the companies being reluctant to accept the risks of Chinese camps.[195] Much worse was a fire in March 1893, which destroyed six houses. The houses were 'huddled together as closely as possible', which was 'very conductive to the rapid spread of fire'. Many Europeans helped the Chinese remove their possessions, and a special effort was made to save the temple and its contents. These deeds earned the grateful thanks of the Chinese. A lodging house and a clubhouse which adjoined the temple were destroyed, and the temple partly destroyed. An inquest found that the fire had been deliberately lit, the likely fuel being small packets of phosphorous used for rabbit poisoning. The Chinese residents offered a reward for any information on who may have started the fire, but with no luck.[196]

In October 1897 it was the turn of the Narrandera camp. House after house was devoured by fire until the fifth from the western end was reached. The flames were finally arrested by chopping down one of the buildings. All that was left of the camp were the first five buildings on the right side at the entrance. Sam Yett was an 'exceptionally heavy loser'.[197] The ***Sydney Empire*** correspondent was less than sympathetic, referring to the great impromptu display of Chinese fireworks, that in the end left

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[191] Brennan, 'Chinese Camps', pp.1-2.

[192] Brennan, 'Chinese Camps', pp.1-2.

[193] Brennan, 'Chinese Camps', pp.1-2.

[194] Webster, *The First Fifty Years of Temora*, p.73; conversation with Bill Speirs, February 2012.

[195] *Riverine Grazier*, 24, 26 March 1891, 28, 30 March 1893.

[196] *Riverine Grazier*, 28, 30 March 1893.

[197] *Narrandera Ensign*, 8 October 1897.

Aftermath of a fire in the Chinese camp at Narrandera, 1897. Sydney Mail*, 23 October 1897.*
National Library of Australia

the second largest Chinese camp in the colony nothing much more than a lot of white ashes...if all the Chinese camps of the colony deserved an evil reputation as well as this Narrandera one, I would have much pleasure in photographing their ashes as I have in this case.'[198]

A similar fate befell the Deniliquin camp in January 1900, when an elderly Chinese storekeeper fell asleep while reading and knocked over a lamp. Within half an hour almost the entire camp was destroyed. The fire brigade attended, but with little effect as the water pressure was very poor, and only three buildings were saved. About 20 buildings were completely destroyed. None of the buildings or stock were insured. Not everyone was sympathetic to the victims, a local resident expressing the wish that the camp, which he called 'Rats Castle' would not be reconstructed.[199]

The camps were predominantly male domains, which meant that social and family life was pursued largely outside a family environment. To engage in sexual relations involved crossing the cultural divide, with partners and prostitutes sought from the local non-Chinese population.[200] Most social activity took place in the temples, lodges, gambling houses and opium rooms, although home visits and entertainments were frequent where women were involved. These activities and liaisons drew constant criticism in the press, with the issue of morality always to the fore. With few people to champion their interests, the Chinese men and their womenfolk, married or otherwise, were portrayed in an overwhelming negative light.

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198 *Sydney Mail*, 23 October 1897; *Narrandera Ensign*, 8, 22 April 1898.

199 *Pastoral Times*, 27 January, 3 February 1900.

200 Williams, *Chinese Settlement in NSW*. p.10; Wilton, *Golden Threads*, pp.55-56.

In March 1888 a Narrandera correspondent known as 'Whaler' described the Narrandera camp as, 'a perfect inferno, indescribable by any writer who possesses not the power of Dante himself'. Passing through the camp late at night he found Mrs Elizabeth Ah Fee engaged in a dispute with a Mrs Smith, the language from which must have 'ruffled the placid waters of the Murrumbidgee, as well as the fishes beneath'. Smith's Chinese husband came to her assistance, Smith in the meantime threatening to tear Ah Fee's 'drunken liver' out. The combatants were later joined by a large woman known as 'Big Maggie', Ah Fee retiring inside and 'keeping up a barrage of foul language' until the others retreated.[201] Whaler's observations raise an important question often at the heart of much of the anti-Chinese feeling of the day. Lizzie Ah Fee, or 'Tiger Lil', as she had been formerly known at the Beechworth Chinese camp, was often before the Narrandera court, and her exploits filled many an issue of the local press, and brought the camps into disrepute.[202]

The Hay camp had its problem women as well, the local correspondent referring in June 1888 to 'a fleshy molecular aggregation - known as Annie Singleton' (Annie Ah Leong). She was described as a 'female Lucifer', with 'almost undisputed sway amongst her fellow inhabitants, her rule being one of might and intimidation'. He continued that, 'in any case that comes from the Chinese quarter Singleton is always the central figure'.[203] The comments of Annie Singleton and Annie Ah Pew as witnesses in a camp disturbance at Hay in January 1898 are revealing. Described as a well known camp habitué, Singleton entered the box with a black eye, a bruised cheek, a bouquet of flowers, 'a gaily coloured parachute, and manifestly the worse for liquor'. She prefaced her observations by saying that she had been drinking for a week, and readily admitted that she had served a sentence of 12 months in Goulburn gaol for stealing. When asked a question as to the character of the accused, Rose Allen, she remarked to the bench, 'none of us are any good in the Chinese Camp. We wouldn't be there if we were, would we, sir?' She said that May Gardiner had blackened her eye and Rose Allen had bit her arm and bruised her shoulder. When asked if she was drunk Annie Ah Pew replied, 'I drink all day, you don't think I can keep count of 'em do you?' Allen was given 14 days gaol and fined 10s.[204] In May 1899 a major fracas occurred amongst some of the women at the Hay camp. The main incident involved an assault charge by Agnes Thompson against Nellie Booth. According to other evidence, Thompson was drunk at the time and did her fair share of hair pulling as well. She was charged on a cross summons with assaulting Nellie Booth. Both women were fined £1 each.[205]

Many camp women were charged with vagrancy and having no lawful means of support, in a desperate attempt by the police to have them leave town. At Hay in early December 1893 Ellen Driscoll was fined £2 for using obscene language at the camp. She was under the influence of drink and very disorderly and had been cautioned by the police and given a chance to leave town, which she said she could not afford to do. Not long after she was charged with being a common prostitute and behaving in a riotous manner in a public place. She was sentenced to three months in the Hay gaol. In October 1894 she was sentenced to three months gaol for having no visible means of support, the magistrate stating that there appeared 'no prospect of reform in her character'. The police stated that she had been seen soliciting men and was connected with the worst of the females.[206] In May 1895 Sarah Burton was charged with having no lawful means of support, one police officer saying that

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201 *Narrandera Ensign*, 29 March 1888.

202 *Narrandera Ensign*, 29 September 1891, 10 March, 15 September 1893.

203 *Riverine Grazier*, 5 June 1888.

204 *Riverine Grazier*, 4 February 1899.

205 *Riverine Grazier*, 30 May 1899.

206 *Riverine Grazier*, 12, 29 December 1893, 23 October 1894.

he had never known her to do any work and had seen her wandering about the streets soliciting men. She was gaoled for three months.[207] The case was dismissed.[208]

More heart-rending were cases involving young children. In April 1892 the Hay Court was told that eight year old Henrietta Sing lived in the house of Mrs Ah Leong (Annie Singleton), who lived with her Chinese husband and was known to the police as a common prostitute, who was almost always drunk. Other prostitutes lived in the house and men were seen coming and going frequently. Henrietta's mother lived at Wilcannia and had given the child to Maggie Hill, a prostitute, who in turn passed Henrietta to her sister, also a prostitute. Complaints had been made about the child's treatment. She had been forced to buy drinks from an adjacent hotel, and had been beaten viciously for any misdemeanour. In November 1893 11 year old Annie Smith was found to be living with a prostitute at the Hay camp, the police having previously seen prostitutes, convicted thieves and vagrants mixing with the child, who was often asked to go to hotels to buy drink. Both girls were removed from the camp and sent to an Industrial School, the parting of Annie and her foster-mother being 'very affecting'.[209]

At Temora the problems posed by wayward women loomed less large, simply because there were fewer of them. However, historian Rob Webster has remarked that, presumably in the 1880s, Lower Temora, including Chinatown, 'was living up to its unenviable reputation as a 'haunt of the vice and wickedness of the field'. When the railway was being built Temora's population jumped to over 7,000, a large percentage of whom were transients. He remarked that Lower Temora, including Chinatown, won a 'bizarre and tawdry notoriety', which lasted until comparatively recent times. Prostitution would have been one of those vices.

Brennan had quite a bit to say on the European women at the camps. He remarked that some of the European women who were married to Chinese men appeared respectable and kept aloof altogether from the bad characters. Their homes too were clean and comfortable and displayed the combined taste of both the Chinese and the Europeans. He also noted that the Chinese, and presumably their wives as well, showed great interest in the education of their children, and at the camps visited all of suitable age were attending school. Of the less respectable wives he was scathing:

> Others of them made the lives of their unfortunate Chinese husbands miserable; they conduct themselves regardless of consequence...When not at war with their husbands they fight with one another, seek redress in the police courts, and the Chinese husbands have to pay the penalties incurred by their European wives, and consider themselves fortunate that they too have not been included in the litigation; most of those women have been prostitutes for years before they get married to the Chinese, and an alliance under such unfavourable auspices seldom produces any reformation in the moral character of the women.[210]

He was even more critical of the prostitutes and their clientele. There were 37 prostitutes in the camps, all between 18 and 30 years, but occasionally the camps contained twice that number.

> The police have on some occasions hunted many as ten young men from off a Chinese bed, where the central figure would be one of the females already mentioned, and as soon as the police left the camps those fellow returned again...In the shearing season the camps, particularly those at Wagga Wagga and Narrandera , are thronged with shearers and others; they indulge in drink and contribute largely to

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[207] *Riverine Grazier*, 7 May 1895.

[208] *Riverine Grazier*, 30 July 1895.

[209] *Riverine Grazier*, 1 April 1892, 3 November 1893.

[210] Brennan, 'Chinese Camps', pp.2-3.

> the disquieting elements observable at that period. The women too find their harvest set in, assume a recklessness previously unnoticeable-to get money, when 'sly grog' selling, prostitution, gambling and robbery are resorted to for that purpose.[211]

Brennan stated that it was those females and most of the disreputable married women who were the 'principal cause of all the disturbance, robberies and crimes, which have transformed the Chinese camps into dens of immorality'. The European women had committed more than three offences to every Chinese one and had been instrumental in most of the cases for which the Chinese had been prosecuted. About two thirds of the camp women were confirmed opium smokers. He stated he had not been aware of even one case where a female living in the camps was there other than by her own free will. The Chinese allowed them full liberty of action, and in most cases made them the repositories of all their belongings and treated them with great kindness.[212]

Two principal comments can be made about the European women in the five main camps. Firstly, there were not that many of them, 74 all up according to Brennan, of whom perhaps two thirds fell into a rowdy and disreputable category by varying degrees, and of these not all of them found their way into the courts, at least not on a regular basis. Women such as Lizzie Ah Fee and Annie Singleton may have been the exception rather than the rule, but their high profile meant that they were rarely out of the public gaze, confirming for many people that the camps were dens of iniquity. Along with that opprobrium went the reputation of the Chinese men, who were seen as harbourers and abetters. Secondly, as historian Dinah Hales has so convincingly argued in her study of Chinese-European families in central western NSW, the accepted story to date is a distorted picture. She referred to the 'ubiquitous derogatory description of the women in these relationships' and observed that 'Chinese-European relationships and marriages were more common than previously perceived'. The majority of the women in her sample contended with 'tragedy, shame, prejudice, hard work and sometimes terrible poverty', and in the process 'successfully raised families, large or small, thus demonstrating stability and competence'.[213] In the Riverina many of the European women who were married to Chinese men lived in the camps, but a large number, perhaps even more, lived elsewhere and were not part of the camp scene.

Another aspect of the camps to cause much anguish was the lack of sanitation. At Wagga in 1881 a local correspondent bemoaned that, 'it was not necessary to go to Sydney to evidence the filth and dirt in which the Chinese residents live'. Similar residences could be seen at any time in the lower end of Fitzmaurice Street, where 'numbers of Chinamen are huddled together in rooms not sufficiently ventilated or large enough for dog kennels, while the stench arising therefrom is disgusting in the extreme'.[214] Sub-Inspector Brennan stated that the sanitary condition of the Wagga camp was extremely bad, as in addition to the absence of drainage the water-closets had become neglected, and the smell in the hot weather was 'sickening'. However, for the most part the houses were good and the sleeping accommodation 'fairly decent and sufficient', although when an influx of Chinese men takes place from the country they were crowded.[215] He stated that overall, in each of the camps, there were 'a few nicely furnished rooms occupied by some well to do Chinese or some married Chinese', but they were few compared with the 'many tenements which in hot weather must 'breathe pestilence because

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[211] Brennan, 'Chinese Camps', p.4.

[212] Brennan, 'Chinese Camps', pp.3-4.

[213] Dinah Hales, "Lost Histories: Chinese-European Families of Central Western New South Wales, 1850-1880", *Journal of Australian Colonial History*, Vol. 6, 2004: pp.93-112.

[214] *Daily Advertiser*, 21 June 1881.

[215] Brennan, 'Chinese Camps', p.2.

Chinese coins, excavated from Fitzmaurice Street, Wagga Wagga.
Museum of the Riverina, Wagga Wagga

of the neglect of all hygienic laws'.[216]

The most frequently commented upon leisure activities of the Chinese men in the Riverina in the late 18th century were opium smoking and gambling. While no mention has been found of Chinese attendance at racehorse meetings in the Riverina, it was a popular activity with the Chinese elsewhere in NSW, and it can be assumed that the same must have been the case here: they were not excluded from doing so. By the mid 1900s many Chinese families were involved in horse, harness and greyhound racing, and a myriad of other mainstream sporting and recreational activities, such as football. Many of the camp residents were also literate in their own language and brought books from China or purchased them from the city merchants and importers.

Gambling took place in the main Chinese camps and elsewhere in the Riverina (and almost certainly at Temora) all year round. Sub-Inspector Brennan and Quong Tart considered gambling to be a major concern, and recommended that Chinese gaming in all its forms should be 'swept away', not only because of its effects upon the Chinese but European men and boys. The principal game was "Pak ah pu" or "my pow Chong", commonly known as the "Chinese lottery"; the other was Fan Tan. According to Wagga-based historian Sherry Morris, Fan Tan was played on a table on which rested a square sheet of metal, the sides of the square numbered 1, 2, 3 and 4. Players chose a side on which to place their bets. The croupier then took a handful of brass coins and threw them in a heap on the table, covering a part of them with a cup. After sweeping the remainder of the coins away, he lifted the cup and counted the coins beneath it in sets of four. The players who had their money on the side of the square corresponding to the number of coins remaining after the last four had been subtracted trebled their stakes. If there were no coins remaining, then four became the winning number. Chinese coins were used as tokens.[217]

A fulsome account of the processes involved in the lotteries appeared in the *Riverina Grazier* of 5

[216] Brennan, 'Chinese Camps', p.2.

[217] Sherry Morris, 'Chinese Quarter Gambling', *Daily Advertiser*, 17 May 1997.

August 1890. At Hay five or six of the wealthier Chinese had formed a bank and appointed Chinese agents on commission to sell the tickets. Each ticket was numbered from 1 to 80 in Chinese characters, and sold from prices of between 6d to 15s each, the one shilling being most in demand. The purchaser marked off 10 of the 80 numbers, the agent retaining a duplicate, which he handed back to the bankers. Drawings were conducted in a partly partitioned room known as the bank. The 80 papers were posted on a board, taken down one at a time, rolled into pellets and put in a jar. The jar was shaken up, and the tickets taken out one at a time and put, 20 in each, in four basins numbered 1.2.3.4. A clerk drew one of the four numbers to decide which basin to draw from. That done, the other basins were set aside and the 20 papers from the selected basin drawn out, opened and affixed to the board. The clerk then marked off the numbers on the bank and result slips. Once this was done the slips were handed to Chinese emissaries and distributed throughout the Camp and the next day around town. The minimum correct numbers was five. No matter what the profits of the bank were the original capital stood, the profits being divided by the syndicate as they were made. Hence, there was a possibility, albeit remote, that the banks could go bust, and the prospect of fraudulent dealing. However, the correspondent conceded that 'to all appearances the lottery is conducted fairly'.

The Hay storekeepers at the camp did a large trade in lottery tickets, but most of them were sold on the streets by agents appointed by the banks. Agents also operated in the bush at Oxley, Maude, Booligal and other rural centres. In its report of 5 August 1890 the *Riverine Grazier* remarked that provided the Chinese lived strictly by themselves they [the paper] would be much less interested in their practices. The newspaper regarded the Chinese camp as a sort of 'social plague spot', not because of any inherent objections to the practices therein, but to the extent they impacted on the morals of the Europeans outside. At one time the sellers of lottery tickets were confined to the camp, and the existence of the lotteries was known only to a relatively few. But over the last three of four months itinerant agents had been appointed, and they had 'carried on a most active canvass of the town'. The writer contended that some residents could probably afford to throw their money away, but the greater number of those affected, 'shop boys and girls, youths of all kinds, servants male and female, hotel servants especially', could not afford to lose their money in this way. Worse still was the age of some of the participants, some of whom were children.

The perceived prevalence of gambling in Sydney led to the establishment of the Royal Commission into Alleged Chinese Gambling and Immorality in 1891.[218] The inquiry concluded that the Chinese were addicted to gambling with about one fifth of Sydney's Chinese population subsisting on the proceeds of the gambling houses. However, they found that their activities were 'trifling in every respect' when compared to the gambling elsewhere in Sydney. They remarked that the Chinese were:

> A singularly peaceable and generally law-abiding section of the community. There is a low percentage of criminality amongst them, and it is not without significance that, owing to the exercise of private charity by the well-to-do towards the poor of their own race, they do not depend or rely to any extent upon the benevolent institutions of this country.[219]

In a statement given to the Commission, one witness, Robert Kee Lam, stated that very few Europeans gambled, it was mainly Chinese: 'the shearers go amongst the girls – the prostitutes of the Chinese camp – but they do not do much gambling'.[220]

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[218] Lydon, *Many Inventions*, pp.117-118.

[219] Lydon, *Many Inventions*, pp.121-122.

[220] Report of the Royal Commission into alleged Chinese gambling and immorality and charges of bribery against members of the police force, NSW Legislative Assembly, *Votes and Proceedings*, 1891-92, Vol.8, p.143.

Opium smoking was another popular activity, and to a large degree substituted for the drinking of alcohol, which was mainly the preserve of Europeans. The use of opium in China dates back to at least the 1700s, and attempts by Chinese authorities to limit the trade resulted in the Opium Wars, which the Chinese lost. The Treaties of Nanking (1842) and Tientsin (1858) ensuring that Chinese ports remained open to opium and other trade. Opium smoking followed the Chinese migrants overseas, and was commonplace in the Chinese camps in the Riverina and elsewhere in regional NSW. Implements and containers relating to the consumption of opium have been found at a number of places, and include pipes, parts of opium tins, opium scales and tincture of opium vials. Just how widespread the practice was, or more importantly the level of addiction, is however unclear. Lydon cites the comments of the Commissioners in 1891 that opium addiction was class-based, and was not used by the better class of merchants, hawkers and cabinet makers.[221] Opium smoking was not, however, illegal, and obviously many Chinese men (including those at Temora), and some Europeans, found it relaxing. In 20 May 1882 the *Pastoral Times* correspondent commented on one of the Deniliquin opium shops, stating that:

> In all the rooms are beds similar to the ordinary nocturnal resting place, and upon these the embryonic and actual opiomaniac regales himself with the insidious beverage. A large pillow is placed on the centre of the side of the lounge– not at the head– and from this two pairs of legs may be generally seen radiating to the corners. An oil lamp, opium pipes and opium upon a small tray are the indispensable adjuncts; and after the usual preparation of the opium by means of a lamp, the pastime commences... the delicious languor which is said to supervene maybe judged from the idle...aspects presented.

> Sub-Inspector Brennan made particular reference to the use of opium in the Chinese camps in the Riverina, particularly by the women, stating that an 'infatuation for opium has sunk those females to a "lower depth" of social degradation'. He claimed that about two thirds of the camp women were confirmed opium-smokers, although some were trying to wean themselves from the habit, and that there was hardly a Chinese house that did not contain all the requisites for opium-smoking. All the Chinese smoked opium, and many of them were poor, 'owing to the purchase of this expensive drug to satiate their longings'. [222]

In his submission to the Brennan report Quong Tart stated that:

> The fulcrum on which rests all vice, immorality and corruption within the Chinese is opium. To it the evils arising from the Chinese and their camps can be traced, and it is only by placing that detestable drug beyond the reach of my countrymen that the Government of the State can hope for reformation.

He went on to assert that the majority of the residents in the camps, including those who were opium smokers, agreed with the desirability of restricting the availability of opium.[223] In the report Brennan was a little more ambivalent. He recognised that opium smoking had been imposed upon the Chinese and was now a part of their way of life.[224]

By the early 1880s a few Chinese clergymen and respectable merchants in the colony had begun to voice their opposition to opium smoking and agitate for prohibition. Quong Tart was an active campaigner and in 1883 generated a petition with 4,000 signatures to the Executive Council of NSW. In the 1890s Chinese newspapers in NSW also began to urge their countrymen to cease opium smoking, but vested interests in the form of income from tariffs and income for suppliers and sellers and the relatively confined nature of the opium trade militated against any action. In Victoria and later NSW the Chinese Empire Reform Associations and Chinese Anti-Opium Leagues, began an anti-opium crusade,

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[221] Lydon, *Many Inventions*, p.134.

[222] Brennan, 'Chinese Camps', p.3.

[223] Brennan, 'Chinese Camps, pp.7-8.

[224] Brennan, 'Chinese Camps, p.3.

Opium pipe and scales, tincture of opium vials and parts of opium tins. Opium use was imposed on China by the British, particularly after the Opium Wars and followed Chinese migrants overseas. Its use was commonplace in the Chinese camps in the Riverina.
Museum of the Riverina, Wagga Wagga and private collections

gaining support from influential Australian organisations such as the Masonic societies and the churches. Federal legislation in December 1905 prohibited the import of opium except for medicinal use, but sent the trade underground into the hands of illegal smuggling and trading networks.[225]

Some local observers were sympathetic to the plight of the Chinese opium users and gamblers. Following the release of Brennan's report the editor of *The Daily Advertiser* remarked that it was not fair to prohibit its consumption based on overuse by a few. He reminded his readers of 'the terrible consequences that would ensue upon suddenly depriving our pigtail neighbours of their only source of consolation'.[226] A letter to the editor from 'Justice' was even more sympathetic, stating that the effects of excessive opium use were far less than for alcohol. He considered it very unfair to increase the duty on opium and deny the Chinese men 'that small luxury which in many cases is necessary'. The same writer noted that Fan Tan was only 'played by those in a position to play – storekeepers, cooks, ringbarkers, etc', and that the Chinese lottery was also beneficial, 'for most Chinese give a proportion of money to the local hospital. He also commented that he had never heard of one case where a Chinese man had tried 'to induce a respectable girl to leave her home and live an immoral life', or had encouraged them to 'smoke, and much less to drink'.[227]

Although the Chinese did not consume alcohol on the same scale as Europeans they purchased large quantities of European beverages such as whisky and brandy, and Chinese beverages such as Tiger wine in their distinctive purple and mauve glazed bottles, for use in their various festivals, in particular Chinese New Year. Chinese men were rarely ever drunk and even more rarely prosecuted for such. One of the few such cases involved Tommy Chong Why, who, at Hay in September 1896, was fined 1s for

[225] Yong, *The New Gold Mountain*, pp.179-188; Wilton, *Golden Threads*, pp.65-71.
[226] *Daily Advertiser*, 8 January 1884.
[227] *Daily Advertiser*, 17 April 1884.

being drunk and 5s for using objectionable language in the main street of the Hay camp and in front of a policeman. He had been sorely provoked. Sarah Jackson had allegedly threatened to split his head open with an axe if she caught him giving cigarettes, or presumably being otherwise over-friendly towards Florie Anderson.[228] In another instance, at Tumut in July 1879, the local correspondent stated that the residents of Fitzroy Street were startled at night by the most unearthly yells from the Chinese store, followed by loud lusty swearing and terrible profanity, gradually subsiding into sobs and moans. Police came and found Ah Ti ('hitherto an exemplary Chinaman') hugging the verandah pole. He went quietly with the police, but then broke away and had to be restrained and put in the lockup. The next day he explained that a young Chinaman had vexed him and he had drunk too much brandy. He was fined 5s for obscene words and 5s for drunkenness.[229]

Unfortunately, the mere presence of alcohol on the Chinese premises was pretext enough for a police raid, particularly if the defendant was a storekeeper. Thus at Albury in 1879 Ah Wy, the manager and a shareholder of E Gee's store, was found in possession of eight cases of Chinese brandy and numerous other bottles of alcohol. He protested that he had bought the liquor to treat his customers for a week or 10 days during the Chinese New Year festivities. He also intended to send each of his customers at the outstations one of two bottles as a New Year's gift.[230] He had over 200 customers in the district to whom he would normally present liquor, and had never sold any in his store. Fortunately, the explanations were accepted, and the grog returned.

Eating together was an important means of cementing bonds and hierarchies within families and friends, and was particularly important in the often lonely confines of the pastoral stations. All the major camps had at least one cook house and sometimes boarding houses. Established practice dictated how to eat, who and what to serve, who should eat first and who should have the best food, though on the pastoral stations the eating arrangements may have been a bit more casual. According to Elizabeth Chong, an award winning writer and exponent of Chinese cooking, dining and ritual were inseparable in China, and 'from the humblest peasant meal to the most elaborate banquet, every mouthful manages to combine nutrition, symbolism and history'. She also commented on the importance of Taoist and Confucian influences in cooking, stating that Confucius could take a large part of the credit for the Chinese obsession with freshness and a 'host of other fundamentals of the cuisine'. [231]

Rice was the staple diet and complemented other foods such as chicken, pork, fish, beans and a variety of green vegetables, of which there were plenty in the Riverina, with its many market gardens. Tea was also an important staple as a drink. It was one of the main goods imported from China and became the key beverage consumed in 19th century Australia. The centrality of tea to colonial life can be seen in the advertisements of James Wong Chuey from Junee and merchants such as Dang Ah Chee, from Gundagai and Tumut, and the Mee Ling family (Man Sing store) from Temora.

Along with the dietary staples a wide variety of other ingredients peculiar to Chinese cuisine were consumed. Some of the most common were soy sauce, ginger, garlic and spring onions. Other ingredients included chestnuts, melon seeds, black beans, bean curd, shark fin, canned fish, preserved duck, preserved plums, moon cakes and cooking lard.[232] Jars of ginger were often given as presents

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[228] *Riverine Grazier*, 11 September 1896.

[229] *Gundagai Times*, 29 July 1879.

[230] *Border Post*, 20 January 1879.

[231] Elizabeth Chong, *The Heritage of Chinese Cooking*, Weldon Russell, Sydney, 1993, pp.11-14

[232] Wilton, *Golden Threads*, pp.75-76; Chong, *The Heritage of Chinese Cooking*.

Food and drink containers came in many shapes and sizes. The thick brownware jars were among the most common food containers. Also in frequent use were the wide mouthed or shouldered jars and soy sauce bottles with their distinctive spouts. The most familiar ginger jars to Australians were hexagonal and green glazed with a circular unglazed mouth. Liquor bottles were often referred to as whisky or wine jars and were bulbous at the base. Chinese alcohol also came in green glass bottles very similar in shape to European wine bottles. The containers above were found in various locations around the Riverina.
Private collections

to Europeans on Chinese New Year. In her reminiscences, local historian Joan Palmer recalled that as a child, she and her siblings had received a pot of ginger from the Chinese market gardener on Lake Midgeon Station.[233] Constance Sullivan, remembered that when she was a child at Upper Adelong, the Chinese storekeeper Foo Lee sold sugar and flour, liquorice, tinned fish and 'goodness knows what else', and kept a stock of conversation lollies and small, fish-shaped candies, which he handed out freely to the children. [234]

Along with the food came the distinctive Chinese cooking utensils, eating crockery and storage jars. Brownware jars of various shapes and sizes were made from stoneware with brown glaze of different shades and quality. Soy jars had a spout and were usually sealed with a cork. Similar shaped jars also held other liquids such as black vinegar and black molasses. Some jars were wide mouthed or shouldered, and because of their thickness could hold preserved vegetables, sweet gherkins, sweet bean paste, shrimp paste, salted garlic, salted onion and pickled lemon. Ginger bottles were distinctive, and glazed in either greenish blue or mauve colours. The ceramic eating bowls, plates and spoons came in a variety of common designs and styles, celadon (or winter green), four seasons, bamboo and double happiness. Celadon glazed bowls had a distinct blue green glaze, often with a mark on the base in a cobalt blue glaze. Solid food was eaten with chopsticks made from bamboo, and ceramic spoons were used for serving and eating soups and other liquids.[235]

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[233] Joan Palmer, *Memories of a Riverina Childhood*, UNSWPress, Sydney, 1993, p.105.

[234] Barnes, *There's Gold*, pp.131-132.

[235] Wilton, *Golden Threads*, pp.75-76.

Together with the variety of cooking utensils, storage containers, tableware and ingredients brought from China and used by Chinese residents in the region were many European and locally manufactured foods and objects. Traditional items were not always easily or readily available. Evidence of such sharing and mixing is available from much of the archaeological work done in Australia and elsewhere. Fragments of pottery and glass suggest efforts by the Chinese to retain traditional rites and eating customs in even the most remote and harsh environments, and their incorporation of local produce and products.[236] Strong evidence of sharing and mixing has been found at the Narrandera Chinese camp. An archaeological survey by Diana Osborne uncovered 309 ceramic fragments of which 37 per cent were of Chinese origin. The brown stoneware fragments were in about equal distribution with the porcelains, and came largely from storage jars and soy bottles. There were many glass artefacts, most of which were very fragmentary. With the exception of a few complete Chinese medicine vials, the glass was largely of European origin, probably from alcohol bottles. [237] The same sharing and mixing would have prevailed at Temora.

[236] Smith, 'Hidden Dragons. The archaeology of mid-to late-nineteenth-century Chinese communities in south-eastern New South Wales',; Lydon, *Many Inventions*, pp.95-101.

[237] Diana A. Osborne, 'The Archaeology of a Riverina Chinatown at Narrandera', a sub thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the Degree of Bachelor of Arts with Honours in Archaeology, ANU, November 2008.

Prejudice and Discrimination

By the mid to late 1870s anti-Chinese sentiments in NSW were becoming increasingly prevalent. One concern was increased Chinese migration to colonies such as NSW, Queensland and the Northern Territory. Other concerns were the successful entry of the Chinese into the furniture trade, their increasingly distinct community life in Sydney, much of which was concentrated in overcrowded dwellings in the poorer inner areas of the city, and fears of Chinese immorality. The latter issue was heightened by two enquiries in NSW into crowded dwellings and common lodging houses. The trigger point, however, was a decision in 1878 by the Australian Steam Navigation Company (ASN) to replace Australian crews by Chinese crews from Hong Kong at less than half the standard wage. This decision was fiercely opposed by the Seamen's Union, the Sydney Trades and Labour Council (TLC) and the Political Reform League (PRL). Strike action commenced in NSW and Queensland in November 1878. In Sydney in December a demonstration in Hyde Park was attended by 10,000 people. While the demonstration was peaceful enough the aftermath was not and a near riot occurred, some of the attendees storming into the city streets, threatening to seriously damage Chinese shops and homes and assaulting several Chinese men. The dispute was eventually resolved in a compromise settlement, which allowed for the re-employment of striking union members and a gradual reduction in the number of Chinese employed by ASN.[238]

The Riverina was not immune to these events. At Wagga in December 1878 about 300 people attended a protest meeting in support of the strikers. But it was a pale imitation of the Sydney meetings, one correspondent stating that 'the meeting [...] appeared more disposed for fun than the consideration of the serious objects before it'. There were difficulties in finding a chairman, then when one was found (Alderman Shaw) he disavowed himself of some of the sentiments in the resolutions. More farcical yet, the promoters were not ready with the movers and seconders of the resolutions, and a substitute speaker (Mr Joseph) had to be found. At the conclusion of the meeting a subscription list was opened in support of the strikers, and a committee formed to canvass for subscriptions. A total of £25 was donated on the night. Historian Ann Curthoys has remarked that 'there had been little anti-Chinese sentiment in country areas prior to the strike, but recent events had awoken the feelings of economic competition and racial inferiority which had been so strong in the gold rush era'. Many of the comments at the Wagga meeting were in line with these new sentiments, almost all speakers opposing Chinese immigration and expressing solidarity and sympathy with the strikers.[239]

As demonstrated by the events of 1878 racial attitudes in the Riverina differed generally from those in the metropolis, for town and country life allowed for a greater familiarity between Europeans and Chinese, and mob agitations, violence and protest meetings were much more infrequent. Some local writers used the most intemperate language to convey their views, but most were a little more

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[238] Curthoys, 'Conflict and Consensus', in Ann Curthoys and Andrew Markus (eds), *Who are our Enemies?* Hale and Iremonger, Sydney, 1978, pp.78-95; Barry McGowan, 'The Economics and Organisation of Chinese Mining in Colonial Australia', *Australian Economic Review*, Vol.45, No.2, July 2005, pp.119-138. In 1875-1876 investigations were made into conditions in the Chinese quarter of Sydney by the Sydney City and Suburban Sewage and Health Board and later by a Select Committee on Common Lodging Houses. Markus has remarked that the general picture painted by the witnesses was one of debauchery by the Chinese of young women and children, and the proffering of the opium pipe to their 'victims'; Markus, *Fear and Hatred*, pp.78-84.

[239] Curthoys, 'Conflict and Consensus', p.62; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 December 1878; *Daily Advertiser*, 18 December 1878.

ambivalent, sometimes regarding the large numbers of Chinese in the region with disdain and disapproval, but conceding their economic value and insisting on their rights to protection as residents of the colony. Many white Australians in the Riverina knew or were acquaintances of Chinese people as gardeners, labourers or storekeepers, and were familiar with their various festivals and processions. In many instances a local newspaper, not long after a long-winded anti-Chinese diatribe, could express the deepest sympathy for a Chinese man who may have been injured by being thrown from his cart, had his vegetable produce destroyed in floods, or received harsh treatment by the courts or police.

An early example of these views was by the editor of the *Pastoral Times* on 16 July 1870, when he stated that:

> The seeds of a future problem are now being sown here, and this problem must be solved at an early date. Large numbers of Chinese are flocking to these parts. Almost every station has its Chinese cook or gardener – many of them have both; there are numbers of Chinese engaged in other avocations on the squatter's runs. John, too is beginning to aim at a higher position than that of a cook or gardener - he is entering the lists as a shearer or fencer - he is employed also in sinking wells, or, indeed, in any laborious work. The Chinaman, as a rule is not an indolent man – he must be doing something – he is plodding and saving, and although not prone to drunkenness [sic] he is addicted to the great vice of opium smoking – to which we may add – gambling. From the Victorian gold-fields migrate to Riverina posses [sic] of Chinamen – some of them have been unfortunate on the gold-fields - they come here footsore, poor, and needy, and accept domestic service with readiness, and generally fulfil its duties satisfactorily...We are not prejudiced against the Chinese...Still we look with some apprehension here, where our women are so isolated, and to a great degree, at the advent of so many of these pagans who are without their wives. Many of them, it is true, are models of sobriety and industry. These are the men with pigtails, who hope some day to return to the flowery land to spend their money which they honestly earned from us barbarians.
>
> We cannot help feeling a deep sense of humiliation that our own countrymen (by their general misconduct, their general want of industry, sobriety, and theft) that they should force our employers of labour to accept the services of these objectionable people, the Chinese, rather than put up with laches of persons from the British Isles.

Another, not dissimilar, perspective was given by a correspondent of the *Pastoral Times* following the conviction of Chong Gow for the murder of a fellow Chinese man at Hay in 1871. He lamented the fate of such men and questioned whether Chong Gow was legally accountable for the act, and whether his defence had been adequately conducted. The correspondent questioned the assertion by some to banish the Chinese, stating that without the Chinese the rest of the population would be incapable of sustaining its health and would be 'eaten up by with scurvy and other sundry diseases', and reminding his readers that, 'we go to their country – we cram opium into them at the sword's point or cannon's mouth, and they regard us as "barbarians", possibly not without good reason', pleading nonetheless that if they were to be in Australia then every step should be taken to 'enlighten these dark-minded but industrious heathens'.[240]

These mixed, perhaps more relaxed, attitudes were often a matter of bewilderment to outside observers. In 1879 a Victorian visitor to Wagga commented that:

> The Chinese seem to pervade everywhere. It is evident that the yellow agony doesn't annoy the good folks of Wagga Wagga much. Chinese cooks...Chinese labourers, Chinese servants are everywhere... Taking it altogether, very little can be said against the conduct of the heathens settled on the banks of the Murrumbidgee. Their morals call for no remark, for the simple reason that they don't include any such luxuries among their luggage. Most of the 'ringing' on the surrounding runs and selections is

[240] *Pastoral Times*, 10 June 1871.

> in the hands of Chinamen, who, be it noted, have so far advanced in the civilisation of the west as to understand fully the advantage of a fair day's pay for a fair day's work. Chinese cheap labour is unknown here. The Celestial business establishments seem well patronised by Europeans as well as by their compatriots. The gambling shops are managed well – at least the public eye is averted from them. Fan–tan is the principal pastime. The lottery is unknown...The sleek appearance of the Celestial business firm is most noticeable.[241]

The views of the editor for the *Daily Advertiser*, writing in 1880 in the aftermath of recent race agitations in the metropolitan cities, are another example of these different views:

> Here in an inland town, where there is not that number of Chinamen likely to affect the labour market, there is not that intense feeling against them which is engendered in towns where they are more thickly settled down. Without a certain number of these very useful drudges our tables would lack the supply of esculents which now garnish them. But the question arises, have we not already a sufficient number for this purpose, and, consequently, had not any greater influx be prevented?'

Commenting on a recent violent attack on three Chinese men in Melbourne, he argued that the 'Chinamen living in our midst should be protected by the law, under whose protection they seek their livelihood'. The following week he was very critical of the harsh anti-Chinese legislation in California, stating that the NSW Government was:

> acting with more deliberation, and let us hope with more justice. That the great influx of this race is an evil, no one can doubt; but perhaps, in the Celestial mind, not a greater one than they have had to submit to, by our occupation of a position in the Flowery Land, where, with a supreme indifference to the traditions of centuries, we have introduced laws and customs eminently distasteful to this very conservative people.[242]

Perhaps the strongest account of the different racial attitudes between the country and the metropolis was expressed by a correspondent for the *Town and Country Journal* on 24 September 1881 when he stated that:

> John Chinaman in the bush is very much the same as John Chinaman in the city. The chief difference is that he is not quite so much evidence, and therefore he is not quite so disagreeable to his Christian neighbours. He does not enter into such keen competition with Europeans, and therefore does not raise such a howl of indignation as is only too frequently heard in the city. Of course there are not so many artisans to compete with, nor is there a demand for his handicraft. If it were otherwise, John would be found as busy making tables, chairs, and cabinet work, as he is now in the city. He is occasionally found in the shearing shed, but it is usually as "picker-up" or "tar". He does not shine on the "board", though with his imitative faculty so wonderfully developed, in all probability he will in course of time be found there also. It has been the fashion with a good many people, especially with a certain class of politicians, to characterise the Chinese as everything that is horrible and bestial. But a little examination of the truth, and some acquaintance with John in the bush, at all events, soon teaches that, like a certain nameless personage, he is not quite so black as he is painted. On the contrary, he is very useful, very industrious, very frugal and sets an example of sobriety and regular living which a good many of those who revile and curse him would do well for themselves and society to copy. John being human, is of course not perfect, judging, perhaps, from a very high moral standard. Yet in many things , he is as "white as they make 'em". No one, not even the most enthusiastic admirers of the children of the Flowery Land, desires to paint John as an angel without wings. On the contrary, it is very often a little nearer the other thing…
>
> But John is industrious , and seldom lets his opium smoking habits take such a hold upon him as to cause him to neglect his work; he excels in gardening. If it were not for his skill and industry, the midday meal of those who tempt fortune in the interior would very often be of that monotonous character

[241] *Daily Advertiser*, 26 March 1879.

[242] *Daily Advertiser* 10, 17 June 1880.

> which use to prevail in the olden times. But John has changed all that. Thanks to his industry, vegetables can now be obtained in all the towns of the interior, even beyond the Darling, as cheap and as good as can be obtained in Sydney.
>
> John is clever in a variety of ways…John Chinaman does not as a rule get drunk-or at all events go on a "drunk" for, say, three weeks. He has other uses for his "big cheque" than to "knock it down" at some back block shanty. Nevertheless he has some other vices which are not less hurtful physically, nor less debasing in respect to his moral being. After a hard day's work in the sweltering sun hosing cabbages, he likes to seek the seclusion which his very wretched cabin grants and then with his opium pipe to his lips, obtain forgetfulness…Our artist in his rambles, has made a number of sketches from life of the "Heathen Chinee" in the interior. In the first of the series, John is depicted as having attained the realms of bliss…What is John dreaming of "? Perchance of that almond-eyed occasionally a curer of soles [shoe repairer].
>
> The larrikin element is not unknown in the bush. John has discovered this probably at much cost. Hence the precautions taken in the fourth sketch. If that boy escapes with a vestige of pants remaining he will be fortunate. At all events he will be able to tell his brother larrikins that that "chinkey" has a dog around, and that it knows how to bite.
>
> John has his hours of relaxation and amusement apart from opium smoking. He is frequently an inveterate gambler. Fan-tan is not unknown on the Darling, and though the stakes may not be so high, nor the bank so rich, the players are not so subject to the disagreeable visitation of the inquisitive police as is the case in the metropolis. As a rule John can indulge in the seductive pleasure of fan-tan without fear of interruption, and tempt fickle fortune so long as his cash holds out.[243]

Despite the obvious prejudices in this article, it was, for its time, rather more balanced than many others, and provided a country metropolis contrast that few other journalists attempted. Indeed, the winds of change were already blowing, and such sentiments, particularly in the metropolis, would soon be rare. A sharp increase in the number of Chinese immigrants into NSW in April 1881 prompted the Mayor of Sydney to convene a well-attended public meeting, which called for the imposition of immigration restrictions, and in May the TLC organised a rally in the Domain, which was attended by 10,000 people. [244] The Riverina press could no longer ignore these sentiments, the editor of the ***Daily Advertiser*** commenting critically in June 1881 on the statement of the then Governor, Hercules Robinson, who, in Albury a few years previously, had lauded "John" as being of "incomparable value" as a colonist. In response to an address presented to him by the Chinese residents of that town, the Governor had remarked that he 'was glad to see so many of the race located there and would gladly welcome as many more as chose to come', or words to that effect.

The editor gave voice to the popular and unfavourable stereotype of the Chinese male, referring to the:

> thousands of instances he has polluted our young growing girls, and that besides having the effect of lowering the amount of wages to the working man, he is gradually but surely lowering the tone of morality in the colony, and introducing nameless abominations to which we dare not allude. Had immigration in this colony been only permitted on the understanding that a certain proportion of the incoming Chinese should bring women with them, a very great part of the harm effected by their advent would have been averted. There is a Chinese camp scarcely more than one hundred miles away from us at this present moment in which more than one hundred European women are residents – or were very lately - some nominally married, some actually married by British clergymen, but all dependent on John's whim of fancy to dissolve the fancied tie when convenient to himself.

He also stated that the European labourers got drunk when they were paid and spent the lot, but the

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[243] *Town and Country Journal*, 24 September 1881.

[244] Markus, *Fear and Hatred*, p.95.

"law-abiding" Chinaman did not. He:

> always keeps a pound in his pocket for the advancement of his own immoral purposes, and on worked out diggings and amongst other poor classes of our community, where young girls are suffering the slow tortures of poverty, the Chinese demon is always at hand with money to tempt, and ultimately to destroy...The failings incidental to European humanity are quite sufficient to give work to legislators, and form themes of denunciation for the clergy and the press, without the added horrors of Mongolian beastiality.[245]

Immigration restrictions were introduced by the NSW and Victorian governments in July and August 1881 respectively. In NSW the legislation included a tonnage restriction on ships in the ratio of one Chinese person for every 100 tons of cargo and a poll tax of £20 on Chinese entering or re-entering the colony. Many Chinese had business and kinship ties on either side of the border. Up until 1881 they could move freely between the other colonies and NSW – after that date it was no longer possible, for the poll tax was costly, particularly if frequent visits were envisaged. With a stroke of the pen a new class of criminal was created – Chinese people seeking to avoid payment of the poll tax. The impact of the new provisions can be gauged by the following report in the following report in the *Riverine Grazier* on 14 December 1881:

> The Chinese in the Albury district are in a state of great excitement, owing to the first steps being taken to enforce the newly passed Chinese Restriction Act, which imposes a poll tax upon Chinese entering the colony. The Act was assented to only a day or two since. Last week six Chinamen, who had crossed from Victoria, were arrested for evading payment of the tax, and they were brought up at the Albury Police Court this morning. The sub-collector of Customs, who appeared for the Crown, said that if the defendants would leave the colony by going back to Victoria, he would not press the charge, as this was the first prosecution under the new law. The defendants agreed to leave the colony, and were discharged. A Chinese market gardener, whose garden is at Wodonga, but who supplied vegetable [sic] in Albury was this morning prevented from crossing the river unless he paid the tax which he would not do.

The restrictions stemmed the flow of new arrivals to some extent, but before long anti-Chinese feelings rose again, fomented by increased Chinese migration to the rich tin fields in north east NSW, continued concerns about the use of Chinese labour by some shipping companies, and further substantial increases in the Chinese population in the Northern Territory. The mindset of journals such as the *Bulletin* was critical in encouraging the more racist and inflammatory of these sentiments. In 1886 it published a sensationalist and highly provocative special issue, in which the Chinese were presented in the worst possible light. Many other newspapers and journals expressed similar sentiments, invoking the spectre of a Chinese invasion and using derogatory language such as 'the yellow agony'.[246] It was inevitable that the Riverina newspapers would be swept up in this general wave of hysteria and xenophobia, some of them trenching close to *Bulletin's* tirades and misrepresentations, most, however being rather more ambivalent and tolerant. According to Ann Curthoys, the social and moral arguments put forward in favour of restricting Chinese immigration:

> reflected a basic resentment and also dislike at having to mix with a culturally different people; feelings which were reinforced by a profound belief in the superiority of the British way of life and the British race. Racism, the view that non-Europeans such as the Chinese were inevitably and congenitally inferior

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[245] *Daily Advertiser*, 28 June 1881.

[246] Markus, *Fear and Hatred*: pp.121-127, 136-139. In September 1887 the agitation was further stimulated by the reorganization of the anti-Chinese League, which distributed 20,000 handbills outlining its objectives; McGowan, ' The Economics and Organisation of Chinese Mining in Colonial Australia'.

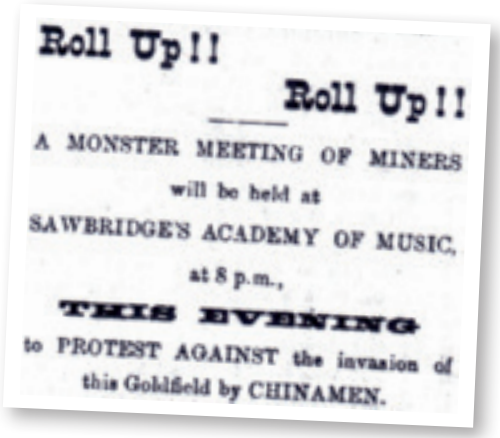
> to Europeans, was an integral part of the argument...[247]

These anti-Chinese sentiments occasionally resulted in protest meetings or the formation of anti-Chinese Leagues. At Temora in April 1883 a roll-up meeting was called at the prospect of an influx of Chinese miners. Prior to the meeting the editor of the *Temora Star* expressed some sympathy for the white miners stating that:

> we can well understand that the European diggers, who have stood the brunt of the past three years' prospecting at Temora, should take the alarm. The fruitless labour of numberless Europeans has shown where the gold is not, and the diggers remaining on the field think it hard that their failure should serve as a guide to Chinamen looking for it.

He did, however, have some words of warning:

> the irritation felt at the invasion of the goldfield by Chinese is easily understood, but on the other hand, we feel it our duty to remind those who are taking the lead in this matter that they will have to act with the greatest circumspection if they wish to score a success. We know that a general impression prevails that Chinese are precluded from coming to any new goldfields for three years after its discovery; but like many other popular fallacies, this rests upon a very slender foundation, It may as well be understood that, as far as the law on the matter is concerned, a Chinaman has as much right to appeal to its protection on the first day of a rush as twenty years after; but, owing to the frequent occurrence of riots on new rushes, intimation was conveyed to the principal Chinese in the colony by the authorities that it would be advisable if their countrymen were to keep off new goldfields, and a custom has thus been established which many look upon as the established law of the land.
>
> White men have found the goldfield; white men have wasted years of their time and labour in tracing it; and white men no doubt have the most equitable right to the benefit which the accumulated experience of the past three years has taught. But, let it be remembered that, in contending for their right they must proceed with the greatest moderation, lest by one rash step they ruin their cause. For our part we can only see one way to obtain the result in view, and that is by petitioning the Government to use their 'restraining influence' on the Chinese merchants of Sydney who may yet have it in their power to divert that stream of Mongolian invasion which has set in in this direction for some time past, into another direction.[248]


Roll Up!!

Roll Up!!

A MONSTER MEETING OF MINERS
will be held at
SAWBRIDGE'S ACADEMY OF MUSIC,
at 8 p.m.,
THIS EVENING
to PROTEST AGAINST the invasion of
this Goldfield by CHINAMEN.

Advertisement for a "Roll Up" meeting in the Temora Star April 7, 1933.
National Library of Australia

A large but orderly public meeting was held not long after, but floundered to some extent when the chairman was asked whether one of his sons was apprenticed to a Chinese man. The editor upbraided the questioner, Mr Rivers, pointing out that it was immaterial whether the chairman agreed with the opinions expressed at the meeting or not, as his sole duty was to see the meeting carried out in an orderly manner. So long as he performed that duty and exhibited fair dealing to all present, he had the right to expect that he be 'spared gratuitous insults while occupying the chair'.

> If, in the ordering of his house, he chooses to employ Chinamen; or if he, in selecting a trade for his son, prefers to apprentice him to a Chinaman, are matters entirely and purely for his own consideration, and

[247] Curthoys, 'Conflict and Consensus', p.56

[248] *Temora Star*, 7 April 1883.

> not by any means inconsistent with taking the chair at a meeting called for the purpose of protesting against the inundation of the field by Chinese diggers. If the spirit involved in the question put by Mr Rivers is to be ruling to its full extent, then white men should not buy from Chinese storekeepers, employ Chinese tradesmen, or eat vegetables grown by Chinese. Probably Mr Rivers, like many more men of shrewd perspicacity, would not have the slightest compunction in patronising a Chinese storekeeper, if by so doing he could effect a saving; or having his picks sharpened by a Chinese blacksmith provided the work was done equally well and cheaper than by a European. In point of fact Mr Rivers has no objection to avail himself of the services or industry of Chinese whenever he pleases, but is intolerant enough to bar the same right to others. Unprejudiced people might ask if that is fair?[249]

At Tumut the formation of an anti-Chinese League in December 1887 followed hard on the heels of anti-Chinese agitations elsewhere in the colony. The league had 170 members, and a committee of 25 appointed to draw up rules and manage business and paid officers to canvass for members.[250] In March a circular was sent to European landholders requesting them not to renew leases to Chinese or let fresh land to them, and a petition signed asking Parliament to take action on Chinese emigration.[251] A unanimous vote of thanks was given to Angus Rankin, owner of Brungle estate, for not letting his land to the Chinese.[252] However, the League's effectiveness was blunted by the unwillingness of many landowners to embrace its central proposition. Many landowners regarded the Chinese farmers as their bread and butter. Following the imposition of prohibitive immigration restrictions in May 1888 the justification for the League's existence began to waiver, a widely reported meeting of the League in August drawing well-merited scorn from the editor of the *Riverine Grazier*, prompting him to ask 'what manner of men are these'. One resolution sought to procure another resident doctor in Tumut, because the current doctor, Dr Mason, originally a League supporter, had subsequently let land to the Chinese. But the most noteworthy feature of the proceedings was a statement by a Mr C. Dean, a committee member, who gave notice of his resignation because he had agreed to allow three Chinese men to erect huts on his land for £1 a week, which he 'thought would be better to him than remaining a member of the League'.[253]

In 1888 the 'Chinese question' was debated hotly throughout NSW. Further immigration restrictions were imposed in 1888, the debate on and passage of the *Influx of Chinese Restriction Act 1888* reflecting a deep seated fear of a resurgent China and racial xenophobia, sentiments fomented by the Premier, Sir Henry Parkes. Earlier, the Riverina press had welcomed the imposition of restrictive measures, many newspapers using emotive and intemperate language to persuade their readers to believe, as did Parkes, in an imminent 'Asiatic invasion'.[254] However, Parkes's hysterical outbursts, his unconstitutional actions against Chinese passengers wishing to disembark from the *Afghan*, and his harsh and hurried legislation proved too much for many of his supporters. The Riverina press now pleaded the case for British justice, and criticised the extreme measures contemplated in the legislation. [255]

One instance of these conflicting views was provided by the editor of the *Riverine Grazier*, who on 18

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[249] *Temora Star*, 14 April 1883.

[250] *Town and Country Journal*, 24 December 1887; *Sydney Mail*, 4 February 1888.

[251] *Town and Country Journal*, 24 March 1888.

[252] *Sydney Mail*, 24 March 1888.

[253] *Riverine Grazier*, 14 August 1888.

[254] *Riverine Grazier*, 13 April 1888; *Daily Advertiser*, 8 March, 5 April 1888; *Albury Border Post*, 3 February 1888.

[255] Markus, *Fear and Hatred*, pp.81-144 ; *Riverine Grazier*, 13 April, 22 May 1888; *Daily Advertiser*, 8 March, 5 April, 19 May 1888; *Gundagai Times*, 22 May 1888; *Albury Banner* and *Wodonga Express* (thereafter *Albury Banner*), 1, 8 June 1888; *Albury Border Post*, 3 February 1888.

April 1888 stated that although the Chinese may not be in competition with the Europeans in Hay:

> no one can, however, be a witness to the depravity and filth which exist amongst them in the local camp, the records of which are periodically served up in nauseous dishes at the Police Court without feeling that they should not be in our midst...the bulk of those who come under the public eye are objects inspiring disgust and revulsion. That their low civilization and comparative pagan habits render them undesirable fellow-colonists under any circumstances, is palpable, but when there are possibilities of their equalling - and perhaps outnumbering - us, the danger is one that cannot be magnified, and measures which make for the prevention of the increase of the evil cannot be postponed.

A little over a month later, on 22 May, his tone and focus had changed entirely. He stated that:

> Perhaps the one thing that would act more adversely to the country than the threatened influx of Chinese is the method laid down by Sir Henry Parkes for dealing with it. The hysterical demonstrations which we are being treated to by the Parkes Government are becoming so frequent that we will soon have to diagnose them as the outcome of chronic insanity rather than that of occasional fits…His utterances in the House on the Chinese Restriction Bill on Wednesday evening last stands unprecedented, and coming from the lips of a Premier, are calculated to breed the most dangerous discord…The introduction of the Bill at all was the prime error and the gravest one, and it was aggravated by the provisions which it contained – a combination of defects which should have made its rejection sure.

These contrary sentiments were expressed by almost every other newspaper editor in the Riverina. Perhaps the most interesting comments were by the editor of the *Narrandera Ensign*, who concluded his condemnation of the Premier by stating that although the Chinese were 'a menace to our civilisation', the fault rested 'with ourselves', for:

> on account of our deficient social system, a Chinaman is better fitted than the ordinary Caucasian to dwell under our laws. The survival of the fittest is the survival of the cheapest according to our present standards...Before abusing the poor Chinaman, let us alter the conditions of life which render him formidable. For the causes which make this semi-barbarian superior to the civilised European are at work all over the world...the distribution of wealth, the relations between labor and capital, the training and improvement of the masses and above all the tenure of lands.[256]

The most objectionable provisions of the bill were removed by the Legislative Council, but the remaining restrictions were harsh; the tonnage ratio being increased to 500 tons for each Chinese passenger and the poll tax increased to a prohibitive £100. Children and wives of Chinese naturalised in NSW were exempt from the poll tax and could enter freely, but these exemptions aside, Chinese immigration was all but prohibited, other than by people smuggling, both from overseas and other colonies. An increase in the Chinese gaol population was all but assured.[257] The new restrictions soon drew scorn from the Riverina press, the earliest of these objections coming from the editor of the *Corowa Free Press*, who commented in July 1888 that:

> To say that a Chinaman living in Corowa, and possessed of duly authenticated naturalisation papers for the colony of New South Wales, and who has occasion to go to Wahgunyah, cannot return to his home without paying £100 poll tax, or running the risk of two years imprisonment, is to make our legislation the laughing stock of the whole world. [258]

Wholesale evasion of the poll tax soon became commonplace, as did the large number of police, customs officers and informers needed to enforce it. People smuggling and border evasion was a

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[256] *Narrandera Ensign*, 21 May 1888.

[257] Markus, *Fear and Hatred*, pp.81-144.

[258] *Corowa Free Press*, 20 July 1888.

This form to be carefully folded in six parts.

No. _____ Name Willie Ah Poy

Date when Portrait was taken 23 Sept 1896.

Native place China
Year of birth 1875
Arrived in Colony { Ship Not Known / Year 1894
Trade or occupation previous to conviction Miner
Religion Pagan
Education, degree R. Mechanical
Height, without shoes, 5 feet 5½ inches
Weight in lb. { On committal 124 / On discharge
Colour of hair Black
Colour of eyes Brown
Marks or special features:— Pale
Pock marked.

(No. of previous Portrait _____).

CONVICTIONS.

Where and When.				Offence.	Sentence.
Corowa P.C.	1	7	96	Evading poll tax	£50 or 2 years Impt.

Albury courthouse record of Willie Ah Poy, sentenced for evading poll tax by crossing the river at Corowa.
New South Wales State Records Centre

Willie Ah Poy and Walter, Ruby, Doris and Billy with Leslie against wall of shop, 1890s, Chiltern, Victoria
Private collection

relatively easy option on the northern border. It was a little more difficult on the southern border, for the Murray River had to be crossed. The main point of evasion was near Wahgunyah, the Chinese first making their way to that town then proceeding along the river on the Victorian side to a place owned by a compatriot, remaining some time as labourers, then crossing in the night by boat.[259] Albury-based historian Bruce Pennay has commented that several police court reports from Moama, Deniliquin, Albury and Corowa indicate quite clear sympathy with the long time Chinese residents, who were caught by what seemed to be an 'uncaring bureaucracy'. Customs officers, it was alleged, were going to all kinds of trouble, including infiltrating the Chinese camps with private detectives to catch offenders. [260]

The Albury courthouse record of Willie Ah Poy portrays him as a poll tax evader and therefore a criminal. In a photograph of Willie Ah Poy in Chiltern, Victoria he is revealed as a respectable fruit and vegetable storekeeper. He married Louisa Coon from the Victorian goldfields and they had nine children. Willy travelled frequently to China to see his parents, and possibly he had a wife and children there was well. He did not return from his last trip and he was presumed dead. Louisa moved to Albury with the eight surviving children, where she met and married Edward (Teddy) Mahlook, a local market

[259] *Daily Advertiser*, 31 August 1893, 18 October 1894; Williams, *Chinese Settlement in NSW*, p.32.
[260] Bruce Pennay, *From Colonial to State Border*, Charles Sturt University, Albury 2001, pp.37-39.

gardener.[261]

By the mid 1890s much of the Riverina press, particularly at Albury, had become impatient with the absurdity of the border restrictions and the farcical arrangements for enforcing them. In 1894 a Chinese man, a former servant of a Mr Stuckey for more than 15 years, was denied entry into NSW as part of Mr Stuckey's funeral cortege unless he paid the £100 poll tax, despite several people giving their personal guarantee that he would return the same evening into Victoria.[262] No less ridiculous was the inability of the Rev Cheok Hong Cheong to visit Albury from Victoria in 1896 for the purpose of holding a short mission amongst his countrymen unless he paid the poll tax; at least his copies of the Bible were exempt![263] In another instance that year, charges were brought against Ah Why, who had been a resident of New South Wales for 35 years, but was arrested on returning to the colony after living in Victoria for five years. The authorities only withdrew the case against him when he agreed to return to Victoria.[264] But perhaps the silliest incident was in 1898 when Lie Cook, Long Poy, Lie Hung and Lee See were arrested making their way from Broken Hill to Sydney. There was no direct rail route to Broken Hill and the Chinese men were arrested on their return to New South Wales after passing through South Australia and Victoria to get to Sydney.[265]

[261] Neil Wilson, 'The dinky-di Poy Boys', *Herald Sun*, 29 July 2000; *Albury & District Historical Society Bulletin*, May 2005, No 446; information from Lindsay Poy junior, Albury, 2010.

[262] *Daily Advertiser*, 1 February 1894; *Narrandera Ensign*, 2 February 1894.

[263] *Albury Banner*, 10 January 1896.

[264] *Albury Banner*, 3 January 1896.

[265] *Albury Daily News*, 3 June 1898.

Law and Order

The evidence for prejudice and discrimination in the legal system is mixed. Unlike California in the early 1850s, Chinese evidence was admissible in the courts and the use of interpreters was common. The Chinese made full use of the courts to prosecute individuals, including their own countrymen, and were generally treated in an even handed way. Nevertheless, the sudden increase in court cases involving the Chinese was a challenge for the judiciary. A case at Gundagai in 1869 illustrates some of these issues. The case took a long time to resolve owing to the court's difficulty in understanding the answers as interpreted, and making the interpreter understand questions. In a subsequent hearing a Chinese missionary in Gundagai refused to act as interpreter as he had been told that the plaintiff meant to misinform the bench. The services of Ah Young, another interpreter, were sought. When questioned on his religion Ah Young said he was a Christian but did not know much about the religion and would return to Buddhism if he went back to China. The Police Magistrate, in some frustration, remarked on the absurdity of administering an oath to a man who took up the Christian religion as a matter of convenience. He then approached the missionary, but he again refused to act as interpreter as he claimed that all his countrymen would turn against him and he could do no work among them. Ah Young was finally used. In his summing up the Magistrate stated that he 'had considered it his duty to go fully into the charge because he knew that Chinese were sometimes wronged in their dealings with Europeans, and he wished such cases presented less difficulties in adjudication'.[266]

Another instance arose at Narrandera in 1884 when Martin Callahan, Margaret Ling Kim and Elizabeth Robinson were charged with assaulting and robbing Dick Shing.

Acting Judge Backhouse stated that:

> The prosecutor in this case was a Chinaman and it was unnecessary that he should ask them (the jury) to consider the case exactly in the same way as if he were a European. Some people might have an objection to Chinamen, but it should not be forgotten that as long as they were in our midst we should extend towards them the same justice as we would to one of our own nation. There was a strong feeling throughout the country with reference to Chinamen. Therefore, at this moment, he thought it his duty to refer to the matter.

The three defendants were found guilty; Callanan got five years gaol, Robinson four years and Kim three years.[267]

Working in the Chinese men's favour was the perception by some judges and magistrates that the Chinese were inoffensive or defenceless. For instance, in early 1873 John Toole was fined £2 for assaulting Ah Wing, a market gardener at Wagga who was hawking vegetables at Currawarna. The Magistrate commented that striking a Chinese man was 'like striking a woman'. [268]A similar, less than flattering, comment was made by the Police Magistrate in case brought by Tu Hock against Alexander Neil for assault at Adelong, the incident involving four Europeans and two Chinese men. The evidence was very conflicting, the Police Magistrate concluding that 'four Europeans who were all powerful men, were more than a match for two celestials', and fining Neil £1 with costs. [269]

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[266] *Gundagai Times*, 13 February 1869.

[267] *Daily Advertiser*, 15 March 1884.

[268] *Wagga Express*, 5 February 1873.

[269] *Gundagai Times*, 24 February 1882.

At times, however, the administration of justice by the police appeared to be heavily weighted against the Chinese, who were seen as easy targets. The prosecutions for gambling are a good instance of this apparent discrimination. In 1888 the Wagga police secured their first gambling conviction. On that occasion they found two large tables in a back room on which were placed mats and square pieces of lead, a number of Chinese coins and cards, two pointed sticks, two fan-tan cups, a number of Chinese dominoes, together with paper and Chinese rushes and ink, and £3 1s 3d.in cash. The defendant, Sim on Lee, banker and keeper of the house, was fined £25. Three other Chinese men were fined £15 each.[270] A local correspondent under the pseudonym of 'Justice' commented that it was well known that gambling was carried on every night at some clubs and hotels, and that many people, including the police, were aware of it. A well known citizen was commonly known to have lost over £200 in one night not so very long ago.

> But here is the poor Chinaman (whose life is almost worse than that of a dog, from the way he is hounded down) who plays a game in which Europeans seldom join. It is...his only national amusement. He is rarely, if ever, before our courts for being drunk, and apparently is a quiet and harmless citizen, and you never hear of himself as being ruined through gambling. He had his club where he meets his countrymen. They conduct themselves with sobriety, and each man goes to his home in an orderly manner. Not so with some of our other citizens when returning late at nights. [271]

At Hay, in August 1890, 10 Chinese men were charged with running a lottery. Constables Thorncroft and Barnes, both of whom bought two tickets each for six pence a ticket, apprehended the men. They attended the drawing of the lottery two hours later, Constable Barnes winning nine shillings for his little flutter.[272] At the trial for the accused their Counsel stated that the object of the lottery was to establish a benevolent fund. One of the accused (Sin Sang) was the head of the Chinese Freemason's Lodge, which benefitted considerably by the winnings. A percentage was also given to the Hay hospital. All the defendants were men of respectability and wealth, and several Europeans came forward as character witnesses. George Mair of Groongal station attested to the respectability and industry of Long Jim, who had worked for him for several years, and Herman Levy verified the character of Wong Pack, Sin Sang, Long Jim, Chuck Kee and Sammy, whom he had known for 10 years. Tom Wood also attested to Long Jim's character. The judge acknowledged that the men had been engaged in a charitable occupation and gave 'a light sentence' of a month's gaol each.[273]

In February 1892 it was the turn of the Fan Tan devotees to draw the attention of the police. The *Riverine Grazier* reporter highlighted the prejudicial way in which the police sometimes approached their duties, when he said:

> presumably because the gambling law is one which is practically suspended or inoperative against certain of the more respectable sections of the community, and because in the view of this, the singling out of the "heathen Chinee" for punishment would verge on the arbitrary, considerable care was taken to inquire into the merits of the complaints before taking any action.

With the merits of the impending action verified, a number of police took up different vantage points on the outskirts of the camp and at a given signal closed in on the house, and captured 10 men. Counsel for the men, Mr Crang, asked for a light sentence, stating that the game was a national one in China, and that one third of the profits of the table went to the Hay hospital, one third to the

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[270] *Daily Advertiser*, 14 February 1888.

[271] *Daily Advertiser*, 16 February 1888.

[272] *Riverine Grazier*, 8 August, 2 September 1890.

[273] *Riverine Grazier*, 21 November 1890.

Chinese Freemason's Lodge and the rest to the banker. Ah Hing was fined £20 and costs and the money and gambling tools confiscated, and other men, deemed spectators were fined £1 each with costs. Because of the poverty of several of the defendants Crang bore the court and professional fees and instituted a subscription list to pay the fines. In another gambling case a few weeks later Crang pointed out that more gambling was done at the club in one night than the camp in a week, and that gambling took place in the hotels every night, but no action was ever taken against the perpetrators. Further, through their gambling the Chinese had donated more money to the local hospital than any private house or club had given. The men were given a 'light sentence' of £5 each. Mr Crang advised that as the men were unable to pay the fine, he had taken up their case without payment and would arrange a collection to pay the fines.[274]

In the case of sly grog selling, it is doubtful if the police would have anywhere near as much success in making arrests, leave alone securing successful convictions without willing informants, both European and Chinese, who were rewarded for their 'Judas' acts with half the fine monies. In almost all instances it was the informant who approached the police and provided the information. Once the information had been laid the police were obliged to seek a warrant for the arrest of the alleged wrongdoers. In the case of suspected sly grog sellers the usual ploy was for the informant to proceed to the house in question, almost always located in the camp, with a marked coin and empty bottle provided by the police, then on purchasing the alcohol, departing and handing the evidence to the local constable, who had meanwhile observed the proceedings from some vantage point.[275] In August 1891, Constable Thorncroft, while disguised in other men's clothes and false bushy whiskers, arrested Annie McCarthy (Annie Chung Soo), a resident of the Hay Chinese Camp, for selling sly grog. An informer, Ryan, who had figured in similar cases the previous week at Carrathool, accompanied him. Having paid for a drink Ryan suddenly feigned sickness and left the room temporarily to pour the liquor into a bottle, which he handed to Thorncroft. Following this incident the two men went to a house owned by Ah Seong with the constable, still disguised, planted behind a door, while Ryan was served. The tactics were a little different, Ryan shouting out 'here's luck' on which cue Thorncroft dashed into the room and seized the offending glass, plus one held by another customer, Elizabeth Neet. A fine of £30 was imposed in each case, with Ryan getting half the share. The reporter commented that as Ryan's share of the Carrathool fines was £40, informing was a lucrative, 'if not particularly honourable employment.'[276]

Sometimes the Chinese were informers, revealing a breakdown in traditional loyalties, or perhaps reflecting clan differences or economic hardship. In Hay the presence of Chinese informers appears to have been particularly prevalent in the early 1890s. In November 1891 Ah Non, a labourer acted as informant for Constable Thorncroft in two cases. In one case the accused was Mary Hung Him, whose husband was a wool scourer. Ah Non said that he had been in the town a fortnight and had previously been at Benerembah and Tumut. He had left Tumut in search of work and had not yet found it. Following the apprehension of Hung Him the two men went to a house owned by Joey Sar Sing, where Ah Non was served by his wife, Johanna. Both women were fined £30 each, the Police Magistrate remarking in the case of Hung Him that 'the evidence of an informer should be received with caution, but on this occasion they were satisfied with the corroboration'.[277] In April 1892, a well known Chinese man, Wong Pack, was charged with sly grog selling. The Chinese informer, Han Won,

[274] *Riverine Grazier*, 2, 12 February 1892.

[275] *Riverine Grazier*, 28 August, 6 November 1891.

[276] *Riverine Grazier*, 25, 28 August 1891.

[277] *Riverine Grazier*, 6 November 1891.

was given a shilling to purchase liquor, and returned from Wong Pack's store with some brandy in a flask. In evidence before the court it was elicited that Han Won had only been out of gaol about a fortnight before the incident, and had tried to borrow money from Wong Pack, which he refused. Han Won admitted that he was hard up for money. The police found a large quantity of alcohol concealed in different rooms. Wong Pack said that he had obtained the liquor for Chinese New Year, when he had given a dinner for 40 of his countrymen, and the alcohol in the house was left over from that event. He was not fined, but the alcohol was confiscated, Han Won departing the court a monument to avarice unrewarded.[278] Wong Pack later appealed the verdict, the police admitting that they had not searched the informer for the money on his return from the house, but the court ruled that the alcohol was kept under the bench, which was proof that it was intended for sale.[279] Wong Pack was before the court again in September, courtesy of another Chinese man, Tommy Ah Foon, a cook in the camp, who freely admitted that he had turned informer for the money. The case was dismissed.[280]

The court reports provide many examples of the types of offences committed against the Chinese, and the attitudes of the courts and the press. Throughout the Riverina fruit and vegetable stealing was a common offence against the Chinese, possibly attaining the status of a rite of passage amongst the local youth. One of the earliest reported cases was at Deniliquin in 1865, when some thieves climbed over the fence of the Chinese garden at the Wanderer Inn, North Deniliquin and stole a large quantity of the best of the cabbages. The paper's readers were warned that the gardener slept in a room opening onto the garden, and had a watch dog there and a loaded gun ready, 'and as a Chinaman can shoot straight enough, it is probable that the petty thieves on their next attempt may carry away something that will make them remember their visit'.[281] In August 1866 one of the local papers carried a notice that Ah You would 'shoot any thief stealing from his Deniliquin garden'. Whether he was the same Chinese gardener referred to the previous year is unknown.

At Hay in September 1878 David Bourke was fined £5 for assaulting Ah Woon, striking him with his fist and kicking over his basket of oranges. Several Europeans witnessed the incident, the Magistrate describing it as 'a most unjustifiable assault'.[282] A similar incident occurred at Narrandera in 1899, when John Swan was charged with assaulting Tip Nooey, a popular vegetable hawker, after he asked payment for a vegetable marrow that Swan had taken from his cart. The incident was corroborated by several European witnesses, the Police Magistrate stating that Swan had a number of previous convictions and that the assault 'was a most cowardly and unprovoked one'. Swan received three months hard labour.[283] In July 1900 nine boys aged between 9 and 16 were charged with stealing vegetables from a Chinese market garden at Narrandera. Five of them pleaded guilty and were fined 6d each plus 4s compensation and 8s costs. Four others pleaded not guilty, and the case against them dismissed as it was uncertain as to whether they were in the garden.[284]

Throughout the Riverina the press and the courts were scathing on the larrikins, who sometimes assaulted the Chinese by throwing stones. At Wagga in March 1876 a young boy was charged with assaulting Ah Cow, hitting him on the head with a stone and causing serious injury, the correspondent

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278 *Riverine Grazier*, 1 April 1892.

279 *Riverine Grazier* 1 July 1892.

280 *Riverine Grazier*, 20 September 1892.

281 *Pastoral Times*. 6 May 1865; Bushby, *Saltbush Country*, p.106.

282 *Riverine Grazier*, 18 September 1878.

283 *Narrandera Ensign*, 13 January 1899.

284 *Narrandera Ensign*, 13 July 1900.

complaining of 'ruffianism running riot during the band promenades', and expressing his relief to see the magistrates prepared to deal severely with such cases. [285] In another incident at Wagga in January 1881, the correspondent remarked that assaults upon the Chinese by larrikins were very common, notwithstanding the severe sentences and fines. In the latest incident a European youth was fined £2 6 s 4d for throwing a stone and striking a Chinese storekeeper. The correspondent commented that perhaps the fine would 'teach other boys that Chinamen live under the same protection as other colonists and must not be ill treated'. [286] Similar incidents took place elsewhere. At Gundagai in 1878 a correspondent bewailed the tricks played by the larrikin element on the Chinese and other vulnerable citizens, suggesting that the Chinese may be seen by the larrikins as 'fair game for sport, on the principle "hit him again, he has no friends"'. He pleaded that the sooner that 'larrikinism is stamped out the better'.[287] In September 1881 a correspondent for the *Gundagai Times* lamented the fate of a Chinese man at Adelong, 'a quiet, harmless old man', who was cut just above the eye by a stone thrown by a youth. He remarked that 'no doubt justices will deal with the case in such a manner as will act as a caution to the larrikin tribe. The Celestials here have much to complain of, as it is almost impossible for them to move about without being assaulted.' [288] Similar incidents would have occurred at Temora, but the press reports are unavailable.

Many assaults took place at the Chinese camps. At Temora in 1883 a woman, B. Wilkinson, was charged with disorderly conduct and obscene language in Lower Temora, where she was caught abusing a Chinese man in his house. A witness said that the language could be heard a 'quarter a mile away'; and they? saw the woman leave the house with a crowbar in her hand. She went in again and the Chinese man ran out by the front door. In other information it transpired that the incident occurred in a room on the side of a Chinese store, and that the defendant was in the company of Annie McDonald, the wife of Tow Lang. The outcome of the case is unknown.[289] A number of assaults and disturbances, primarily by European men, occurred at the Hay camp. In 1893 John Watson was fined £1 for being drunk and disorderly at the Chinese camp, kicking in doors and dancing in the street, and being turned out of one house after another.[290] Another incident at the Hay camp took place at one of the cookhouses in January 1894, when Frederick Butcher was charged with inflicting grievous bodily harm on Ly Hoon, the owner of the shop. The Magistrate described it as a 'cowardly assault' and fined Butcher 10s, in default three months in gaol. Butcher chose not to pay.[291]

Many instances of physical and oral abuse were never reported to the police, and did not make it into the courts, especially when the offenders and victims were children and teenagers. A local Hay resident recalled that at the wool scours the more 'daring type of schoolboy' would cross the river by boat with a good supply of stones, and then from behind the large gum trees opposite the scour he would throw the stones, causing an uproar and a threat to call the police. Eventually a policeman was sent to the scour and the Chinese workers were left in peace.[292] Possibly there were no other witnesses to the offence and by the time the police had arrived on the scene the miscreant had vanished. He

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[285] *Daily Advertiser*, 29 March 1876.

[286] *Daily Advertiser*, 13 January 1881. A similar incident took place in Gundagai in 1882, *Gundagai Times*, 21 March 1882.

[287] *Gundagai Times*, 25 October 1878.

[288] *Gundagai Times*, 6 September 1881.

[289] Temora star, 7 April 1883.

[290] *Riverine Grazier*, 15 August 1893.

[291] *Riverine Grazier*, 9 January 1894.

[292] *Riverine Grazier*, 26 March 1945.

also recalled that another Chinese man, Tin Can (a nickname at best), was the victim of many practical jokes by the juvenile fraternity and that if all the rocks that were thrown on his house were gathered together 'there would have been sufficient to provide a monument to his memory'. He also told of another prankster, Bill Pearse, who placed himself on top of the temple roof while a service was in progress, throwing a young rooster though an opening on the roof, the subsequent reaction likened to a 'damaged hornet's nest'. On another occasion, while the Chinese men were at the temple, he fixed the pigeon loft so that the loft with all its pigeons would fall into one of the gambling rooms on their return.[293]

The Doon family from Tumut were victims of this larrikin-type behaviour. Legendary Sydney jockey Ted Doon, a descendant of Dang Charles Doon of Tumut, recalled that while walking to the Anglican Church on Sunday, he and his brothers were accosted by young boys on horses, who chased the terrified boys all the way to church. Their father retaliated in a very practical way, buying each of the boys a pair of boxing gloves and a punching bag. The next time they were ready. Bob, the oldest boy, pulled the ringleader off his horse and belted him. Ted grabbed the other boy and did likewise, the third boy riding away in a hurry. In Sydney, as an apprentice jockey living at the stables with the other apprentices and strappers, he was teased relentlessly and called names such as 'little fried rice' or 'little Chinkie'. He didn't like it and realised that unless he did something life would become intolerable. One day he called his six tormentors together and challenged them to a fight after work, with the foreman as the referee. At the appointed time the six boys were lined up and Ted called them out one at a time, knocking each one down. Afterwards he had friends everywhere. For the other boys it as just as well, for the owner, Dan Lewis, appointed Ted as a type of enforcer, and if one of the boys misbehaved he had to answer to Ted.

Descendants of other Riverina-based Chinese-Australian families have similar stories. Lindsay Poy senior from Albury recalled that 'it was bloody awful at school, we used to get called chinky and darkie [...] we had a few fights'.[294] Happily that tended to be the worst of it, and he met with very little discrimination afterwards. His sister Kay had a harder time of it as she had darker skin and was teased endlessly. For some the experience was much worse. Members of one Wagga-based family recalled that while the boys were taunted at school, they could hold their own. Not so the girls, particularly if they had darker skin. The girls were teased, taunted and bullied, and they were called chinks and half-castes, a girl from another family committing suicide as result. The family did not socialise very much with other families in town. Some Chinese males used to visit on Saturday evening to a shared dinner, followed by Euchre (cards), but the children did not go to other children's places for birthdays or holidays. The family was so ashamed of its Chinese heritage that they removed the Chinese inscriptions from their father's headstone in the local cemetery. All the children found it hard to talk about their Chinese heritage, often trying to change the subject or even becoming very angry when asked, or the talk continued about it. One of the aunties even tried to lighten the colour of her skin by rubbing lemon juice on it. Years later, their own children have a different attitude, one that permits of some pride in accepting their Chinese heritage. It has, however, been a long haul and amongst the older members of the family the scars still remain. [295]

The Chinese were certainly not innocent in the area of theft, particularly on the Adelong goldfields, where the police were often absent. At Upper Adelong Mr Watson's store appeared a favourite target.

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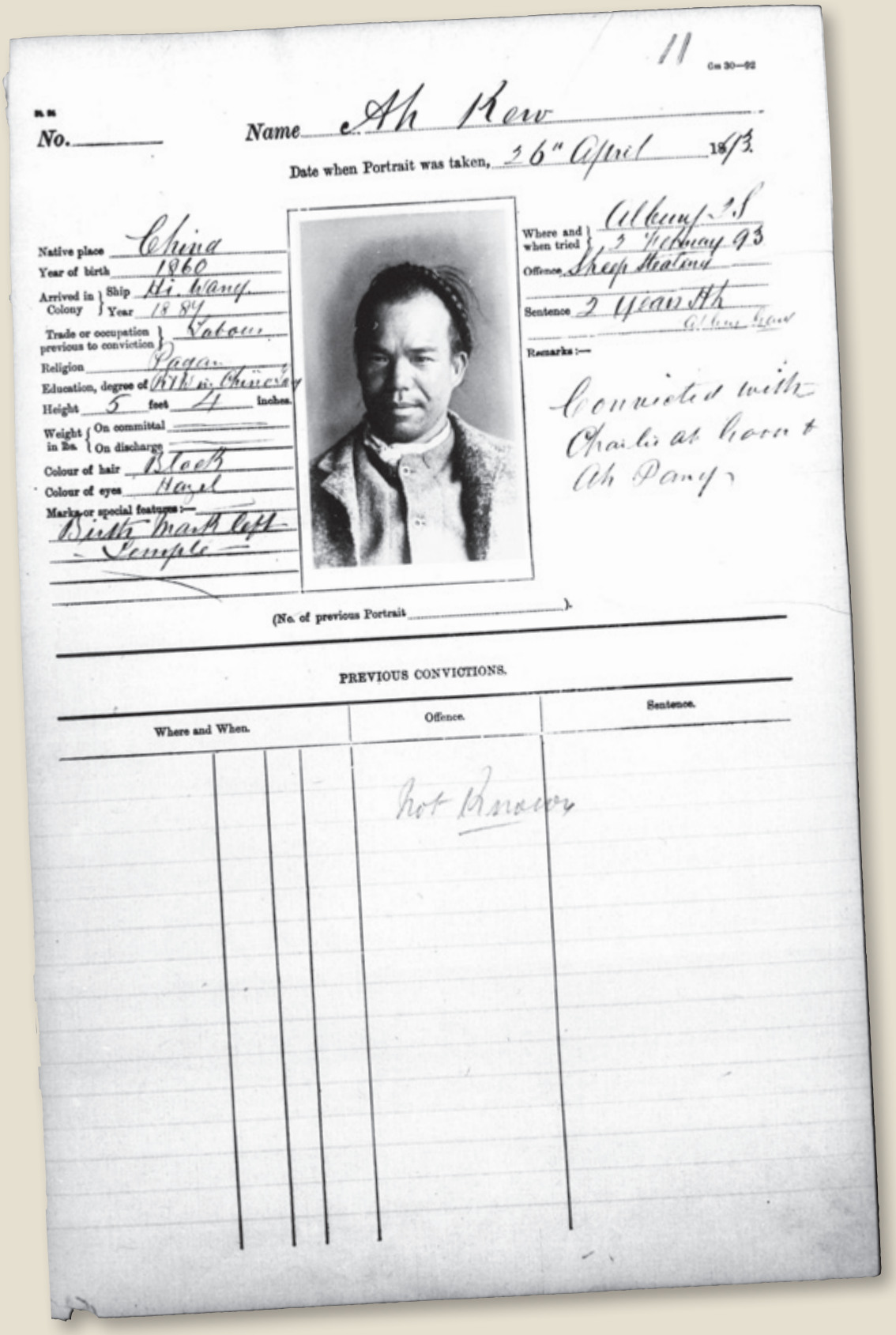
[293] *Riverine Grazier*, 26 March 1945.

[294] Neil Wilson, 'The dinky-di Poy Boys', *Sun Herald*, 29 July 2000.

[295] Information from Allison Nye, Castlemaine, 2011.



No. _____ Name Ah Kew

Date when Portrait was taken, 26th April 1893

Native place China
Year of birth 1860
Arrived in Colony { Ship Hi Wang / Year 1884
Trade or occupation previous to conviction Labour
Religion Pagan
Education, degree of Nil in Chinese
Height 5 feet 4 inches
Weight in lbs. { On committal / On discharge
Colour of hair Black
Colour of eyes Hazel
Marks or special features:— Birth mark left Temple

Where and when tried Albury 2 February 93
Offence Sheep Stealing
Sentence 2 years Hl Albury Gaol
Remarks:— Convicted with Charlie at Howe & Ah Pang

(No. of previous Portrait _____).

PREVIOUS CONVICTIONS.

Where and When.	Offence.	Sentence.
	Not Known	

Ah Kew's record from Albury court; he was accused of sheep stealing.
New South Wales State Records Centre

In February 1862 a Chinese man robbed him of £59, and in July the same year two Chinese men stole goods valued at £14 from his store.[296] Chinese men also robbed the premises of John Wheatley at Upper Adelong, the correspondent lamenting that it had been the third burglary in the last three weeks committed by the Chinese. He remarked that Adelong was one of the most important goldfields in the Southern District, yet 'left entirely without that protection which is daily becoming more and more necessary'.[297] In September, Watson's store was robbed of £14, while several Chinese were making a purchase.

Some of their crimes, such as sheep, horse and saddle stealing, were very Australian, many of them occurring in the bush and on the pastoral stations. A number of these offenses were committed against their own countrymen, not just Europeans and station owners. These examples show a wide range of crimes, but perhaps of even more interest are the insights they provide on the occupations of the Chinese, their circumstances, and their place of residence. In June 1879 Ah Howe, a worker on Illillawa station near Hay, was fined for possessing dogs accused of killing several rams, and in February 1888 James Ah Lick, a rabbiter, was sentenced to three month's gaol for stealing a saddle from James Hawker, a groom residing at Slatter's Hotel at Oxley, west of Hay.[298] More newsworthy was the conviction of Ah Foon, Ah You and Ah See with sheep stealing on James Tyson's Tupra station, west of Hay.[299] The three men were rabitters on the station. Richard Mahoney, a horse breaker at Tupra, and one other man, saw the three men cutting up a sheep near the Chinese camp at Eaglehawk paddock on Oxley Creek. The jury concluded that although dogs had killed the sheep, the Chinese men were guilty of taking the mutton and each was sentenced to a year in gaol. [300] Later that year Dah War, who had been working as a cook for the Mungadal station shearers, was charged with stealing tinned meat from the storeroom and hiding the cans in a nearby creek bed. He was sentenced to six months gaol.[301]

In another 'pastoral case' Ah Sing was charged in 1888 with stealing a watch and chain from Ah Wah and similar articles from Ah Chung. All three men worked at Corrigan's wool scouring works near Hay and slept in a hut near the wash. After a trial by jury he was gaoled for 18 months.[302] Corrigan's wool scour was in the news again the following year when Wee Toy was fined for assaulting Look Tang. At breakfast time Wee Toy had thrown some tea over Look Tang, then hit him twice about the head with a ladle, the two then coming to grips in close combat. Evidence from a witness, Quong Way, suggests that the origins of the fight may have been partly factional or ethnic. He stated that Wee Toy had been a slave in China, and such persons were looked down upon by other Chinese. Look Tang had said to Wee Toy, 'you're a slave and no good'.[303] One of the more dramatic sheep stealing cases occurred at Temora station in 1894, where the manager, Wyatt De Little, found a Chinese man killing a sheep. De Little sent a man to Temora to fetch the police, and dismounted to keep watch over the man, who rushed at him and cut his neck with a butcher's knife, inflicting a nasty but not fatal wound. The Chinese man made off and was not captured until late in the evening when he was found concealed under some bushes. His hut was nearby. He resisted at first, but surrendered when faced with the

296 *Wynyard Times*, 25 February, 15 July 1862.

297 *Wynyard Times*, 18 July 1862.

298 *Riverine Grazier*, 7 February 1888, 28 June 1879.

299 *Riverine Grazier*, 21 February 1888.

300 *Riverine Grazier*, 9 March 1888.

301 *Riverine Grazier*, 2 October 1888.

302 *Riverine Grazier*, 27 November, 7 December 1888.

303 *Riverine Grazier*, 29 November 1889.

policeman's revolver.[304]

The most serious crime committed by a Chinese man in the Riverina was at Hay in November 1870 when, after a heated argument, Chong How killed a fellow Chinese gardener, Tommy Ah Gong, by a blow with a spade, cleaving his head in two as if it had been struck with a 'butcher's cleaver'. Another Chinese man, who had attempted to interfere, was also badly wounded.[305] At his trial Chong Gow 'seemed to glory in the deed', and his confession "me kill Tommy" all but sealed his fate. The correspondent lamented the fate of such men and questioned whether he was legally accountable for the act, and whether his defense had been adequately conducted. Nevertheless, he asserted that Chong Gow was very violent and dangerous and 'unfit to be at large'. He was hung at Deniliquin gaol. According to the correspondent, Chong Gow was at ease with his fate, taking the view that in some form or another he would be soon be back in China with his friends and relatives. He even demanded a new set of clothes from the gaol authorities, and was very mindful of his watch. In the circumstances the writer wondered that there were not more such crimes.[306] Not long after Ah Gong's murder Ah Fat was charged with stabbing Ah Cowey, after accusing him of stealing a pipe case. The crime was witnessed by another Chinese man, Ah Chew, the jury returning a verdict of unlawfully wounding.[307]

Overall, the level of physical provocation and abuse of the Chinese people in the Riverina, bad as it was, never rose to anything like that seen occasionally on some Australian goldfields. These melees, in turn, paled into insignificance compared to the racial disharmony with its associated murder and systemic violence characteristic of Chinese and European race relations in the USA. Nevertheless, there were several incidents of mass assault or even murder. An attack in the late 1870s by Thomas Booth and other rouseabouts and shearers from Corrong station south of Booligal on 20 unarmed Chinese was particularly cowardly. It had been rumoured that the Chinese were considering working for James Tyson on Tupra station for 15s a week rather than the usual 20s. Armed with shearing blades, waddies and some kerosene tins to use as drums to drown out the shouts from the victims, the assailants tore down the tents of the Chinese while they were asleep and scattered their belongings everywhere, later collecting everything that remained unbroken and retreating back to their quarters. The Chinese spent the night hiding in the scrub and the next morning left en masse for Hay. Several days later the police arrived to investigate the assault, but 'everybody who had been involved was suddenly struck dumb'.[308] The most infamous incident was the 'Battle of Hillston Bridge' in 1895, in which one Chinese man, Yeong Kue, was killed, three severely injured and taken to hospital, and between eight and 18 variously wounded. The fracas occurred on Chinese New Year and involved about 30 Chinese men and about 20 Europeans. The Europeans had gone to Chong Lee's garden, but some of them were inebriated and had abused the hospitality of the Chinese by pulling unripe fruit from the trees. When one of the owners complained he was struck, and other Chinese soon came to his aid. In the meantime one of the Europeans went to the nearby Albion hotel and successfully recruited a mob armed with lemonade bottles and other missiles, who confronted the Chinese on the bridge. Police reinforcements were brought in from various places and the alleged perpetrators were brought to trial, but the lack of reliable witnesses meant that all were acquitted of manslaughter.[309] A Chinese man was killed at

[304] *Narrandera Ensign*, 5 June 1894.

[305] *Pastoral Times*, 12 November 1870.

[306] *Pastoral Times*, 10 June 1871.

[307] *Pastoral Times*, 17 December 1870.

[308] Hay Historical Society Web-Site Newsletter, February 2006, No IV.

[309] *Hillston Spectator*, 2 February 1895; *Riverine Grazier*, 29 January, 5, 8, 19 February, 26 March, 5 April 1895.

Chinese Garden.

AH YU will shoot any thief stealing from his Garden at Deniliquin.
1st August, 1866. 391

An advertisement from the Deniliquin newspaper, 1866.
Deniliquin and District Historical Society

Grahamstown near Adelong in 1880, when Michael McNamara fatally assaulted Sin Lee Yong, who he accused of stealing part of his fence. The local reporter commented that the judge, in his directions to the jury, was 'somewhat favourable to the prisoner, being evidently of opinion that he was guilty of manslaughter if guilty at all'. The jury found McNamara guilty of manslaughter and he was sentenced to 12 months gaol, the sentence giving 'great satisfaction here and at Grahamstown, as it is thought the Chinaman gave McNamara great provocation'.[310]

[310] *Gundagai Times*, 7, 23 September, 5 October 1880.

Families, Friendship and Influence

The historian T. Yarwood has remarked that the Chinese eventually became a people of long standing who were respected and useful citizens, contributing to charities and corporate life, but that this was a 'status won as individuals rather than as members of a race'.[311] Fraternisation between Europeans and Chinese in the camps, particularly in some of the less salubrious activities such as prostitution, gambling and sly grog selling was just one aspect of their lives. More edifying was the mixing of the two peoples in the more happy circumstances of Chinese New Year, for while white Australians were largely observers in these celebrations, occasionally they were invited to the feasts. One such function happened at Hillston in 1876, when some Europeans attended a banquet at the gardens. According to the *Riverine Grazier*:

> invitations had been sent to Europeans and "John" was there with his pig and his fowl with the concomittant appendages and dessert dry fruit prepared by themselves, and splendid grapes which hung in clusters about the house.

At the function Mr Markey proposed the health of the Chinese market gardeners of whom there were 20 working in partnership and wished them 'many happy New Years'. Mr Mackenzie responded on their behalf, giving details of their business enterprise 'following which those present enjoyed 'the pleasure of a quadrille'.[312]

At Chinese New Year at Gundagai in 1880 Dang Ah Chee and Sun Yun Yek, the two main merchants, invited some European residents to dine with them. Not all the invitees attended, but those that did gave 'ample justice' to the 'good things provided, the peculiar flavour of certain dishes [...] being particularly admired by the visitors'. One of the guests proposed the health of the hosts and gave an 'eloquent discourse' on the many benefits the Chinese had conferred on the colonies. [313]A similar function took place at Adelong in 1887 when the townsfolk were woken at an early hour by a:

> great explosion of fireworks which our Celestial friends were discharging in honour of the advent of their new year...celebrated with usual feasting and entertaining of their friends, amongst whom were a good many European acquaintances, some of whom were rather puzzled what to make of some of the strange delicacies to which they were treated.[314]

At Narrandera in 1899 the leading merchant Sam Yett gave a dinner 'in excellent style', inviting several prominent townspeople, 'who expressed themselves in complimentary terms regarding the hospitality displayed'. [315]

The Chinese New Year celebrations at Junee in 1903 differed from those held elsewhere in the region, and were characterised by a heavy emphasis on the benefits of the Christian religion. James Wong Chuey and the Chinese members of the Junee Wesleyan Church (10 in number including Mr and Mrs Chuey) entertained over 60 friends, mainly European, at a banquet at the Chuey home. It was reported that the:

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311 A.T. Yarwood, *Asian Immigration to Australia. The Background to Exclusion 1896-1923*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1964, p.117.

312 *Riverine Grazier*, 2 February 1876.

313 *Gundagai Times*, 13 February 1880.

314 *Gundagai Times*, 28 January 1887.

315 *Narrandera Argus*, 17 February 1899.

> table was laden with all the good things imaginable in the way of eatables, and soft drinks in abundance were provided; the surroundings, too, were most picturesque, Chinese lanterns being dotted here and there in the midst of a galaxy of decorations.

After supper Mr Wheatley moved a resolution of appreciation thanking individually the Chinese hosts 'for their unstinted hospitality in providing for us this evening's entertainment and sumptuous repast'.[316]

Whatever else they may have said or felt, few white Australians disputed the generosity of the Chinese. Of particular significance was their readiness to donate money to the local hospitals and help in other fund raising efforts. At Gundagai in 1879 the Chinese were congratulated on having set a 'praiseworthy example to the Europeans' by the generosity of their contributions to the hospital. [317] The same generosity was evident at Wagga. In January 1883 San Ling called in at *The Daily Advertiser* as the representative of a number of Chinese residents to explain that the amount acknowledged in the paper by the Treasurer of the hospital from Kin, Lee, Chong and Co was the result of a collection among a large number of Chinese residents. He stated that 'several of them would be discouraged if the acknowledgement was not made public'.[318] *The Riverine Grazier* carried regular lists of contributors to the Hay hospital, Europeans and Chinese alike. In February 1879 the list contained the names of 52 Chinese residents of and visitors to Hay, and the names of 30 Chinese at the small town of Booligal, plus the contributions of those residing on iconic stations such as Burrabogie.[319] In 1887 the list contained 54 names of contributors from the Chinese camp, the collection being organised by Hi On and Chuck Kee, each of whom contributed £3 3s each, which at that time was a lot of money, equivalent to at least a good week's wage for a tradesman[320]. In 1892 the subscription list included 18 Chinese contributors on Tupra station and 25 on Ulonga station, to name but two.[321] The Deniliquin Chinese were equally generous to their local hospital; with 52 contributors from the town in 1875 and 66 in 1899.[322]

In September 1890 Long Jim and Ching Lee from the Hay camp donated £23 14s, the proceeds coming from a pro rata deduction by Chinese participants in the Chinese lotteries. The correspondent remarked that the Chinese hoped that such contributions would 'justify the continuance of the lotteries'.[323]

In March 1883 the *Temora Herald* ran an article titled 'Chinese Generosity'. Although it refers to a number of incidents in other towns, it is recounted here as it runs counter to the hostility towards the Chinese being displayed at that time by many European miners and other residents of Temora.

> Chinamen cannot be such bad fellows after all for we see that a Chinaman is employed by Cobb and Co to discharge the mail coaches of the letter bags and carry them to the post office; and also that, very recently, two Chinamen, James Lee Yung and Moy Sing, handed to the Lord Bishop of Goulburn

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316 *Junee Southern Cross*, 6 February 1903.

317 *Gundagai Times*, 31 January 1879; Deniliquin and District Historical Society, *Chinese subscriptions to the Deniliquin hospital 1872-1908*.

318 *Daily Advertiser*, 1 February 1883.

319 *Riverine Grazier*, 8 February 1879.

320 *Riverine Grazier*, 25 January 1887.

321 *Riverine Grazier*, 16 February 1892.

322 *Riverine Grazier*, 25 January 1887; Deniliquin and District Historical Society, 'Chinese Subscribers to the Deniliquin Hospital from stations listed in Annual Reports 1872-1906'.

323 *Riverine Grazier*, 2 September 1890.

> the sum of £15 11s towards the erection of St James Cathedral, subscribed by thirty-five Chinamen. The subscription list was written in Chinese characters as well as in English. This act, says the ***Yass Courier***, speaks well for this industrious people, who in other instances also have been found promotive of good works in the land of their adoption. For example, at Wentworth, on the Darling, a Chinaman, John Egg, was the first to start a subscription for the building of a church. He headed the list with a liberal donation, and also another list to the stipend fund of a clergyman whenever he should be appointed.[324]

Another instance of Chinese generosity came to light during proceedings in the Temora Petty Debts Court in 1883. A tearful Mrs Chaunt had come to Tommy Ah Tack, a Temora blacksmith and machine repairer, saying that her husband was sick in bed, and the children had nothing to eat, and that she would have to leave him. Tommy told her not do such a thing, as she would get a bad name, and he then gave her an order to get some rations at Hancox's at Upper Temora. Later, Ah Tack gave Chaunt money at various times, and once at Boxhalls he gave him 5s instead of the 2s 6d he had asked for. Some time later Chaunt went to Ah Tack and asked him to buy a share in his claim at the Hibernian Reef, and then he could repay him what he owed. Tommy agreed to keep Chaunt going on the claim and supplied him with £3 of rations. The Police Magistrate gave Ah Tack a verdict for the whole of his claim and 5s costs.[325]

The Chinese also took part in local concerts, fetes and processions; particularly where fund raising was involved and were ready contributors to other worthy causes. For instance, in April 1891 several Chinese were listed as contributors to a fund set up in aid of those affected by a serious fire at Booligal. The most generous was King Goon and Co, who donated £1 10s.[326] In August 1892 a Chinese orchestra and singers performed to a mixed audience at the Athenaeum Hall in Hay, and in 1894 a number of Chinese men took part in the Hillston hospital fete procession, including a Chinese band with instruments and a Chinese cook shop four-in-hand, and eight Chinese men participated in two Chinese races at the games that followed. The Chinese also donated fireworks to the Hay hospital fetes. In 1897 the three main storekeepers at the camp, Hi On, Harp Lee and Looy Goon, donated 5,000 packets of crackers each, and in 1899 the Chinese storekeepers donated 10,000 crackers towards the torchlight procession.[327] Chinese gardeners also entered and won prizes in horticultural shows.[328]

In Albury in 1876 a holiday and public parade of almost all town bodies and associations was held to celebrate the visit of the Governor of NSW, Sir Hercules Robinson. The Chinese procession was:

> novel and striking, consisting…of a number of our Celestial fellow colonists garbed in the habiliments of first-class mandarins of the Flowery Land. The dresses worn were most handsome and costly. Made entirely of silk they reached almost to the ground, and the gorgeous beings thus apparelled in blue, red, yellow and pink, with long tails sweeping the earth…[329]

In 1897 a parade was held in aid of a fund to erect a Queen's memorial wing to the Albury hospital, and on the occasion of the Queen's jubilee celebrations. Albury's Chinese residents were an important part of this event, the reporter commenting that the 'Chinese in the kindest and most self-sacrificing manner threw themselves into the enterprise enthusiastically, and were very largely instrumental in making its unqualified success'. 80 men 'all dressed in gorgeous attire' carried a monster dragon, about

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[324] *Temora Herald*, 2 March 1883.

[325] *Temora Star*, 6 April 1883.

[326] *Riverine Grazier*, 7 April 1891.

[327] *Riverine Grazier*, 12 August 1892, 3 April 1894; 23 April 1897; 2, 12, 16 May 1899.

[328] *Riverine Grazier*, 19 October 1894.

[329] *.Albury Banner*, 4 November 1876.

Miss Lentell's music class in Junee, 1907. Rose Chuey is participating in the back row, fifth from the right.
Private collection

50 metres long, and in the evening they held a fireworks display at the showground at their own expense.[330]

Although Asian and European races in the 19th century led largely separate lives, there were many instances of affection at the departure of a long term Chinese resident for China, or at his funeral. Two such instances of the former occurred in the Junee area in 1903. In March 1903 the *Junee Southern Cross* correspondent spoke very highly of Ah Chock, a Bethungra market gardener, on his imminent departure for China, describing him as 'one of the most popular and liberal minded residents of the district'. He remarked that Ah Chock was

> of a most charitable nature, and besides helping on ever good cause in and around Bethungra has been a constant contributor to the Cootamundra hospital for very many years past. It is not too much to say that his absence will be felt by many, and should he ever return there is no doubt as to his receiving a warm welcome. Were all Chinamen possessed of the same disposition as Mr Ah Chock it is safe to say that the Chinese Restriction Act would never have been enacted, inasmuch as there would have been no necessity.[331]

In August 1903, Tommy Ah Nan, a well-known Junee vegetable dealer, and a member of the Methodist church, entertained 60 of his friends in the church at a banquet prior to his departure for China to see his elderly parents. At the function the Rev. Brown said that Tommy had been a resident of Junee for 10 years and he had known him for five or six years. He remarked that:

> his characteristics were such as to attract respect from anyone. He was a good citizen and a loyal subject, and in fact was a most exemplary man in every sense of the word....and when he returned to Junee he hoped he would get as hearty a welcome as any man that ever landed in Australia'. Tommy was presented with a gold medal, on which was inscribed 'Presented to Tommy Ah Nan by his Junee

[330] *Ovens & Murray Advertiser*, 19 June 1897; *Albury Daily News & Wodonga Chronicle*, 23, 24, 28 June 1897.

[331] *Junee Southern Cross*, 6 March 1903.

friends'.[332]

At Deniliquin in 1946, Pelly Ah None, a market gardener, decided to return to China to spend his final days. He was described as a favourite with young and old – a jovial generous man, who was ready to contribute toward any fund in the public interest. In July he was given a public send-off at the Town Hall. The Mayor, James Hynes, presented Pelly with a gold watch, leather travelling case and a wallet of notes from his Deniliquin friends. Pelly's son, Charlie, was educated at Deniliquin and later became a doctor.[333]

The death of Adelong storekeeper Ah Nam provides another illustration of the esteem with which individual Chinese could be held. His funeral cortege was one of largest witnessed in Adelong for some time and all the leading business people attended, there being no less than 600 people at the grave. The Rev. Soares read the Church of England service, and in a short address alluded to the 'honest manliness of his character, for he was always ready to assist charities and each religious denomination received a share of his liberality'.[334] According to the *Gundagai Times* correspondent:

> Many a poor family would miss him for, Chinaman or not, he was a kind charitable man. He was known to have given long credit to his customers and must have a deal of bad debts in his books…A short time ago a firm in the same line of business was burnt out, and he supplied goods to the owners at cost price. As a business man he could hold his own against any European, he was very benevolent in his ways, gentle and civil to everyone.

He had been known personally to the *Gundagai Times* for nearly 20 years, and was regarded as 'a man of strict integrity, polite and courteous to all, and a genuine good townsman'.[335]

At Narrandera two venerable and much respected Chinese identities were Harry King Fan and Tip Nooey. Harry King Fan, a market gardener and labour contractor, was born in Beechworth, coming to Narrandera in 1882 as an eight year old, where he attended the public school and acquired a good education. Later he paid a visit to China where he married. His wife did not come to Australia, no doubt because of the immigration restrictions. He passed away in 1954 aged 80 years, and was buried with Church of England rites. The *Narrandera Argus* remarked that he:

> was a good resident and during his long residence here helped in many ways to raise funds for various appeals. King generally made his appeal to the Chinese residents, who readily responded. He also gave generously to the Narrandera hospital in the days when appeals were made to the public for support.[336]

Tip Nooey was also a market gardener at Narrandera. Historian, Joan Palmer, remembered that her father bought his cabbage and cauliflower seedlings from Tip, rather than plant them himself. She described him as a well-known citizen and member of the Church of England, who gave generously to local charities. In 1925 he sold his garden and retired to Sydney. The *Narrandera Argus* stated that he had 'always been ready to do his bit for patriotic or charitable matters', and was 'especially good in his interest in the public hospital, which for many years had benefited by his generosity'.[337] Tip died in 1939 and was buried in the Narrandera cemetery beside Joan's parents and the Aboriginal stockman,

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[332] *Junee Democrat*, 10, 12 August 1903.

[333] Bushby, *Saltbush Country*, pp.276-277.

[334] *Gundagai Times*, 6 July 1888.

[335] *Gundagai Times*, 3 July 1888.

[336] *Narrandera Argus*, 19 August 1954.

[337] *Narrandera Argus*, 16 May 1925.

Archie.[338]

Harry King Fan's headstone, Narrandera cemetery.
Barry McGowan

In the Riverina, Chinese alliances and associations began to change over time along with the slowly dwindling Chinese population, particularly after the imposition of the 1888 immigration restrictions. Many Chinese men, particularly the storekeepers, were members of one of the Christian churches, and were married, mostly to European women, although some married Chinese women. An early instance of the latter took place in 1880, when the arrival in Gundagai of the Chinese wife of the Adelong storekeeper, Kum Hang Long, caused quite a sensation. The *Gundagai Times* reporter remarked that, 'she was attired after the Chinese fashion, her dress being of richly embroidered satin. She wore no hat or bonnet, but had a quantity of choice flowers in her hair'.[339] After 12 months her Chinese maid was sold to a Chinese storekeeper in Wagga for £90. Originally the price had been £80, but Chinese women were in high demand, 'hence the advance in price'. The purchaser conveyed her away in a buggy accompanied by a half dozen Chinese men. [340]

For Chinese men who were Christian converts and married to European women the fraternal associations became less important, and were replaced by other allegiances and friendships forged in the Christian churches and elsewhere. Mixed marriages were seen as one way of bridging the racial divide; church was another. Later still, membership of European associations, religious, sporting, social and cultural, became even more prevalent. These men did not abandon their fellow, often less fortunate, countrymen, or even their traditional beliefs and allegiances, although for many these ties and associations became progressively weaker. As historians Kate Bagnall and Paul Macgregor have commented, many Chinese men in Australia upheld the family lineage by supporting wives in China and overseas, the Chinese wives either having had children before the husband left for Australia, or conceiving again on the husband's periodic return. Taking a younger wife or adopting sons was part of this strategy.[341] For these men tradition and family ties in China were still very important.

One of the telling characteristics of the Chinese people during these transitional years was the strength of their Australian family ties and their links with other Chinese families in the Riverina and other parts of Australia. Many Chinese men created miniature dynasties within their local district, emboldened by an intricate system of inter-marriage, clan and family allegiances and networks, and adoptions. Dang Charles Doon from Tumut was one of these people. In about 1910 or 1911, he returned to China and married Esther Gow. They had one child, Richard, but because Esther and Richard were born in China they could not migrate to Australia. Esther came out 14 years later, and Dick later still.

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[338] Palmer, *Memories of a Riverina Childhood*, pp.102-103.

[339] *Gundagai Times*, 16 April 1880.

[340] *Gundagai Times*, 26 April 1881.

[341] Kate Bagnall, 'A journey of love: Agnes Bruer's sojourn in 1930s China', *Transnational Ties. Australian Lives in the World*, Desley Deacon, Penny Russell and Angela Woollacott (eds), ANU Press, 2008, pp.115-134; Paul Macgregor, 'Dreams of Jade and Gold. Chinese families in Australia's history', *The Australian family. Images and Essays*, (ed) Anna Epstein, Scribe Publications, Melbourne, pp25-28.

Dang Charles Doon and family, Esther in a fur coat on right.
Private collection

The circumstances of Esther's arrival in Australia are shrouded in mystery, and part of the shadowy intrigue surrounding the administration of the White Australia Policy. Several of her children, John and Ted Doon and Grace Ching, were adamant that she entered under the assumed name of Gow, as a member of a Chinese-Australian family of the same name. Charles and Esther had a large family. Eight of their children were born in Tumut: Eric, Bob, Ted, Betty, John, Grace, Bonnie and Joyce, the size of the family making it most unlikely that, if detected, she would be deported. Sadly, Esther died at the early age of 50, leaving Betty, the eldest girl to become the 'mother' to the family. Charles passed away on 12 November 1955. A local correspondent described him as an astute businessman, whose motto was, 'Fair and Square to all and honest dealing'. No one had an adverse word to say against him. In his younger days he was a keen athlete and excelled at running. He was one of the first Chinese people to be baptised in the Tumut Church of England and was a member of the first Chinese Sunday school at Tumut Plains. He was also a founder of the JA Boys Organisation in Tumut.[342]

The young Doon boys were talented and passionate footballers and played with the Junior Anglican (JA) and Young Anglican (YA) teams. They were also passionate about horses. Ted recalled that the family entered the family horse 'Lady' in the Tumut and Gundagai shows where she won the prize for the best and quietest pony every time. Hearing of the horse's exploits the Sydney Royal Easter Show organisers invited the family for an exhibition every show day, all four boys sitting or standing on the horse's back.

Ted Doon recalled that he wanted to be a jockey from the earliest days. While still at school he did track work at Tumut, getting up at 4 am to ride his bicycle 11 km to the track, then after work riding back and milking the family cow before going to school. He did track work after school as well. When he was 14 he worked as an apprentice to Danny Lewis at Randwick, and went on to become one of Sydney's leading jockeys. Between 1944 and 1950 he rode winners in the AJC Metropolitan, Summer Cup (twice), Christmas Cup, Carrington Stakes (twice), Tattersall's Cup and Canterbury Stakes.[343]

Charles Doon and his other sons raced their own horses at local and district meetings, and by the early 1960s they had a stable of 10 horses and Ted was often the rider.[344] The family's most famous horse was Arwon, winner of the 1978 Melbourne Cup. Arwon was owned by Eric, Bob and John Doon in a syndicate with two other men.[345] Bob Doon passed away suddenly in August 2007. He had been part

[342] *Tumut and Adelong Times*, 18 November 1955, 20 April 1993.

[343] *Sun Herald*, 26 July 1981, *Daily Telegraph*, 4 May 1988; discussions with Ted Doon, 2010.

[344] *Daily Advertiser*, 3, 10 March 1962.

[345] *Tumut and Adelong Times*, 10 November 1978.

of the family trucking business, and after retiring had worked with his son Peter and his wife Carol in their business, Tumut Bricks and Pavers. Bob contributed enormously to the local community through his involvement with the Tumut Lions Club. He was a Charter member when the club was formed in 1970, President in 1985-86 and a life member in 1997. Bob was highly active in the club's service activities and projects, and with his wife May, a regular attendee at various district, multi-district and international conventions.[346] He was described as:

> Popular with people from all walks of life, a man well known and well respected in the community, a real character held in deep affection. He was without pretension, calling a spade a spade, and ever willing to do someone a good turn. He and May were invariably there when someone they knew was in trouble or needed a helping hand.[347]

May also made an enormous contribution to the local community. In recognition of her charitable work through a host of organisations and her special compassion for the needy, aged and the sick, she was named as Tumut Citizen of the Year in 1991. Decades of devotion to pastoral care, and her work with a host of local organisations, were rewarded by the presentation of the Order of Australia Medal (O.A.M.) by the Governor General Michael Jeffrey in 2004. At the time of writing, she was still heavily involved in voluntary pastoral care, church activity and the Lions Club.[348]

Eric and Zelda Doon were also very popular, and after their marriage in 1954 several hundred people gathered at the Oddfellow's Hall to celebrate their return to Tumut.[349] In the years to follow Eric and Zelda were to continue their earlier involvement with the Anglican Youth (YA) of Tumut, Eric as Treasurer and Zelda as President.

Richard Doon's Australian story is multi-facetted and intimately linked with the administration of the White Australia Policy. He emigrated in 1938 under exemptions which allowed Chinese merchants (in this case his father) to sponsor staff or family members to work in their Australian businesses, but could not bring out his wife, Chen, or his daughter, until 1952. He worked at first in his father's business in Tumut, before becoming a restaurant owner in Sydney. In 1954 he bought a half share in the Chung On Café in Moonee Ponds, Melbourne, later becoming the sole owner. Richard became a Parliamentary member of the Taiwanese Upper House in 1970 under special provisions which allowed overseas Chinese people with Tawianese allegiance or affiliation to be nominated for Parliament. In Richard's case the nominations were made by party branches in the South Pacific region, and the nomination endorsed by senior members of the Taiwan Government. He retired from this position in 1976 and then worked to establish a Chinese community centre in Melbourne, with the support of the Taiwan Government, later becoming director of the Chinese Cultural Community Centre in Little Bourke Street. He had contacts and influence at the very highest levels in white Australia, and often used these contacts to respond to problems caused by the Immigration Department. He was heavily involved in local community affairs and was Chairman of the Chinese Citizen's Association, and helped build many community projects for migrants, including the Chinese Cultural Centre at Ascot Vale. His son Danny also became widely involved in civic affairs, serving as president of Melbourne Chinatown, president of the Chinese Restaurateurs Association of Victoria, vice-president of the Moonee Ponds Chamber of Commerce, and organising the establishment of the Victorian Elderly Chinese Hostel in

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346 *Tumut and Adelong Times*, 8 April 2004, 28 August 2007.

347 *Tumut and Adelong Times*, 28 August 2007.

348 *Tumut and Adelong Times*, 16 July 1991, 8 April 2004, 27 January/2004, 28 August 2007.

349 *Tumut and Adelong Times*, 18 January 1954.

Ascot Vale in the 1990s.[350]

The Doon family maintained close contacts with other Chinese families in Tumut and elsewhere, including Dang Loon's family after they moved to Sydney. Auntie Violet (Dang Loon's wife), as she was known to the Doon family, remained in close contact after Esther Doon passed away in 1943. She helped Charles buy dresses for the Doon girls throughout their teen years, and together with her husband, invited the girls to stay at their corner grocery shop in Surry Hills for Christmas holidays on several occasions. Their son, Don, came to Tumut for his annual holidays and stayed with Tom and Thelma Young, and became good friends with the Doon family. One of his sisters, Joyce, was a keen horsewoman and Charles made sure she had access to the horses in the stable when she visited Thelma and Tom.[351]

While they call Australia home, the family has never forgotten their traditional allegiances. Charles Doon was strongly connected with the Sze Yap Association building at the Chinese Camp and prepared and performed burial ceremonies, which involved incense, paper money and the roasting of a pig. The ceremonies usually happened on the actual burial day, because the men had saved money for the ceremony throughout their working life. Towards the end of the 1930s only two or three elderly men lived at the Chinese camp and as they did not have much money saved, there was no ceremony, just the incense and burning of the paper money.[352]

In 2007 Charles' grandson, Ramon Doon, accepted a position as principal of the international school in Guangzhou, later moving to another school in Shenzen. Ramon and his wife Tracey lived in China for two years. As an Australian born Chinese, Ramon found the experience both enlightening and confronting. In 2008 25 family members undertook a long anticipated trip back to China to visit the ancestral village, Num Ping, in Taishan County, Guangdong Province, and met many relatives.[353] Another illustration of the family's links with China were the ties between Richard and Danny Doon and the ancestral village. Originally a teacher in the village, Richard was also involved in the administration of the district and was an adviser to the village mayor. After the Second World War Richard wrote to his friends in the village for information on the welfare of his family and later sponsored his former teacher under the student provisions. In Australia he contributed money to the home village in China to help with the maintenance of the village and the graves of their ancestors, and to help pay for the annual Ch'ing Ming ceremonies, for in the village there were some 50 or 60 families with the same name. Danny has also contributed money to the village.[354] The family has held several reunions in Australia, the first of which was in Tumut in 1993. 60 descendants attended the function, coming from all over Australia, and including grandchildren and great grandchildren, The most recent was in Melbourne in April 2013.[355]

The Tumut-based Shai Hee family was also heavily involved in the local Tumut community, and maintained strong links with China. William Shai Hee was a Tumut storekeeper and had several businesses in China, including a bank in Guangzhou and a cotton spinning mill in Shanghai. On one of

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[350] Andrew Junor, 'Chung On: Moonee Ponds and the lemon chicken long boom', Honours thesis, University of Melbourne, 2010, pp.20-33; Discussions with Danny Doon, September 2011.

[351] Information from Grace Ching, March 2012.

[352] Information from Grace Ching, October 2011.

[353] *Tumut and Adelong Times*, 14 September 2008; information from Ramon Doon, September 2011, Grace Ching and Carolyn Ufer, October 2011 and May 2012.

[354] Discussions with Danny Doon and Grace Ching, September 2011.

[355] *Tumut and Adelong Times*, 20 April 1993.

Shai Hee family, China, 1920s. All the standing children are from William's first marriage. Seated left to right are Chin See, William's mother and William Shai Hee.
Chris Shai Hee

his trips to China William married Chin See. As he had to return to Australia to attend to his businesses he left Chin See in the home village, Hem-Ning, Hoe-Sun, (near Guangzhou), where his first son, Ted, was born.

A year later William brought his wife and son to Australia, and they lived at Tumut. They stayed in Tumut for six years and had more children: Jean, Allan, Eva and Reg. In 1933 the family returned to China for the children's education. By this time William had built two large homes in his village, one for his Australian family and one for the children from his first marriage (his first wife having died). Again William had to return to Australia. This time he took Ted, but the rest of the family remained behind, including the new-born Joe. During the Japanese invasion of China the family took what possessions they could and went by bus and ship to Hong Kong, staying with friends of William until the family could travel to Australia.[356]

The children attended school in Tumut with Reg, Allan and Joe joining the Boy Scouts. Allan proved to be a very good artist and mechanic, and Allan and Reg were both very good musicians. Chin See was a talented herbalist. Additional family members were Bill, Margaret, Eileen, Mary, Bob and Pam. In 1948 most of the family went to live in Sydney to further the careers and education of the children. Ted stayed in Tumut where he became the local photographer. Allan had been working as a mechanic and Joe was finishing his Leaving Certificate and became Captain of the Tumut High School and Captain of the Senior Rugby League football team. The Shai Hee family had strong social contacts with other

[356] Joe and Reg Shai Hee, 'An Anecdote on the life of Chin See Shai-Hee', unpublished reminiscences, Sydney, 2004; letter from Clarrie Hogue to Harold Holt, Minister for Immigration, November 1952. (courtesy of Chris Shai Hee); Ross Curnow, 'Bland, Francis Armand (1882-1967). www.adb.anu.edu.au/biography/bland-francis-armand-9525.

FEE PAID WARRANT No. 3969 of 15/3/22

Book No. 329 C 22/1376

Form No. 21.
DUPLICATE.

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.
Immigration Act 1901-1912 and Regulations.

No. 100

CERTIFICATE EXEMPTING FROM DICTATION TEST.

I, WILLIAM HENRY BARKLEY the Collector of Customs for the State of NEW SOUTH WALES in the said Commonwealth, hereby certify that Willie Shai Hee hereinafter described, who is leaving the Commonwealth temporarily, will be exempted from the provisions of paragraph (*a*) of Section 3 of the Act if he returns to the Commonwealth within a period of THREE YEARS from this date.

Date 14 March 1922 W. H. Barkley *Collector of Customs.*

DESCRIPTION.

Nationality Chinese
Birthplace Canton
Age 43 years.
Complexion Dark
Height 5 ft. 5½ in. in boots
Hair Dark
Build Medium
Eyes Brown
Particular marks Scar on left cheek bone

(For impression of hand, see back of this document.)

PHOTOGRAPHS.

Date of departure 18/3/22
Port of Embarkation Sydney
Ship St Albans
Destination China

Date of return 28/8/23
Ship St Albans
Port Sydney

A.214/3.17.—C.2005.

Customs Officers.

William Shai Hee's CEDT document, 1922.
National Archives of Australia

Chinese families in Tumut and elsewhere in the Riverina and Sydney (for example, the Chuey family).[357]

The Shai Hee family, Tumut, 1933. William and Allan, Chin See and Reg, Jean, Ted, unknown woman holding Eva.
Chris Shai Hee

Despite these positives, the Shai Hee family had mixed experiences socially. According to Reg Shai Hee the boys were always in fights at school, sport eventually proving to be the great equaliser. Racism did not only affect the children of Chinese families, but also the children of Aboriginal families, the European children trying unsuccessfully to enlist Joe's help to attack the Aboriginal children as they crossed a bridge on their way to school. Ted suffered more than the other Shai Hee boys. He was very bright and very good at his school work, but was expelled from school once it was discovered that he was born overseas, and therefore an alien. He was the eldest of the children, but more vulnerable, and later, as a consequence of his expulsion, had a nervous breakdown. He completed the rest of his schooling at the convent and became a member of the Roman Catholic Church; all the other Shai Hee children were Anglicans. Joe also had his problems. Although he was born overseas, he was not expelled (probably because he came to Australia much later). But he suffered in other ways. He was the popular choice as captain of the senior football team, but the coach deliberately ignored the wishes of the rest of the team and chose a European boy. Fortunately for Joe the support from the other boys was sufficient enough for the decision to be overturned. At a technical college in Sydney, sometime in the late 1950s, he scored the highest points in his year and was the top apprentice in NSW. However, because the Premier of NSW was to make the presentation at the Sydney Town Hall a European boy was chosen to receive the prize instead.[358] Joe recalls that for the most part his siblings got on very well with, and played with, other children, however, they were never invited into their homes for birthdays or parties. He could not remember his father and mother ever being invited into other people's homes (other than Chinese homes). [359]

Dang Ah Chee was another highly respected Tumut businessman whose involvement in the local community dated back to the late 19th century. Together with his brother Dang Bown Sluey, and their connections with other members of the local Chinese business community, they formed a business dynasty. Both men were at one time very wealthy, but lost most of their money due to a combination of poor management and bad luck. According to Josephine Oh, a descendant of Dang Bown Sluey, Dang Ah Chee had a wife in China, but she was childless, and he decided to remain in Australia, where he was already very successful. He married an Australian woman, Margaret Carruthers, who was related to the then NSW Premier of the same name. Dang Bown Sluey also had a first wife in China, but left her

[357] Joe and Reg Shai Hee, 'An Anecdote on the life of Chin See Shai-Hee'; letter from Clarrie Hogue to Harold Holt, Minister for Immigration, November 1952. (courtesy of Chris Shai Hee); Curnow, 'Bland, Francis Armand (1882-1967).

[358] Information from Chris and Reg Shai Hee.

[359] Information from Joe Shai Hee.

The Shai Hee family, Tumut 1945. Back row: Jean and Bobby, Allan, Eva and Reg. Front: Margaret, Eileen, Willie and Jo.
Private collection

HI CHONG STORE, GUNDAGAI.

AH CHEE,

HAVING an eye to business as well as to the wants of his customers, has laid in a large stock of goods

Suitable for the Christmas Season

Which he is offering at VERY REASONABLE PRICES.

Those who have not yet visited this store will be amply repaid by doing so, as they will **save fully 30 per cent.** in their purchases there. He has, besides

Drapery, Grocery and Hardware,

A FIRST-CLASS STOCK OF

HOUSEHOLD FURNITURE,

Galvanized Iron and Fencing Wire.

ALSO AN EXTENSIVE ASSORTMENT OF

BOOTS & SHOES

From the best importing houses, as well as Gillespie's Goods.

This is no Puff, but a genuine advertisement.

AH CHEE is no stranger to the Gundagai public; they know he is a square man and a fair dealer, and he will not forfeit the confidence reposed in him.

Dang Ah Chee's store advertisement, Gundagai Times *December 25, 1888.*

there and brought a young wife to Tumut, and then on his return to China took a concubine.[360].

Ah Chee was very generous, and a major benefactor of the Tumut hospital, which cost about £1300 to build, Ah Chee donating £100. He also donated the baptismal font at the Presbyterian Church in 1883. Everything Dang Ah Chee touched turned to gold, but Josephine Oh's mother, Chin Shi Wing, said that much of that success was attributable to his wife Margaret, who could read the market reports, and advise him when to buy and sell wheat.[361] In his will, Ah Chee made provision for a payment of £50 to the Tumut hospital and a generous provision of £7000 plus the Club House hotel in Gundagai and other property to Dang Hack of Gundagai. He bequeathed his Hong Kong businesses to his son Dang Yeng Tang, and most of his remaining Tumut estate to Dang Bown Sluey.

William and George Hock Shung.
Parkside Cottage Museum, Narrandera

After Dang Ah Chee dissolved his company in Tumut, Ty Loong and Co was formed on new premises, with Dang Bown Sluey as manager. Dang Bown Sluey was recalled to Hong Kong by the family elders to settle Ah Chee's affairs, and in his absence the business was left in the hands of a cousin, Dang Loon (who also had a first wife in China). Later, Dang Bown Sluey's eldest boy, Dang Quong Wing, returned to Tumut from China to work in his father's business, his father having since passed away. The Tiy Loong business was dissolved in 1926, and then re-established as Quong Wing's store. Dang Loon's daughter, Thelma, married Tom Young, who ran the Sun Kum Lee and Co store in Tumut.

One of the strongest family networks in the Riverina district was at Narrandera, and began with the prosperous merchant Sam Yett, and his nephews George and William Hock Shung. Described as the 'King of Chinatown' he was held in very high esteem by the Chinese and Europeans residents of the town. On his death the *Narrandera Argus* stated that:

> He practically owned and supported the Chinese population of Chinatown, being in his way something of a philanthropist. Towards local charities he was ever liberal, and his support to deserving institutions will be greatly missed.[362]

The *Narrandera Ensign* was even more effusive remarking that during his time in Narrandera:

> he had gained much esteem as a good townsman. He was the wise counsellor of his country men, over whom he exercised much influence; he was a good business man, and scrupulously honest in all his transactions; and he was a ready and willing contributor to all charitable movements, as well as a liberal supporter of the institution in which he died.[363]

George Hock Shung succeeded Sam Yett in his business, and married Jessie Lamonte, the daughter

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[360] Josephine Oh to Kate Bagnall, 20 October 2004.

[361] letter from Josephine Oh to Pam Archer 30 June 1988.

[362] *Narrandera Argus*, 26 March 1903.

[363] *Narrandera Ensign*, 26 June 1903.

George Hock Shung with his son Mervyn in Narrandera.
Parkside Cottage Museum, Narrandera

Jessie Hock Shung (née Lamonte).
Parkside Cottage Museum, Narrandera

Keith, Hilton and Mervyn Shung.
Parkside Cottage Museum, Narrandera

Heather, Mervyn, Frances and Hilton Shung.
Parkside Cottage Museum, Narrandera

of Adelaide Lamonte and Willie Ah Kinn of Urana. George had four children, Mervyn, Hilton, Keith and Heather. On his death the *Narrandera Argus* stated that he 'was respected by all who knew him. He had many good qualities, and in past years had been a contributor to the Hospital and other movements.' George was buried with Church of England rites. [364] The Shung family had very strong connections with other Narrandera based Chinese people. One of these was Wong Gooey, the famed land contractor, whose son became a doctor. Other families were the Hun Chong family, who were Narrandera storekeepers, and their relatives, the Hook family. Sammy Hook later took over the Chong business. The family had three girls, Thelma, Dorothea and Hazel. Heather Shung, Thelma and Dorothea ran a dressmaker's shop in Narrandera for a time. None of the Hook girls married, and when Ah Gooey's son (the doctor) moved to Melbourne, the Hook family followed, for he was the family doctor.

George Shung's son Hilton joined the RAAF in World War II and his last posting was with the Narrandera Air Training school. He was very popular and highly respected, and together with his brother Keith regarded as among the best greyhound judges in the State. Described by the *Narrandera Argus* as a 'Sensational Plane Crash', Hilton and six other crew members of a Beaufighter were killed when the plane hit high tension electricity wires in September 1945. All the crew were locals and the funeral service was one of the largest held in Narrandera, with hundreds of people lining the streets and attending the graveside service.[365]

Another son, Mervyn worked at fencing, bag sewing, pitching hay, stooking sheaves and gardening, before commencing work as a wool classer. Early in World War II Mervyn joined the Volunteer Air Observer Corps, which was attached to the RAAF. His job was to help spot aircraft flying over Sydney. Earlier, the Army had rejected him twice. Mervyn recalled that after a short spell the authorities advised him that he would be more useful back in the bush, so he returned to his former work as a woolclasser. In 1943 he married Frances McMahon. Mervyn recalled that he played a lot of cricket and tennis when young, joining the Narrandera cricket club in the early 1930s and playing for many years in the Austin Cup competition. In 1949 he joined the Masonic Lodge (Lodge Leopold) in Narrandera and was awarded his 50 year certificate in 1999. Mervyn's son Geoffrey joined the RAAF when he was 16 and was involved with the American Space Programme at Honeysuckle Creek tracking station near Canberra at the time of Armstrong and Aldrin's moon landing. Geoffrey also served with the RAAF in Malaysia.[366]

But the Shungs are not the only descendants of Willie Ah Kinn in the district. Aside from Jessie, Willie and his wife Adelaide had five other children, Ivic, Archibald, Adelaide, Emily and Annie. The lineage of Annie's descendants illustrates the difficulties in tracing the genealogy of Chinese Australian families, and suggests strongly that there are many more descendants of Chinese Australian families living in the Riverina and nearby districts. Annie married Thomas Hoban. They had four children, Iris, Dorothea, Evelyn and Alton. Iris married John Reuben Hunt, a flour miller, and had two children, Patricia and John (Jack), John marrying Lorna Salter, who has now become the family chronicler. John and Lorna live in Narrandera and are life members of the Leeton Harness Racing Club, Lorna earning the NSW Volunteer of the Year Award in 2007 for her work with the club. Jack was the airport manager at Narrandera. Dorothea married James Pearson, a descendant of whom is James Pearson, who also lives in Narrandera. To complicate matters Thelma also married a Pearson, and a son, John Pearson, also lives in Narrandera. Alton, a steam train driver, was the father of Bob Hoban, who is also a resident of

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[364] *Narrandera Argus*, 23 May 1944.

[365] *Narrandera Argus*, 7 September 1945.

[366] Mervyn Shung, 'Probis Address. My Life Story by M.W. Shung'.

William and Adelaide Ah Kinn (née Lamonte)
Parkside Cottage Museum, Narrandera

Narrandera. All three families have strong connections to the Roman Catholic Church and are close friends of the Shung family. Adelaide, another daughter of Willie and Adelaide Ah Kinn, married Jim Lett. They had two children, Norman and Catherine. Norman was a lithographic printer and worked with the De Havilland aircraft factory at Bankstown, before coming to Batlow in 1951. Two of his children still live in the district, Royce a builder, and Evelyn, who works in a bank at Tumbarumba. Norman Lett and Mervyn Shung were close friends [367]

Another family connection straddling the length and breadth of the Riverina district involves the Pack family from Hay and the Choy family from Grong Grong, and later Narrandera and Wagga. Alex Pack was one of 18 children born to Margaret Pack and Ah Pack. Margaret was of Scottish and Chinese parentage; her mother, Maria Yew, passing away in Hay in September 1895. Together with his brother George, Ah Pack was brought to Australia at the age of 15 by his father, Law Pack, who had returned to China after working at the gold diggings in Victoria. Ah Pack was a market gardener on Til Til station between Balranald and Ivanhoe, often selling vegetables in Hay on his returns to see his family. Margaret remained in Hay where she raised the children. Alex's parents died before he turned six, and he was raised by other members of the family. His uncle George worked as a market gardener and eventually married Margaret's sister, Rosie. [368]

Alex spent most of his working life as a shearer.[369] Harold, one of Alex's brothers, worked as an apprentice in a local bakery, leaving at the age of 14 or 15 to go tank (dam) sinking in the Oxley district. He enlisted in the army in the early weeks of the Second World War and was serving with the Second Pioneer Battalion when he was taken prisoner in Libya. Interned in Italy he escaped from the camp and spent several months wandering in Northern Italy before making his way to Switzerland. He was repatriated to Australia at the end of the war in Europe and for a time served on the coast defences and in the Hay garrison. After the war he returned to his former work of tank sinking and earth moving,

[367] Information from Lorna Hunt, Geoffrey Shung and Royce Lett, 2009.

[368] *Riverine Grazier*, 6 November 2002.

[369] *Riverine Grazier*, 6 November 2002.

until a foot ailment, probably related to his war experiences, saw him turn to less arduous work at the Hampton Cafe in Hay. He later worked in the building industry. Harold was known as a good horseman and assisted with the work of the Hay Rodeo Club. He was a member of the Hay Services Club, and did a 'lot of charitable work in an unobtrusive manner'.[370]

One of Alex's sisters, Amy, married into the Rooks's family in Hay. The Rooks were fishermen on the Murrumbidgee River, using a boat with an outboard motor and fishing primarily for Cod and Perch. Another sister, Florence, married William (Harry) Choy from Grong Grong. They had two children, Bill and Betty. Betty lived in Grong Grong and worked both there and in Narrandera as a telephone operator. Later she married Bob Menzies, who ran a garage and later a steel fabrication business in Grong Grong with his brothers in law.

Alex Pack, Hay, 2009.
Barry McGowan

Betty helped run the nearby Bluebell café. Both Bob and Betty retired to live at Ashmont, Wagga where they still live at the time of publishing. On her father's side of the family Betty's grandparents were William and Susan Quong. They had three children, Percy, Albert and William (Harry), who became Betty's father. On William's death, Susan married Charlie Choy, and they had two children, Bert and Livinia.[371]

The Choy family were very highly regarded residents of Narrandera and Grong Grong. Albert Choy died in 1949 at 60 years of age in an accident in his Narrandera laundry. In his obituary it was stated that he 'interested himself with the progress of the township and was held in high esteem by all who knew him'. Albert was described as possessing 'a retiring disposition and was a good resident.'[372] His wife, Rita, had passed away the previous year, aged 48 years. In her obituary she was described as a 'highly respected resident of the Narrandera district'. She was 'possessed of an amiable and likeable disposition, and had many friends in the district'. Rita was a member of the CWA at Grong Grong and Griffith and during the war years was an enthusiastic worker for the Chinese Relief Fund. Susan Choy (formerly Quong) was born in Hong Kong and came to Australia at 15 years of age. She passed away in August 1954 at the age of 86 years. On her passing it was said that she 'gave her help to all charitable and patriotic movements in her district', as well as other efforts that helped advance the locality in which she lived.'[373] Florence Choy, the wife of Harry Choy, died in 1954 at the age of 52 years. She had been very active in local organisations, including the CWA, the Far West Children's Health Scheme and her church.[374] Her husband, Harry Choy, died in 1974 at the age of 82 years. He had been active

[370] *Riverine Grazier*, 1 July 1969.

[371] Discussions with Alex Pack and Betty Menzies, Wagga, 2009 and 2010.

[372] *Narrandera Argus*, 3 February 1948, 11 October 1949.

[373] *Narrandera Argus*, 16 August 1954.

[374] *Narrandera Argus*, 30 December 1954.

Advertising card from the Reliance Garage, Grong Grong.
Private collection

in community affairs at Grong Grong, where he served on the gymkhana committee, fire brigade committee and football club. In his younger days he had played Australian rules.[375]

The most prominent Chinese in Temora were the Mee Ling family. George Mee Ling senior, the joint owner of Man Sing and Co (with his brother), and his wife Jeng Jing, were residents of Temora from the earliest days.

George was a member of the local Masonic Lodge for 14 years and very active in charitable work. On his departure for China in 1910 the members of the Masonic Lodge presented George with an illustrated Testimonial 'as a small token of their deep appreciation of your efforts in always promoting the best interests and harmony of the Lodge'. In the testimonial it was stated that, 'the Brethren will ever remember the loyal and faithful services that you have so efficiently and successfully given to Lodge Temora as Treasurer during the past twelve years'.

George and Cheng took their children, George, Andrew, Albert and Annie to China. George junior stayed for about 16 years, during which time he received an 'excellent education, being able to read and speak Chinese fluently'. He returned to Australia at the age of 19, and was an active member of the Temora community, enjoying tennis, bush picnics and barbeques with family members and a keen collector of coins and antiques.

On his passing in 1975 he was described as having a genial personality and gentle manner, and a 'ready response to those in need'. He was buried with Church of England rites next to his mother. George senior had died many years ago in China and had been buried there.

Andrew passed away in 1976. He had been married to Katherine Ah Sue. Her father, Thomas, left China at the age of 17 years and spent 67 years in Australia, of which 30 were in Temora, where he established a green grocery business and owned a market garden. Before his death in 1942 he transferred his business to his only surviving daughter Katherine, with whom he had lived since the death of his wife Mary two years previously. After George senior's death the Mee Ling store was run by Annie, George junior, Andrew and Albert. Meredie Mee Ling recalls that the brothers were very generous and obliging and often gave vegetables away. All Temora based members of the Mee Ling and Ah Sue families were buried with Church of England rites. [376]

The Fong/Clarke family, originally from Broken Dam and Ariah Park, were another important Chinese

[375] *Narrandera Argus*, 30 June 1974.

[376] *Temora Independent*, 3 February 1942, 5 June 1975, 3 January 1940, 8 April, 1976; Temora Centenary Committee, *Temora Yesterday and Today*, 1880-1980,p.250; information from Meredie Mee Ling, June 2012; Lodge Temora Testimonial, 27 April 1909.

Susan Quong and two of her sons, Albert and William(Harry) Choy.
Betty and Bob Menzies, Wagga Wagga

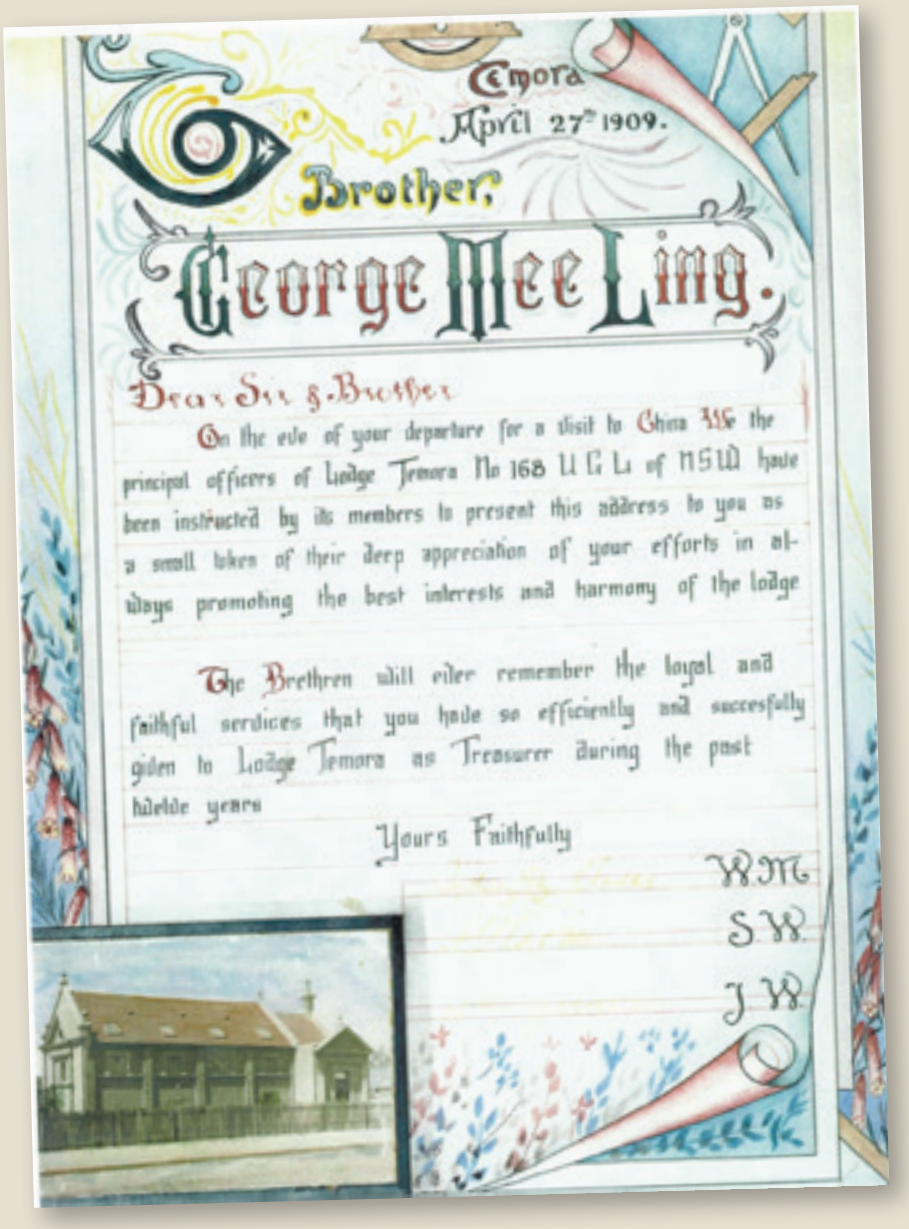
Hand coloured studio portraits of Betty & Billy Choy.
Private collection


BOOK No 44.
Form No. 21.
DUPLICATE.
COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.
Immigration Restriction Acts 1901-1905 and Regulations.
No. 2
CERTIFICATE EXEMPTING FROM DICTATION TEST.
I, William Lawson Acting the Collector of Customs for the State of New South Wales in the said Commonwealth, hereby certify that Jeng Jing Mee Ling hereinafter described, who is leaving the Commonwealth temporarily, will be excepted from the provisions of paragraph (a) of Section 3 of the Act if he returns to the Commonwealth within a period of Three (3) years from this date.
Date 23rd April 1910
W Lawson
Collector of Customs.
DESCRIPTION.
Nationality Chinese
Birthplace Canton
Age 28 years
Complexion
Height
Hair Dark
Build Medium
Eyes Brown
Particular marks
(For impression of hand see back of this document.)
PHOTOGRAPHS.
Full Face:—
Profile:—
Date of departure 27th March 1910
Destination China
Ship Aldenham
Date of return 5 Nov 1927
Ship Changte
Port Sydney
Customs Officer
See C20/7716


No 44.
Form No. 21.
DUPLICATE.
COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.
Immigration Restriction Acts 1901-1905 and Regulations.
No. 1
CERTIFICATE EXEMPTING FROM DICTATION TEST.
I, William Lawson Acting the Collector of Customs for the State of New South Wales in the said Commonwealth, hereby certify that Mee Ling hereinafter described, who is leaving the Commonwealth temporarily, will be excepted from the provisions of paragraph (a) of Section 3 of the Act if he returns to the Commonwealth within a period of Three (3) years from this date.
Date 23rd April 1910
W Lawson
Actg Collector of Customs.
DESCRIPTION.
Nationality China
Birthplace Canton
Age 42 years
Complexion
Height
Hair Dark
Build Medium
Eyes Brown
Particular marks
(For impression of hand see back of this document.)
PHOTOGRAPHS.
Full Face:—
Profile:—
Date of departure 27th March 1910
Destination China
Ship Aldenham
Date of return
Ship
Port
Customs Officer
See C20/7716

One of the first generation Australian Mee Ling brothers (possibly George) and his wife Jeng Jing 's CEDT documents, 1910.
National Archives of Australia

Albert and Andrew Mee Ling at Naraburra Hills near Temora, New South Wales.
Private collection



Temora
April 27th 1909.

Brother,

George Mee Ling.

Dear Sir & Brother

On the eve of your departure for a visit to China We the principal officers of Lodge Temora No 168 U.C.L. of N.S.W. have been instructed by its members to present this address to you as a small token of their deep appreciation of your efforts in always promoting the best interests and harmony of the lodge

The Brethren will ever remember the loyal and faithful services that you have so efficiently and successfully given to Lodge Temora as Treasurer during the past twelve years

Yours Faithfully

W.M.
S.W.
J.W.

Above: *Testimonial for George Mee Ling Snr from the Temora Masonic Lodge.*
Private collection

Right: *Andrew, Albert and George Mee Ling.*
Temora Rural Museum

Two of the Mee Ling brothers.
Temora Rural Museum

family in the Temora area. Their story demonstrates again the adaptability and versatility of many Chinese Australian families, many of the family living in the district, and some marrying into local families, and two of the boys serving with the AIF in World War One. Lena, Mrs Clarke's eldest daughter, married Thomas McPherson and settled first at Broken Dam, where Thomas worked as a blacksmith and sawmiller prior to opening the first blacksmith shop at Ariah Park in 1905. In about 1924, Thomas and his family moved to Narriah, and remained there until 1937. Jim, the son of Jane, another daughter, also settled at Broken Dam, where he worked as a blacksmith and waggon builder after Tom McPherson's departure. He married Jane Keys and in 1935 bought 40.5 acres of land near Broken Dam. His wife already owned the hotel block as part of a holding totaling 225 acres (56 hectares). In about 1950 he and his wife sold their land to Bill Clarke and moved to West Wyalong.[377]

Walter Fong left Broken Dam as a young man and sharefarmed at Beckom, and later on the Thompson Brother's 'Murrill Creek' holding near Ardlethan, subsequently farming there on his own account until 1947. Harry Fong was a farmer at Mirrool. Les Fong, a partner in the building firm of Fong and Pratt, served with the 4th Australian Brigade in the 1st AIF in WWI, but did not return to Australia. May Fong, the third daughter of Mrs Clarke, married Arthur White, who was appointed as the teacher at Ariah Park school in 1902. He complemented his teaching by having a modest farm. He initially farmed on 'Myrtle Vale' a 300 acre block , but later moved to 'Arbortree', where Ariah Park Lake is now located. Arthur ceased teaching at Ariah Park in 1912, but continued teaching in the district in outlying schools until his appointment to Lucknow, near Orange, in the late 1920s. Dick Clarke, the youngest son of Mrs Clarke's second family served in the army in World War 1, and on his return found work with the NSW railways as a carpenter. Vena, Dick's younger sister, married Bill Robinson Junior. In about 1932, after

[377] Speirs, *The Beehive and the Broken Dam*, pp.66-71.

an absence of 10 years, they returned to settle in Ariah Park and remained there for 20 years before retiring to Sydney. [378]

By 1906 Mrs Clarke owned over 1000 acres (405 hectares) of land at Broken Dam, including the store block, 'Wattle Farm' and Bill Sanderson's 1884 selection, which adjoined 'Wattle Park'. Later she sold the property, except for the 40 acres on which the store was located. Bill, the second youngest of her sons, also farmed at Broken Dam, marrying Ellen Cuddy and living at the old store. Mrs Clarke was a practising Methodist and one of the church's most active supporters during its formative years, a contemporary describing her as 'a real mother to the church in its early days'. She donated the land on which the Mirrool Methodist Church was subsequently erected. Margaret passed away in July 1943. In her obituary it was stated that her death had:

> deprived the district of one of its most respected citizens, a gentle but indomitable soul, in every regard a credit to the nation which she had helped build, and to the pioneering spirit which had mastered the 'backblocks. [379]

Bill and Ellen Clarke had five children, but because it was not practical for him to expand his farming interests at Ariah Park to provide for his sons, he subsequently sold out at Broken Dam and purchased a large holding near Dubbo.[380]

James Wong Chuey was one of the most influential and wealthy Chinese in the Riverina district with stores in many towns, such as Junee, Barmedman, West Wyalong and Wagga. His range of contacts was immense at all levels of society, enhanced considerably by his role as a leading member of the Junee Methodist church and a principal benefactor of the Sze Yap Society, the Glebe Temple and the Chinese Masonic Lodge in Surry Hills. In August 1912 he wrote, in his capacity as a Junee businessman and an officer of the Chinese Masonic Society of NSW, to the Australian, Dr George (Chinese) Morrison, to congratulate him on his appointment as Political Adviser to the Chinese Government.[381] Chuey was also a confidant of the then Premier of New South Wales, Mr William Holman. In October 1916, he called upon Holman's services to help rescue his adopted son Wong Sat How (the son of the Jembaicumbene storekeeper and herbalist Ah How), who had been kidnapped from the Hsin-ning train in China by bandits. The boy was a student at Newington College, Stanmore, and was in China to complete his Chinese education. Holman used every method at his disposal to help, sending a detailed report to the British officials at Hong Kong, who then forwarded it onto the British Consulate at Guangzhou. In the end a ransom of £400 had to be paid. After this incident Holman wrote a letter of recommendation allowing Chuey to take a few friends to see the official government munitions and machine factories, coal mines and many other places in NSW. [382] In 1925 Chuey was invited by the Chinese Masonic Society in Melbourne to help celebrate the opening of a new Masonic Lodge in Shanghai[383] His wife, Rose, a Chinese woman, was well known by Junee residents for her 'lovable disposition and well known benevolence, charitable and Christian principles'. Rose was an adopted daughter of James Chung On, a very highly regarded citizen of Launceston, and a patriarch of the

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[378] Speirs, *The Beehive and the Broken Dam*, pp.66-71.

[379] Speirs, *The Beehive and the Broken Dam*, pp.66-71.

[380] Speirs, *The Beehive and the Broken Dam*, pp.66-71.

[381] 'Morrison Papers', Vol.66 of MS312, Mitchell Library, Sydney, pp.391-397.

[382] *Braidwood Review*, 8 August 1916; *Chinese Australian Herald*, 28 October 1916 (translation of original by Michael Churchman, ANU); *Adelaide Advertiser*, 15 September 1916.

[383] Melbourne Argus, 14 September 1925.

Tasmanian Chinese community.[384]

Another prominent Junee identity, Tommy Ah Wah (or Ah War), a skin, wool and hides dealer in the early 1900s, later became the owner of a very successful garage and service station. Tommy and his wife Mary had six children, several of whom worked in the garage business, in particular Lesley Edward, Linda Emily and Albert James (Jack).

Ruby, the eldest child, married Henry Lee, a Cowra-based herbalist. Russell Danswan worked for the Wahs almost his entire working life and remembers them as very kind and considerate employers. The family belonged to the Methodist church and had strong social links with the Mee Ling family in Temora, Russell recalling the warm-hearted greetings when the Mee Lings visited Junee. The Wah family often visited the Mee Ling family in Temora, as did the Shai Hee family from Tumut.[385] According to Russell the Wah children were all well educated, some of them attending Brothers in Wagga. The girls were very proficient in dancing and piano, and Tommy was a very good fiddle player. Lorna Hepper and Rhonda Haddon recalled that another daughter, Edna, taught tap dancing to the girls for the Methodist church concerts. Lesley enlisted in the Australian army in the Second World War and in 1945 was in Sabah, formerly British North Borneo, where he contracted malaria and was repatriated to Australia.


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WAH'S GARAGE

Broadway — JUNEE — Phone 123

Ah Wah Advertisement, ***Southern Cross*** *newspaper, Junee, February 8, 1963.*
Junee and District Historical Society

The last surviving member of the family was Jack Wah, who retired from the business due to ill health in 1995. He excelled at bowls and held many executive positions with Junee rugby league and Group Nine.[386] Clarrie Leslie (Chun), another Junee garage owner with a Chinese background, and owner of the Loftus Hotel, was very highly regarded in the local community. He served on the municipal council for three terms between 1947 and 1956 and again between 1962 and 1965. He was Mayor of Junee between 1949 and 1956.[387]

The Albury-based Poy family are another very well known Chinese family in the Riverina. Their story began on the Victorian goldfields in 1880 when Lim Coon married a European woman Mary Jones. They had four children, one of which was Louisa Coon, who married Willy Ah Poy, a fruit and vegetable storekeeper in Chiltern, Victoria. They had nine children.

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[384] *Hobart Mercury*, 25 February 1952; *Launceston Examiner*, 25 February 1952.

[385] Information from Russell Danswan, 2009, and Meredie Mee Ling, June and July 2012.

[386] Information, Russell Danswan, Junee, 2009; Military Records, Leslie Edward Ah Wah, Series B8832002, Item NX157455 NAA, Canberra; Morris, *Speaking of the Past*.

[387] *Junee Southern Cross*, 4 November 1999.

Left to right: Stan Hancock, Lesley Ah Wah, unknown and Linda Ah Wah.
Junee and District Historical Society

Willie and Louisa Poy with two of their nine children, William and Doris.
Private collection

Ruby Poy on her brother in law, George Moy's, £40 Chevrolet, Borambola.
Private collection

Lindsay, William & Roy Poy.
Private collection

Willy travelled frequently to China to see his parents, and possibly he had a wife and children there was well. He did not return from his last trip to China and he was presumed dead. Louisa moved to Albury with the eight surviving children where she met and married Edward (Teddy) Mahlook, a local market gardener.

During World War II, three of Louisa's sons, William, Roy and Lindsay, were in different parts of Asia fighting the Japanese. William joined the British army in Hong Kong where he was a motor bike dispatch rider and won the Military Medal. He was captured when the city was taken on Christmas Day 1941, but managed to merge in with the locals and escape soon after, eventually making it to Canada. Roy was not so fortunate and was captured at the fall of Singapore in February 1942, and had the misfortune to work on the infamous Thai-Burma railway.[388] Lindsay put up his age in 1941 so that he could join the army. His turn for overseas duty came in May 1945 when as a trained engineer he went to British North Borneo (Sabah), where his main task was to help destroy concrete beach obstacles in preparation for the Australian landing on Tarakan Island. After the landing he went on numerous jungle patrols, eventually becoming victim to a booby trap. He was saved by the belt on which he hung his pliers, which deflected much of the shrapnel.

Years later, on their return, Roy became a bookmaker and sometimes worked at Bandiana during the week as a storeman, attending the races on Saturday. Lindsay worked at the woollen mills in Albury before he too became a bookmaker, later retiring and buying a taxi, before retiring again. His son Roy followed in his father's occupation, which at times caused confusion to some punters, not knowing which Roy to go to with their tickets. He also owned the Commercial Hotel in Albury, later retiring from bookmaking and buying a taxi. Roy was a well known Australian Rules footballer and John Harms from the *Melbourne Age* included him in his list of the 10 greatest Chinese Australian footballers of all time. Roy also had interests in several race horses. Between 600 and 700 people attended his funeral at St

[388] *Border Mail*, 12 August 1989, 15 February 1992.

Patrick's Church, Albury in October 2008, many people having to stand outside.[389]

William became a very successful businessman and at one stage was commuting weekly between Canada, New York and Hong Kong, where he managed an international brokerage firm. His son Neville became a famous plastic surgeon and his daughter Adrienne a famous journalist, television host, film maker and diplomat. In 1999 she was appointed Governor General of Canada.

Adrienne Poy, 26th Governor General of Cananda.
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adrienne_Clarkson

Another Poy brother, Lesley, moved to Sydney where he created a family circle of jockeys, racehorse owners, trainers and professional punters. He was connected to the horse 'Better Loosen Up', which won the Japan Cup in 1996, at the same time that the annual Poy family reunion was being held at Noriuel Park.[390]

The experience of the Nye family from Wagga illustrates further the strength of family and kinship networks, and the increasing importance of new allegiances, such as military service. Daniel Nye, the patriarch, came to Australia in the 1860s, making his way to Wagga where he met Ellen Richardson. They had several children; Arthur, Isabelle, Robert, Dolly and Jessie, all of whom attended the Gurwood Street School in Wagga. Daniel was a hawker servicing the small country towns near Currawarna, and may have been a court interpreter during the 1880s and 1890s. Isabelle, Daniel's eldest child, ran the household in the absence of the parents (Ellen having left some years earlier). When old enough Arthur accompanied his father on his many bush trips, later becoming a boundary rider on one of the large properties near Currawarna. He later married Hannah Mabel Rogers (Mabel), the daughter of a publican, and they had six children: Jack, Robert, Marjory, Dorothy, Isobelle and Norman, all of whom also attended the Gurwood Street School. Arthur continued hawking after his father's death in 1904 and worked as a market gardener and later a nurseryman, becoming reasonably wealthy in the process. Isabelle never married, working for a time with the Hamilton family at Illabo, cooking and cleaning, then travelling around the district, returning to Wagga intermittently to help out Hannah, and in the 1940s working in Melbourne, before returning to live in Wagga. She built a house in Forsyth Street, later living with Arthur and Hannah. [391]

One of Arthur's sons, Norman (Ted), joined the army in 1941 and saw active service in the Buna campaign in Papua New Guinea. He was in an armoured vehicle when it was disabled by enemy fire, injuring other crew members. In his citation his commanding officer stated that, 'at great personal risk and showing utter disregard for his own safety, he removed the injured men from the tank under heavy M.G. [machine gun] fire, to a position of comparative safety in a mine crater. In all, three sorties were made with injured personnel'. The men were pinned down by machine gun and mortar fire for about five hours during which Ted made three trips to a shell hole, about eight metres away, for water. When stretcher bearers arrived he helped to bring the wounded men back. For these acts of bravery

[389] Discussions with Colleen Poy, July, August 2010.

[390] Wilson, 'The dinky-di Poy Boys'; Albury & District Historical Society Bulletin, May 2005, No 446.

[391] Information from Allison Nye, Castlemaine, and Lexa Shulz, Wagga Wagga.

Arthur and Mabel Nye, Wagga Wagga.
Private collection

he was mentioned in despatches.[392]

Perhaps the most amazing story of military commitment comes from the family of William Flood Sam. William arrived in Australia in 1860 and spent three years on the Tambaroora goldfields before settling in Wagga, where he stayed 18 years, leaving for the Marsden, Wyalong and Barmedman area in 1881.

He was married to a European woman, Jane May White. Historian Kate Bagnall, in her article 'That famous Fighting Family', states that two of his sons, James and Norman, left with the 4th Battalion in February 1915 and saw action at Gallipoli. Another son, Henry, left with the 17th Battalion and soon after another son, George, sailed with the 4th Battalion. A fifth son, Tom, and two grandsons, William and George Loolong, also from West Wyalong, served with the AIF on the Western Front, as did the other boys. At the farewell for James and Norman and two other young locals, one speaker noted that, 'he had watched the boys grow up to manhood. They had always been worthy townsmen, and he looked for the time to welcome them back'. William Flood Sam was described by fellow West Wyalong residents as a 'good, hardworking sober man', 'a man of first-class character'. His wife Jane was noted as being 'a highly esteemed resident of the district'. Not one report on the family in the local press, other than in William's obituary, commented on the family's Chinese connection. On his visit to China in 1915 William Flood Sam was accompanied by his son Percy, who also needed a CEDT. Kate Bagnall has remarked that even though the older Sam boys and grandsons were 'Europeans enough to fight for Australia', their younger brother was 'Chinese' enough to need special papers to prove his right of return, despite being born in Australia. [393]

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[392] Recommendation for Award, 8883, NX438444, 12 April 1943, NAA, Canberra.

[393] Kate Bagnall, 'That Famous Fighting Family', *Your History*, March-April 2012, pp. 37-40; Series SP 42/1, C1915/4032, C1915/4058, NAA, Sydney.

Of the seven fighting Sams, grandson George Loolong returned in December 1918 minus his left thumb. James Francis Sam and grandson William Loolong returned to Australia in January 1919, William with a Military Medal and bar. George Flood Sam came home in April, also with a Military Medal. In the citation for his award the Commanding Officer said that at Gruignes on 23 August 1918 Sergeant Sam was in charge of the Pack animals carrying ammunition forward to the machine gun positions. He maintained a constant supply of ammunition to the machine guns despite heavy machine gun and artillery fire, enabling them to give the necessary support to the remainder of the Battalion. His conduct was marked for its 'coolness, courage, and determination'. Curiously, no record could be found of William Loolong's two awards. Henry Herbert Sam returned in July 1918 with an English bride, Ethel (Kirby), and a baby. Norman Sam arrived back in December 1919, minus an index finger. According to Kate Bagnall the fate of the fifth brother, Tom, is unknown. His name doesn't appear on any casualty list or in war grave or service records.[394]


Book No. 179

Form No. 21. COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA. No. 85

DUPLICATE. Immigration Act 1901-1912 and Regulations.

CERTIFICATE EXEMPTING FROM DICTATION TEST.

I, WILLIAM HENRY BARKLEY the Collector of Customs for the State of NEW SOUTH WALES in the said Commonwealth, hereby certify that William Flood Sam hereinafter described, who is leaving the Commonwealth temporarily, will be exempted from the provisions of paragraph (a) of Section 3 of the Act if he returns to the Commonwealth within a period of THREE YEARS from this date.

Date 27 JUL 1915

DESCRIPTION.

Nationality Chinese Birthplace Canton

Age 78 years Complexion

Height 5 ft Hair Dark

Build Medium Eyes Brown

Particular marks

(For impression of hand see back of this document.)

PHOTOGRAPHS.

Full Face:— Profile:—

Date of departure 10-7-15 Port of Embarkation Sydney

Ship Aldenham Destination China

Date of return 10 NOV 1915 Ship S.S. EMPIRE

Port of Sydney

Customs Officers.

Wlliam Flood Sam's CEDT document, 1915.
National Archives of Australia

The story of Lucy Ah Kin, Ah Kim or Ah Kem and Joe Coey, a green grocer in Wagga and later a tobacco farmer at Hillas Creek illustrates the difficulties in tracing family histories of some Chinese families and the ephemeral and uncertain circumstances in which many Chinese lived. If it suited them to change their names, they did, often anglicising them in the process to help avoid discrimination. The experiences of Lucy and Joe also illustrate the mobility of much of the Chinese population. Often they had no strong ties to any one particular place, and followed their prospects where they could and where there was an existing and supportive Chinese community, which there was at Wagga and Hillas Creek. Information retrieved by Sherry Morris and Jan Cronk sheds light on the frequent name changes at the time of their children's births. Their first two children were born in Wagga, Julia Wing Coey in 1873 and Mary Chu Cooey in 1875. Dolley Mary On was born at Hillas Creek in 1885, and the twins William On and Rosanna On in 1888. Not long after, the family moved back to Wagga, where David Henry Ah-Kem and Richard Robert Cooey were born. The family later moved to Bathurst where Lucy and Joe again changed their surnames to On Wong and Owen. Joe was reputedly a labourer first at Hillas Creek, then later a tobacco grower, both there and at Wagga, Bathurst and Kelso, where he was also a market gardener.

394 Bagnall, 'That Famous Fighting Family', pp. 37-40; War records for William Loolong, George Flood Sam, Henry Herbert Sam, James Francis Sam, Norman Sam, George Thomas Loolong, Series B2455, NAA; Sydney http://chineseaustralia.org/archives/258.

Some of the children from the Fong/Clarke famiy from Broken Dam also changed their names. Most of James Fong's sons adopted the surname of their stepfather, Millington Clarke. But Harry Fong retained his father's surname on the basis that, 'if you can't change your appearance there is no point in changing your name'. Walter also retained his father's surname. [395]

Occasionally several very strong and genuine relationships were formed between Chinese and white Australians. In one such instance Shin Chow bequeathed all his possessions (after expenses) to Robert Percival McFarland, the son of Andrew and June McFarland of Thelangerin station near Hay, and in another example, Harry Ah Mow Wong, a market gardener on Wyvern Station, gave a tea set in wicker basket to the Robb family.

\Perhaps the most heart-warming story concerns Charlie Wong Hing, a Wagga based market gardener. Wendy Hucker a former employee of 2WG, and Yvonne Braid, a Wagga City Councillor, have very fond memories of Charlie. Wendy Hucker is the adopted daughter of the late Eric Roberts, a prominent businessman and founder of 2WG, the first commercial radio station in Wagga. Charlie Wong Hing's origins in Australia are mysterious, the most likely story being that he jumped ship at Sydney Heads sometime in the late 1800s, making his way to the Riverina, where he later assumed the identity of a deceased Chinese man. He went back to China at some stage and fathered a son there, but left before the boy was born. Later he made his way to Wagga, where he took up market gardening.

Percy Flood Sam's CEDT photographs, 1915.
National Archives of Australia

One of Charlie's customers was Eric Roberts, who at that time was living atop the present 2WG building in Fitzmaurice Street, Wagga. Originally a school teacher in Narrandera, he later left teaching and went to Wagga, acquiring a licence to transmit radio and leasing a transmitter. Later he built one himself. In the early 1930s Eric had very little money left after expenses and Charley often did not charge him for his vegetables. One day Eric noticed that Charlie had stopped coming. Seeing him down the street one day Charlie told Eric that he could no longer bring vegetables because his horse had died. Eric responded by buying Charlie a new horse, and in the Second World War, obtained Charlie a job as market gardener for the RAAF at Uranquinty.

After the War, Eric employed Charlie as a gardener, cook and general help on his farm at Clear Springs, and he became more strongly allied to the family; 'whatever Charlie wanted, he got'.

Often he would go to Sydney and mingle with the Chinese community and play Fan Tan, always returning to the farm with a paper bag of chocolate frogs for the children. Charlie sent money to his son in China though a contact in Melbourne. His son wrote to him a number of times, including the during the difficult years of the Cultural Revolution, when the correspondence was transmitted through an uncle in Hong Kong. Writing in 1968 the son urged him to return to China to live with his family, assuring him that everything was alright. The uncle warned Charlie to consider carefully the question of returning to China, which he obviously did, for he never returned.

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[395] Speirs, *The Beehive and the Broken Dam*, p.35.

Teapot with its wicker basket and cups given to the Robb family.
Hay Gaol Museum

Charlie's final years were spent at 'The Haven', an aged care facility in Wagga, which was built up gradually by Eric and his wife Nan, raising money through the 2WG Women's Club. Wendy was the executor for Charlie's will and later visited his family in China.

Charlie Wong Hing with Kirsty Hucker.
Museum of the Riverina, Wagga Wagga

Charlie Wong Hing at ***Clear Springs****, Jingellic.*
Museum of the Riverina, Wagga Wagga

Charlie Wong Hing's son, grandsons and great grandchild in China, none of whom he ever met.
Museum of the Riverina, Wagga Wagga

The White Australia Policy

The *Immigration Restriction Act 1901*, and the introduction of the White Australia Policy, had its basis in the earlier colonial immigration restrictions, a continuing fear of the alien 'other' and a resurgent Japan and perceptions of unfair economic competition. Yet, as historians A.T. Yarwood and Ann Curthoys have so effectively argued, the underlying motivation was a deep-seated racism, which saw all coloured people as distinctly inferior to whites, and the need therefore to promote the ideal of racial homogeneity.[396] Yarwood remarked that because of their greater and disproportionate numbers, the new legislation disadvantaged Chinese males more than any other non-European group. True, no longer did they have to pay the poll tax if they wished to travel between the former colonies, but bar a brief interregnum of 15 months in the early 1900s they could not, as a general rule admit family members to Australia, other than on a temporary basis. By this measure it was hoped that the Chinese population would gradually decrease. The Chinese and all other coloured people were also denied citizenship rights, unless they were naturalised, this policy effectively excluding the children of naturalised Chinese from citizenship.[397] The authorities, and in particular labour politicians, strictly administered and scrutinised the immigration regulations for Chinese people; any major concessions would have been a serious breach of policy.[398]

The new arrangements became effective on 21 October 1902, at which time NSW finally abandoned its poll tax for Chinese arriving by land, the tax remaining for ships' passengers for another six months, other than for naturalised Chinese. Any Chinese person domiciled in Australia who wished to leave temporarily could apply for a Certificate of Domicile. However, as historian Shirley Fitzgerald has argued, the Act did not define the term 'domicile', instead spelling out the mechanism for gaining the certificate, which could be provided to 'any person who satify[ied] an officer' of the Customs Department, which in turn gave enormous power to the bureaucrats. She cites several examples where the authorities denied certificates to Chinese residents of long standing, despite numerous favourable character references.[399] A Gundagai, and later Tumut, businessman who successfully applied for a Certificate of Domicile in 1905 was Dang Loon. His visit to China was unusual, for he was accompanied by the wife and family of Dang Ah Hack, who were taking Dang Ah Hack's remains back to China for burial. Dang Loon, who was then known as Dang Goon Loon, was also a trustee in the estate of Ah Hack. The owner of the *Gundagai Times* described him as a 'highly respectable man, always quiet and unassuming in manner, and is besides a worthy townsman in every way'.[400]

In December 1905 a new system of verification known as the Certificate of Exemption from the Dictation Test (CEDT) replaced the Certificate of Domicile. The CEDT's could be made available to residents deemed of good character who had lived in Australia for five years, the test of character being made more explicit than with the Certificates of Domicile. As Paul Jones and Michael Williams have remarked, after Federation a pattern of regular, short term visits to the home villages and towns of Southern China became the norm. 120 approved journeys by Chinese in 1902 grew tenfold by 1905 and thereafter to several thousands in the following years. Wives and dependent children,

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396 Yarwood, *Asian Immigration to Australia*; Curthoys, 'Conflict and consensus',p.56 .

397 Yarwood, *Asian Immigration to Australia*, pp.68-82; Williams, *Chinese Settlement in NSW*, p.33.

398 Yarwood, *Asian Immigration to Australia*, pp.115-118.

399 Shirley Fitzgerald, *Red Tape Gold Scissors. The Story of Sydney's Chinese*, State Library of New South Wales Press, Sydney, 1996, pp.33-37.

400 Series SP 244/2, C05/5679, NAA, Sydney.

students, businessmen and others were admitted on a short term basis on the basis of a CEDT. But the new arrangements were an administrative nightmare. Between 1902 and 1911 alone, customs officers in each state received in excess of 400 operational guidelines on coloured immigration, some providing clarification of procedures following court action by the Chinese. The bureaucratic needs for administering the CEDT's were complex and involved photographs, hand prints and character references, including one from the local police, who also had to verify the accuracy of the photographs. The Chinese may have been residents of Australia but they were notentirely free people, and if not under continued surveillance, then at least aware that any slip-up on their part could mean that their CEDT application would be refused. Possession of a court record or bad character reference from the local police ensured it.

The difficulties of administration are highlighted by the numerous amendments to the Act and regulations, particularly concerning visits by merchants, tourists and students. In 1934 merchants were permitted to introduce Chinese assistants if they were engaged in wholesale overseas trade and had a certain gross turnover, this latter requirement changing over time, and extending to include managers, and permanent substitutes. Commencing in 1924 the age of students permitted to enter Australia was gradually reduced, particularly if the parents were merchants. In 1940 market gardeners were also allowed to introduce assistants if meeting the turnover requirements. Earlier, a new category of chef had been introduced to enable Chinese restaurant owners to import the necessary staff. At the outbreak of the Pacific War in 1941 further changes were made to the entry requirements to provide for Chinese refugees and those already in Australia on temporary CEDTs. [401]

The fate of CEDT applicants with unsatisfactory references from the local police is illustrated by the experiences of Narrandera storekeeper, George Hock Shung. In December 1912 he applied for a CEDT, describing himself as a storekeeper and clearer contractor. He was married to a European woman and lived at the Chinese camp. George obtained good references from: the Mayor of Narrandera, who described him as a straightforward, reliable and peaceful citizen, S Richards, a local merchant, the manager of the Bank of NSW, and the manager of Hill Clark and Co, stock agents. Senior Constable Toohey, however, had other ideas, describing him as a 'well known sly grog seller, and opium dealer'. He said that George was a 'Chinaman of good appearance, and is in comfortable circumstances, but he certainly does not bear a good character'. On the most recent occasion of sly grog selling the police used a female informant with marked coins to buy some alcohol from him, and found a very large cache of alcohol on his premises. Toohey also stated that he owned two wooden houses in the camp and had rented them to women of bad repute from Melbourne, a matter on which he had been cautioned, but not prosecuted. His application for a CEDT was refused. His uncle wrote to the authorities on George's behalf, stating that the main reason George wished to go to China was to visit his 80 year old mother whom he had not seen for 20 years, but to no avail. George went anyway, and applied for permission to re-enter Australia on his return in October 1913. It was granted on the basis that 'he be of better behaviour in the future'.[402]

More successful was Dang Bown Sluey of Tumut, the brother of the then late Dang Ah Chee. He applied for a CEDT in 1906 to permit him to return to China to help Tang Chee, Ah Chee's son, manage his father's businesses. On his application he stated that he was born in Canton in 1843 and came to Australia in 1868. In April 1909 he was granted an extension of his CEDT for three years and for his son Quong Wing for five years to enable him to complete his education in China. To obtain his initial

[401] A.C. Palfreeman, *The Administration of the White Australia Policy*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1967.

[402] Series SP42/1, C1913/5044, NAA, Sydney.

Form No. 21. DUPLICATE.

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

Immigration Restriction Acts 1901-1905 and Regulations.

No. 06/287

CERTIFICATE EXEMPTING FROM DICTATION TEST.

I, John Baxter the Collector of Customs for the State of New South Wales in the said Commonwealth, hereby certify that Dang Bown Sluey hereinafter described, who is leaving the Commonwealth temporarily, will be excepted from the provisions of paragraph (a) of Section 3 of the Act if he returns to the Commonwealth within a period of Three years from this date.

Date 3 Sept 06

J Baxter
Collector of Customs.

DESCRIPTION.

Nationality Chinese — Birthplace Canton
Age 63 years — Complexion
Height 5ft 7¾ in in Boots — Hair Dark
Build Medium — Eyes Brown
Particular marks Small scar each side of mouth

(For impression of hand see back of this document.)

PHOTOGRAPHS.

Full Face :—

Profile :—

Date of departure 3 Sept 06 — Destination China
Ship Empire

Date of return — Ship
Port

Customs Officer

By Authority: Robt. S. Brain, Government Printer, Melbourne.

Dang Bown Sluey's CEDT document, 1906.
National Archives of Australia


PAID WARRANT No. ...

Book No. 475

Form No. 21.
DUPLICATE.

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.
Immigration Act 1901-1925 and Regulations.

No. 081

CERTIFICATE EXEMPTING FROM DICTATION TEST.

I, George Finlay McKenzie Mitchell the Collector of Customs for the State of NEW SOUTH WALES in the said Commonwealth hereby certify that Violet Loon (Mrs Goog Loon) hereinafter described, who is leaving the Commonwealth temporarily, will be exempted from the provisions of paragraph (*a*) of Section 3 of the Act if he returns to the Commonwealth within a period of THREE YEARS from this date.

Date 14 MAR 1930

Geo. F. G. Mitchell
Collector of Customs.

DESCRIPTION.

Nationality	Chinese	Birthplace	Canton
Age		Complexion	Dark
Height		Hair	Black
Build	Medium	Eyes	Brown
Particular marks			

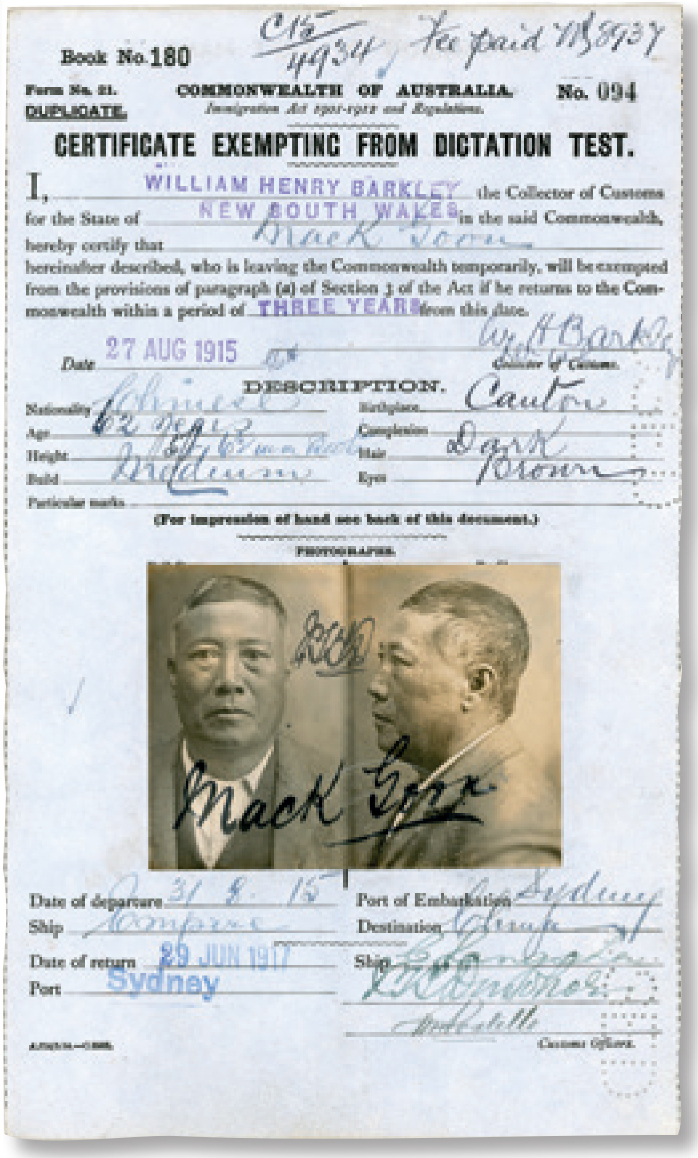
(For impression of hand, see back of this document.)

PHOTOGRAPHS.

Date of departure	22 3 30	Port of Embarkation	Sydney
Ship	Changte	Destination	China
Date of Return	8 NOV 1930	Ship	Changte
Port	Sydney		

Customs Officers.

Violet Loon' CEDT document, 1930.
National Archives of Australia


Book No. 180

Fee paid

Form No. 21.
DUPLICATE.

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.
Immigration Act 1901-1912 and Regulations.

No. 094

CERTIFICATE EXEMPTING FROM DICTATION TEST.

I, WILLIAM HENRY BARKLEY the Collector of Customs for the State of NEW SOUTH WALES in the said Commonwealth, hereby certify that Mack Goon hereinafter described, who is leaving the Commonwealth temporarily, will be exempted from the provisions of paragraph (a) of Section 3 of the Act if he returns to the Commonwealth within a period of THREE YEARS from this date.

Date 27 AUG 1915

W. H. Barkley
Collector of Customs.

DESCRIPTION.

Nationality	Chinese	Birthplace	Canton
Age	62 years	Complexion	Dark
Height		Hair	
Build	Medium	Eyes	Brown
Particular marks			

(For impression of hand see back of this document.)

PHOTOGRAPHS.

Mack Goon

Date of departure	31 8 15	Port of Embarkation	Sydney
Ship	Empire	Destination	China
Date of return	29 JUN 1917	Ship	
Port	Sydney		

Customs Officers.

Mack Goon's CEDT document, 1915.
National Archives of Australia

CEDT he had to provide four references. In one reference the Mining Warden at Tumut described him as a 'well known resident of Tumut' with a 'splendid character', and in another the manager of the Commercial Bank in Tumut stated that he was the owner of considerable property and 'an honest, steady, and commendable resident of Tumut'. His two other referees also described him as honest and respectable. Dang Bown Sluey's property, most of it inherited from his brother, was valued at £8728, a considerable amount of money at the time.[403]

Another Tumut businessman to visit China on several occasions was William Shai Hee, who submitted applications to travel in 1907, 1915, 1922 and 1932. Dang Loon from Tumut also made several visits, and submitted applications in 1928 and 1930. On the latter occasion he was accompanied by his wife Violet and their three children.[404]

In another case, Mack Goon, a labourer and former cook and a resident of West Wyalong, applied for a CEDT in August 1915, to allow him to visit Canton (Guangzhou) for three years. He was 62 years of age and had been in Australia for 34 years, 18 years in the Tumut district and 16 years at Wyalong. One reference was from George Bland, who said he had known him as a labourer for the past 14 years and had had many business transactions with him and found him to be very honest in every respect. The other was from Stephen Watterson, who stated that he had known him as a labourer and testified to his honesty and industry. Police Sergeant Smith described him as of a 'quiet disposition, very respectable and straight in all his dealings'.[405]

Also successful was William Flood Sam, who applied for CEDTs in 1915 for himself and for his son Percy to enable them to visit China. One referee, a Mr Shibley, stated that he had known William for many years and had always found him sober, honest and reliable. Another referee, Joseph Speirs, said that he had known William and his family for 15 years and had always found him to be a good hard working, sober man. One other referee, Mr Flannery, said that he had known William for 15 years and found him to be very honest, straightforward and industrious. He had been known to Mr Flannery's father for 30 years, and he also testified as to his general good character. The local Police Sergeant Mr McCabe, stated that William had been married for 40 years and had 12 surviving family members. His wife and six of his children were living in West Wyalong. Four of the children were married and he had five sons in the AIF. McCabe stated that William bore a 'good character'. [406]

Another local resident, Wong Lip, applied for a CEDT in July 1921. At the time he was a market gardener at Jerilderie. He was 51 years of age and had been in Australia for 25 years, during which time he had worked as a scrub cutter on Coree Station (about 16 kilometres from Jerilderie), and as a gardener at the Hop Sing gardens in Jerilderie for 15 years. Mr Baker, a local auctioneer, stated that he had known Wong Lip for 22 years and described him as 'quiet and respectable man 'who had conducted himself decently' ever since he had known him. The local Police Sergeant described him as a 'very sober, honest and industrious man'. Wong Lip's application was for three years.[407] On his return to Australia he was accompanied either by his son, Toy Sun, or the boy arrived shortly after, commencing school at Temora in late 1924. By then Wong Lip had left Jerilderie and set himself up as an orchardist at Temora.

The referees' comments on the CEDT applications by George Hock Shung, Dang Bown Sluey, William

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[403] Series SP42/1, C1912/3324, C1913/4423, C1913/5044, NAA, Sydney.

[404] Series SP 244/2, C30/2538, C28/11356, NAA, Sydney.

[405] Series SP42/1, C15/4934, NAA, Sydney.

[406] Series SP 42/1, C1915/4032, C1915/4058, NAA, Sydney.

[407] Series SP42/1, C21/5853, NAA, Sydney.

Wong Lip's proof of identity letter.
National Archives of Australia

Flood Sam, Wong Lip and Mack Goon are illustrative of the very obvious regard with which some Chinese people were held by white Australians (other than Constable Toohey) in their local communities. The applications also show a wide range of reasons for returning to China. Foremost was the desire to visit family, especially children and ageing parents, and to ensure that the Australian-born children received a Chinese education. Other reasons were marriage, accompanying family remains for burial, returning home when very ill and near death, or to conduct business.

Toy Sun Lip's experience illustrates the strict regulations surrounding the admittance of Chinese students into Australia, and the perils of non-compliance. In accordance with the regulations, his father and two Chinese merchants in Sydney took responsibility for his financial support during his stay in Australia and for his return to China at the end of his term of exemption. The authorities insisted on regular school attendance, forbad the seeking of alternate employment, and required an attendance and conduct report from the school at the end of each term. Toy Sun's experience also highlights the plight of aging Chinese men who, amidst a dwindling Chinese population, had difficulty in obtaining casual help in their business enterprises. At first Toy Sun's attendance was very good with very few absences, and in his term report in November 1924 the principal said that he was 'no trouble whatsoever-neatly dressed-seems well looked after'. But by the time of his mid-term report in July 1925 an all too frequent pattern was beginning to emerge, the boy being absent for 17 days out of a possible 82, for alleged reasons of family sickness. All other aspects of his attendance were satisfactory, and he was described as a 'well behaved boy'. The same level of non-attendance occurred at the end of first term 1926. This time the reason given was the need to help his father, the school saying that his absences had been 'practically unavoidable'. He was described as a 'most satisfactory pupil'.

During the second school term in 1926 he was away for 33 days out of 57, the reasons being his own illness, the illness of his father and his father's absence in Sydney, which meant that he had to look after the shop. This report drew a warning from the Department of Home and Territories, conveyed by the Chinese Consulate General in Melbourne, that if the boy did not observe the conditions of entry he would be required to leave the country. In October 1926 he was described as 'extremely well-behaved, attentive and industrious, but it was also stated that his attendance 'could be much improved'. He was absent for 12 days out of a possible 59. Through the Chinese Consulate General the father apologised for the boy's absences, saying that it was due to sudden illness on his part. His school reports for most of 1927 were excellent, although he was absent for 17 days to attend his father's shop. In September 1928 an absence of 26 days was reported, and drew a stern warning from the Department that if future reports showed that the boy was kept home to assist in the shop action would be taken to cancel his exemption and steps taken for his departure from Australia.

In April 1929 the Chinese Consulate General applied for a further 12 month's extension of the boy's

exemption. The Department advised that because the boy's absences had continued largely for the purpose of attending his father's business, and because this 'irregularity' had been brought to the Department's attention on three occasions, the Department would not be justified in granting any further extensions and that arrangements should be made for his departure at the end of the month. Following further representations from the Chinese Consulate-General the Department inquired into the nature of the business conducted by the father, the number of employees and whether he had any relatives who could help, which he did not. The Department relented and granted another 12 months exemption, with the usual warning about attendance.[408]

Toy Sun Wong Lip's passport, 1910.
National Archives of Australia

In early 1930 the Department was advised that Toy Son had left Temora High School to attend the Sydney Efficiency Motor School, and would be living in Sydney. The Department refused permission for the boy to attend the Sydney school and insisted he return to Temora, and that arrangements be made for him to leave Australia at the conclusion of his current exemption period. Even an intervention by the influential James Wong Chuey could not save him. [409]

Despite the tight policing and enforcement of the immigration restrictions, evasion and other illegal methods were used, such as the purchase of false Naturalisation Certificates and CEDTs. Some officials also supplied false identification as a returned domicile, and desertion by ship's crew and the smuggling of people on ships also occurred. Court cases and other legal challenges were supported by members of the Chinese community and were often successful in limiting the powers of administrators who were wary of taking a case to court if they felt there was any chance of an adverse, and precedent setting, decision.[410] The cases of Florrie Ching and Esther Doon illustrate some of these issues. Florrie sought entry to Australia in 1917 based on a birth certificate in the name of Florence Matilda Ah Gow, who was born at Mundarlo, between Wagga and Gundagai, on 11 November 1886. Florrie claimed that she was identical to Florence Ah Gow, and had gone to China in 1894 with her parents and remained there ever since. About eight years previously she had married Charlie Ching, who was in possession of a CEDT and allowed to land in Australia. Her husband and two Chinese residents of NSW provided statutory declarations affirming her identity. Thomas and Kenneth Ah Gow, her brothers, had re-entered Australia by special permission in 1906 and 1908 respectively. A departmental memorandum dated 27 December 1906 stated that their father, known only as Ah Gow, had been naturalised in 1881, and in 1894 took his wife and six children to China 'at the desire of the grandparents, who are now deceased, and in order that the children might familiarise themselves with the Chinese language'. Ah Gow subsequently returned to NSW shortly after, and one son (Charlie)

[408] Series A1, 1929/3660, NAA, Canberra.

[409] Series A1, 1929/3660, NAA, Canberra.

[410] Williams, *Chinese Settlement in NSW*, pp.32-33.

returned in 1904; he had been a storekeeper near Gundagai for about 25 years, and since 1902 a commission agent in Sydney. He advertised the opening of his Hi Hing store at Mundarlo in the 11 January 1881 edition of the *Gundagai Times*.

The Collector of Customs in Sydney remarked that in cases like Florrie's it was exceedingly difficult to establish beyond doubt the identity of the immigrant. A comparison of photographs separated as in this case by 23 years was useless. In the past he had tried to prevent the admission of Chinese immigrants because he was unable to satisfy himself as to their identity, but:

> as the immigrant usually had no difficulty in obtaining as many witnesses as necessary (usually Chinese) to swear that he or she was identical with the person who left Australia, the Magistrates, in the absence of rebutting evidence by the Department, dismissed the charge.

In the absence of evidence that Mrs Ching was not identical with Florence Ah Gow, he had no option but to admit her.[411]

The twist to this story involves Esther Doon, the wife of Dang Charles Doon from Tumut. Three of Esther's surviving children, Ted, Johnny and Grace, are adamant that she was born in China (even though the birth certificate states that she was Australian born), and came out under an assumed name, in her case Gow. As a local resident, and having spent his early years in Australia in the Gundagai area, Dang Charles Doon would have known the Ah Gow family very well. He would have been very well aware of the opportunities provided by cases such as that of Florrie Ching. Historian, Paul Macgregor, has commented that, 'a few Chinese brides adopted the name and Australian birth certificate of Chinese children who had been born in Australia, but had returned to China while still young and died'. He further remarked that, 'women who came with these false identities had to maintain them for the rest of their lives in Australia'. The majority of post 1905 Chinese brides of Chinese-Australians were never able to settle here. Esther was one of these women and was given an assumed identity as one of Ah Gow's daughters to allow her entry into Australia. All she needed was a valid birth certificate showing her as Australian born. Family information suggests strongly that both Esther and Florence had false identities and as a consequence became sisters. [412]

But Charles Doon's frustrations with the White Australia Policy did not stop with the arrival of Esther, for the family was under constant surveillance and pressure from the Immigration authorities, who sometimes made home visits to test the assimilability of the family, in particular Esther and the children. Charles's attitude to these visits was that 'there had to be new face at the table every year', Esther's pregnancies ensuring that she could not be deported. The Immigration official's forlorn statement after every visit of, 'oh, you're pregnant, I'll come back next year' says it all. Furthermore, their son Richard was still in China, where he married and had two children. He migrated to Australia in 1938 under the exemptions allowed for hiring of store assistants, and worked in his father's store in Tumut. But he could not bring out his wife, Chen, or the children. When the Second World War broke out Richard stayed in Australia, while his wife and children remained in the family village and avoided famine. Richard brought out his son Danny in 1950 under the student exemption provisions, but it was not until 1952 that the whole family was reunited. The Ah Gow and Doon cases prove just how difficult it was to arrange family re-unions in the early to mid 1900s and the heartlessness of a government policy, which sought to deny and at best frustrate them.[413]

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[411] Series A1, 1917/16652, NAA, Canberra.

[412] Paul Macgregor, 'Dreams of Jade and Gold. Chinese families in Australia's history'.

[413] Information provided by Grace Ching, October 2011.

Form No. 21.

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA. No. 07/570

Immigration Restriction Acts 1901-1905 and Regulations.

CERTIFICATE EXEMPTING FROM DICTATION TEST.

I, John Baxter actg the Collector of Customs for the State of New South Wales in the said Commonwealth, hereby certify that Willie Shai Hee hereinafter described, who is leaving the Commonwealth temporarily, will be excepted from the provisions of paragraph (a) of Section 3 of the Act if he returns to the Commonwealth within a period of three years from this date.

Date 29 Nov 07

DESCRIPTION.

Nationality Chinese — Birthplace Canton

Age 28 years — Complexion Dark

Build Medium — Hair Brown

Particular marks Scar on left cheek bone

(For impression of hand see back of this document.)

PHOTOGRAPHS.

Full Face — Profile

Date of departure Dec 07 — Destination China

Ship Nikko Maru

Date of return 30.5.10 — Ship Aldenham

Port Sydney

Customs Officer

1907

Book No. 166

Form No. 21. DUPLICATE.

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA. No. 94

Immigration Act 1901-1912 and Regulations.

CERTIFICATE EXEMPTING FROM DICTATION TEST.

I, William Henry Barkley the Collector of Customs for the State of NEW SOUTH WALES in the said Commonwealth, hereby certify that Willie Shai Hee hereinafter described, who is leaving the Commonwealth temporarily, will be excepted from the provisions of paragraph (a) of Section 3 of the Act if he returns to the Commonwealth within a period of THREE YEARS from this date.

Date 20 2 15

DESCRIPTION.

Nationality Chinese — Birthplace Canton

Age 36 years — Complexion Dark

Build Medium — Hair Brown

Particular marks Scar on left cheekbone

(For impression of hand see back of this document.)

PHOTOGRAPHS.

Date of departure 22 2 15 — Port of Embarkation Sydney

Ship Nikko Maru — Destination China

Date of return 26 JUN 1916 — Ship St Albans

Port Sydney

Customs Officers.

1915

PRE-PAID WARRANT No. 3969

Book No. 329

Form No. 21. DUPLICATE.

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA. No. 100

Immigration Act 1901-1920 and Regulations.

CERTIFICATE EXEMPTING FROM DICTATION TEST.

I, WILLIAM HENRY BARKLEY the Collector of Customs for the State of NEW SOUTH WALES in the said Commonwealth, hereby certify that Willie Shai Hee hereinafter described, who is leaving the Commonwealth temporarily, will be excepted from the provisions of paragraph (a) of Section 3 of the Act if he returns to the Commonwealth within a period of THREE YEARS from this date.

Date 14 March 1922

DESCRIPTION.

Nationality Chinese — Birthplace Canton

Age 43 years — Complexion Dark

Build Medium — Hair Brown

Particular marks Scar on left cheek bone

(For impression of hand see back of this document.)

PHOTOGRAPHS.

Date of departure 19/3/22 — Port of Embarkation Sydney

Ship St Albans — Destination China

Date of return — Ship St Albans

Port Sydney

Customs Officers.

1922

PRE PAID WARRANT No.

Book No. 508

Form No. 21. DUPLICATE.

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA. No 094

Immigration Act 1901-1925 and Regulations.

CERTIFICATE EXEMPTING FROM DICTATION TEST.

I, GEORGE FINLAY ASHTON MITCHELL the Collector of Customs for the State of NEW SOUTH WALES in the said Commonwealth, hereby certify that Willie Shai Hee hereinafter described, who is leaving the Commonwealth temporarily, will be excepted from the provisions of paragraph (a) of Section 3 of the Act if he returns to the Commonwealth within a period of from the date of departure shown below.

Geo. F. A. Mitchell, Collector of Customs.

Date 7. 1933

DESCRIPTION.

Nationality Chinese — Birthplace Canton

Age 54 years — Complexion Dark

Hair Black

Eyes Dark

Particular marks Scar on left cheek, black mole on forehead

(For thumb prints, see back of this document.)

PHOTOGRAPHS.

Date of Departure 15th July 1933 — Port of Embarkation Sydney

Ship Tanda — Destination China

Date of Return 20-6-35 — Ship Tanda

Port Sydney

Customs Officers.

1935

William Shai Hee's CEDT documents, from 1910 to 1933.

National Archives of Australia

Diaolous in Kaiping, Guangdong Province, China.
www.china-tour.cn/China-Pictures/Diaolou.htm

The final twist concerns Florence Ching and her son Raymond, who were visiting their village in China when Raymond died. His birth certificate was then given to Ng Kwok Nung, who migrated to Australia under his new identity and later married Grace Doon, one of Esther's daughters. By coincidence, and unbeknown to each other at the time, the new Raymond came out to Australia on the same boat as Richard Doon.[414]

The Shai Hee family from Tumut also had some issues with the immigration authorities. On one of his trips to China William married Chin See, but had to return to Australia to attend to his businesses and leave Chin See in the home village, Hem-Ning, Hoe-Sun, (near Guangzhou), where his first son, Ted, was born. A year later Chin See and Ted arrived in Australia under temporary visas. The family stayed in Tumut for six years and more children were born; Jean, Allan, Eva and Reg. In 1933 the family returned to China for the children's education. Again, William had to return to Australia. This time he took Ted, but the rest of the family remained behind, including the new born Joe. After the Japanese invasion of China the family went to Hong Kong and later arrived in Australia.[415]

William's concerns with the ever-present possibility that Chin See and Ted could be deported from Australia, led him to build two homes in China in the 1920s. He may also have had in mind living in China permanently because of his extensive business interests. Although only about two years old at the time, Joe remembers that one of the houses was very large, with a high grey wall around it. His brother Reg remembers that the houses had two storeys, and that while in China, his father, mother and siblings stayed in one, while the two sons and a daughter from his father's first marriage (the wife had died in China) stayed in the other. The families slept upstairs and some of the livestock was kept downstairs. Such buildings were (and still are) referred to as diaolous, (meaning watchtowers or fortified multi-storey towers). They were built by overseas Chinese in the event that they returned to China after making their fortune overseas. The buildings were generally made of reinforced concrete, and built with high walls or towers to serve as lookouts and protection against attacks from bandits, who regarded these wealthy families as 'fair game', and as protection against floods.

Most diaolous are located in the Sze Yap district of Guangdong Province, the home of so many Chinese

[414] Information provided by Grace Ching, October 2011.

[415] Joe and Reg Shai Hee, 'An Anecdote on the life of Chin See Shai-Hee', information from Chris and Joe Shai Hee, February 2012.

immigrants to Australia, New Zealand and the Americas in the late 19th century. Kidnapping was an ever-present risk. The experiences of James Wong Chuey's adopted son have been recounted. Another kidnapping incident involved the Shai Hee family. In their Chinese home Chin See employed a nanny to look after the children. One day she asked the Chinese nanny to kill a duck. The nanny said she couldn't find a knife and Chin See went to look for one. While she was gone the nanny ran away with Reg, who was then only a baby, and went to the docks to sell him. Obviously the sons of the overseas Chinese brought a very good price at that time. After a frantic search Chin See caught up with them and took Reg back (the fate of the nanny is unknown).[416]

Continued concerns about deportation in the post World War II period led William to approach Rose Chuey, the widow of James Wong Chuey, for assistance. She in turn approached a neighbour, Clarrie Hogue, who in 1952 wrote to the Minister for Immigration, Harold Holt, and the then Federal Liberal Party member for Warringah, (and obviously a close friend), Professor F. A Bland, to ask that Chin See, and two of the children, be granted permanent exemption to live in Australia, instead of being given permission to remain here for short periods only. He said that it seemed to be 'very harsh treatment of this family and a shocking waste of time by the Department having to review the case every few years or so'. Hogue described the family as 'fine citizens', stating that William's grandfather had come to Australia about 155 years ago and helped develop the country by cutting down trees and building roads, and that William had been in business in Australia for 58 years, paying taxes and giving employment to many people. The family were 'one of our pioneers' and had 'done very fine work'. He had known the family (who he said had been related to the late Mr Chuey and his wife) for many years. The Chuey family had been neighbours of his in Cremorne for a long time, Mr Chuey having been for many years one of the leading Chinese merchants in Sydney and the country.[417]

Harold Holt, the Minister for Immigration, agreed that Chin See and the two children be granted permission to remain in Australia without having to apply for periodic extensions of their CEDTs.[418] In a letter to Hogue, Bland stated that:

> I wish we could have people with the reasonableness of Harold Holt. You have got to remember, however, that this White Australia country looks askance at every 'furriner'.
>
> I have been arguing that the world is full enough of hardship and misery without our deliberately adding to the volume by refusing families the joy or re-union, when all their world had been destroyed by circumstances over which they had no control.[419]

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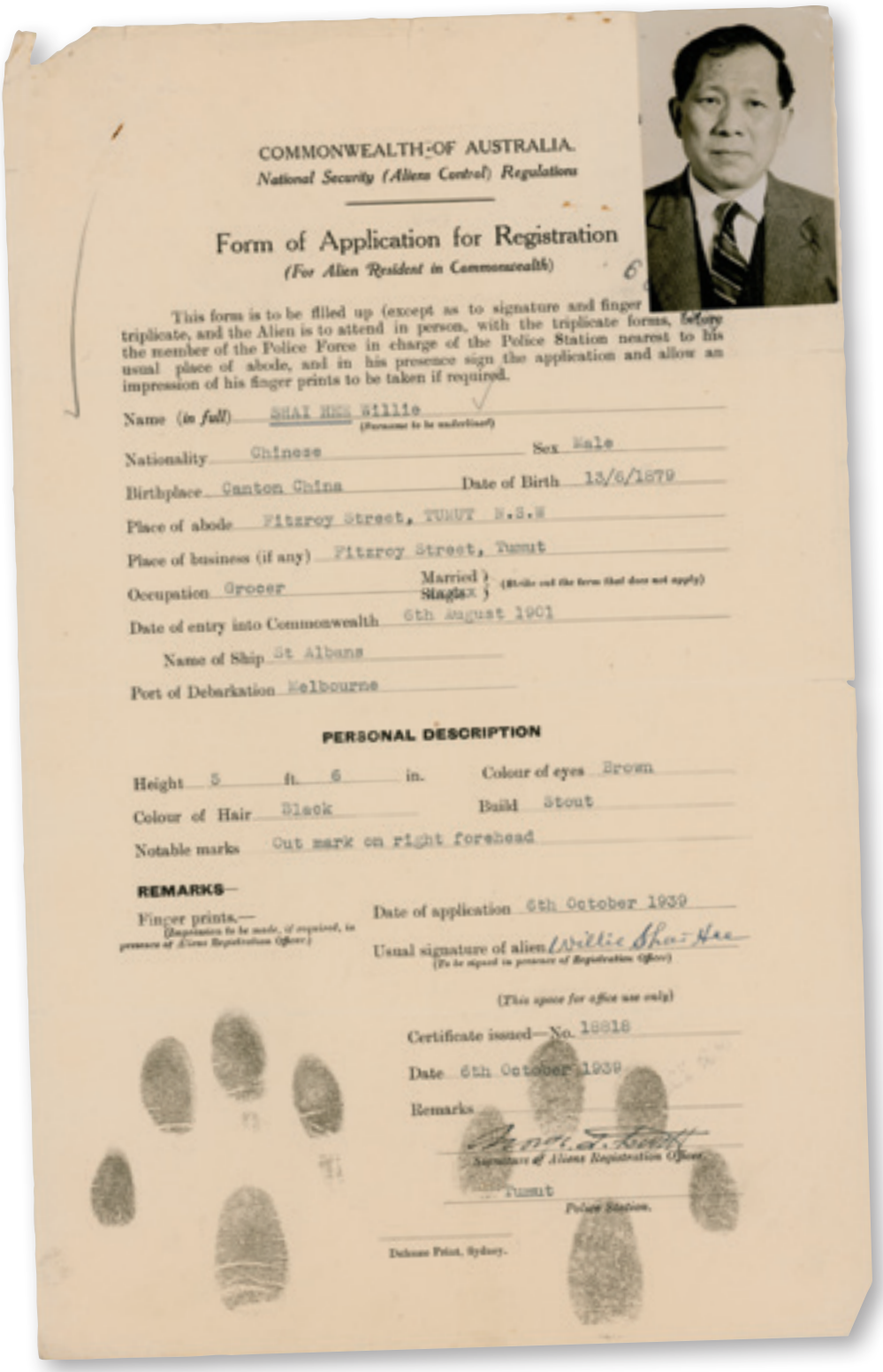
[416] Tan, Jin Hua, Selia, 'Kaiping Diaolou and Its Associated Villages: Documenting the Process of Application to the World Heritage List'; thesis submitted for a Master of Science degree, University of Hong Kong, September 2007; information from Reg andJoe Shai Hee and Jean Chin (née Shai Hee), February 2012.

[417] Letter from Clarrie Hogue to Harold Holt, Minister for Immigration, November 1952. (courtesy of Chris Shai Hee).

[418] Letter from Harold Holt, Minister for Immigration to Professor F.A. Bland, M.P, 5 December 1952 (courtesy of Chris Shai Hee).

[419] Letter from F. A. Bland to Clarrie Hogue, 15 December 1952 (courtesy of Chris Shai Hee).



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

National Security (Aliens Control) Regulations

Form of Application for Registration

(For Alien Resident in Commonwealth)

This form is to be filled up (except as to signature and finger triplicate, and the Alien is to attend in person, with the triplicate forms, before the member of the Police Force in charge of the Police Station nearest to his usual place of abode, and in his presence sign the application and allow an impression of his finger prints to be taken if required.

Name (*in full*) SHAI HEE Willie
(Surname to be underlined)

Nationality Chinese Sex Male

Birthplace Canton China Date of Birth 13/6/1879

Place of abode Fitzroy Street, TUMUT N.S.W

Place of business (if any) Fitzroy Street, Tumut

Occupation Grocer Married / Single (Strike out the term that does not apply)

Date of entry into Commonwealth 6th August 1901

Name of Ship St Albans

Port of Debarkation Melbourne

PERSONAL DESCRIPTION

Height 5 ft. 6 in. Colour of eyes Brown

Colour of Hair Black Build Stout

Notable marks Cut mark on right forehead

REMARKS—

Finger prints.— (Impressions to be made, if required, in presence of Alien Registration Officer.)

Date of application 6th October 1939

Usual signature of alien Willie Shai Hee
(To be signed in presence of Registration Officer)

(*This space for office use only*)

Certificate issued—No. 18818

Date 6th October 1939

Remarks

Signature of Alien Registration Officer

Tumut
Police Station.

Defence Print, Sydney.

William Shai Hee's application to register as an "alien Resident", 1939, a month after Australia joined WWII.
National Archives of Australia

Conclusion

Much of the foregoing highlights just how difficult life was for many Chinese people in Australia. They were not exactly welcomed into the country and were often reminded of that in the press; they were the alien 'other' and were not allowed to forget it. Much of the bullying and taunting of individuals on the streets, school grounds or the work place was never recorded, and far less prosecuted. These thoughtless acts, combined with intemperate language occasionally used by the press, would have been difficult to bear, and deep psychological scarring or worse was sometimes the result. The Chinese presence in the Riverina was, however, mainstream and spanned several generations to the present day. At times they were a significant proportion of the adult male population, and their camps and daily aspects of their lives such as the festivals, court appearances and burial ceremonies were an ever-present reality. It is a story of success; the triumph of an alien people in an alien land, far removed from their kith and kin and the verdant fields and abundant streams of their native Guangdong Province. Sadly, with a few notable exceptions, however, much of this history has been lost, or at best, marginalised. Hopefully, the Museum of the Riverina's interest has helped redress some of this neglect, and pointed the way for a major rewrite of colonial and post colonial history, particularly in the area of race relations and regional economic and social history.

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