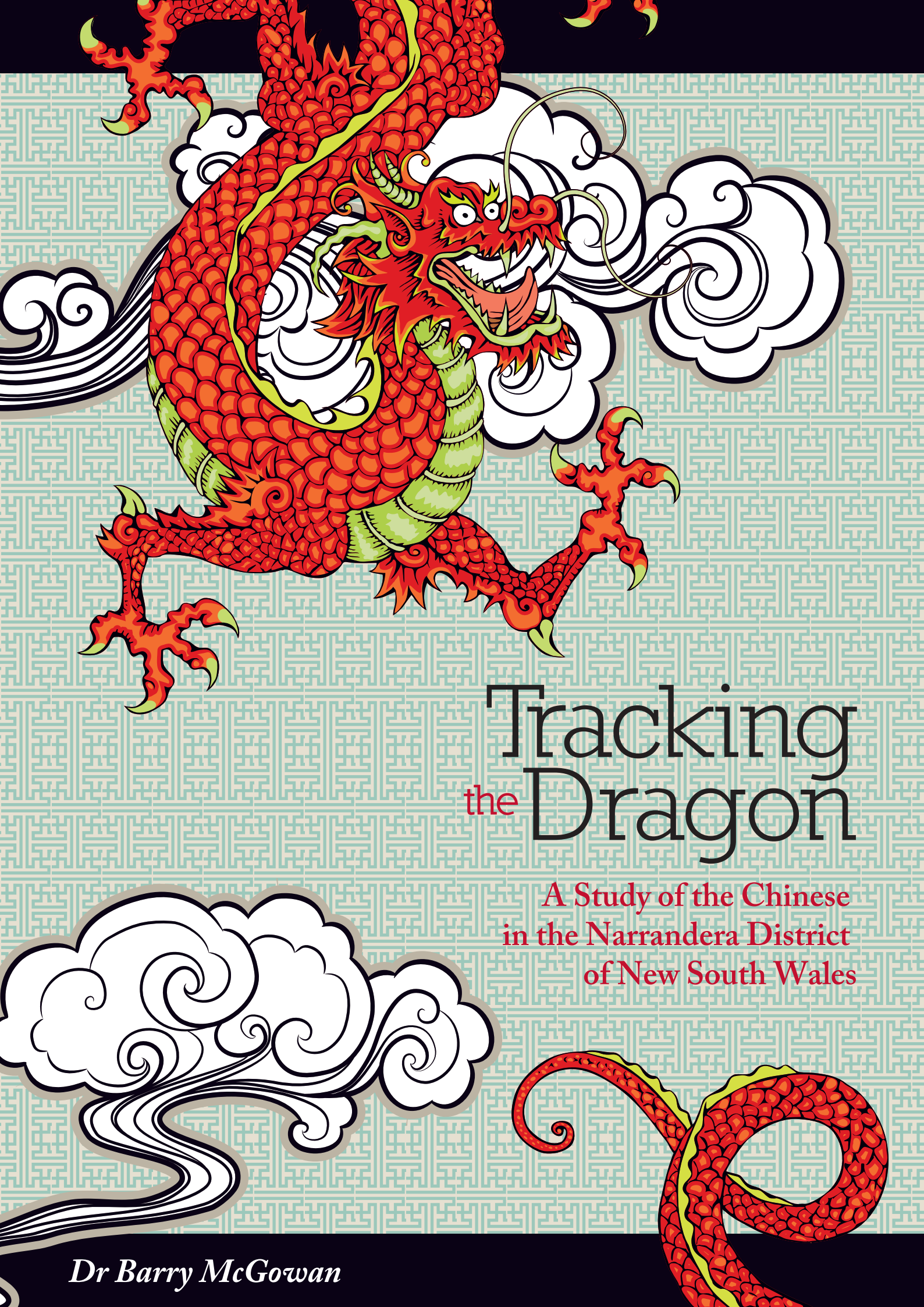

Tracking the Dragon

A Study of the Chinese in the Narrandera District of New South Wales

Dr Barry McGowan

Tracking the Dragon

The history of the Chinese in the Narrandera District of New South Wales

Dr Barry McGowan

Wagga Wagga
Museum of the Riverina

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Written and edited by Dr Barry McGowan

Editor: Genevieve Mott

Designer: Suz Keough

Object Photographer: Thomas Hull

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Contents

Introduction

The project 'Tracking the Dragon: Further Studies of the Chinese in the Riverina' consists of fully annotated and illustrated essays on the Hay, Narrandera, Temora, Tumut and Wagga Wagga districts in southern NSW. It follows on from the exhibition 'Tracking the Dragon. A History of the Chinese people in the Riverina', which was held 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. Because of the large body of new material that came to light after the exhibition it was considered that a more detailed study of the region was warranted.[1]

From the outset it should be noted that there is some overlap between the separate regional essays. Put simply, the Chinese people were very mobile, readily moving to where employment and kinship could be found. Intermarriage was also very common, and the interconnectedness between different Chinese families is striking. Hence Wagga's Chinese history will include references to families and businesses in Junee, Narrandera, Hay and Tumut, to name but four towns. For some districts the sources are silent over certain time periods, as 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.

[1] Barry McGowan, *Tracking the Dragon. A History of the Chinese in the Riverina*, Museum of the Riverina, Wagga Wagga, Migration Heritage Centre of New South Wales and the Powerhouse Museum, Sydney, 2010. The exhibition was held at the Albury Museum in May 2011. Geographically, the Riverina was defined as the area from Hillston, Booligal and Balranald in the arid west to Tumut and Adelong in the east, south to the Murray River, and north to Temora.

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. These early arrivals came as indentured labourers. The men were indentured in Amoy (Xiamen), China 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 weighted heavily in the employer's favour, many of whom were also magistrates.

It was not until the mid-1860s that the 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. Many of their descendants live in the region today.

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. Only 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 both Sub-Inspector Martin Brennan and a prominent Chinese entrepreneur, Mei Quong Tart (hereafter referred to as the Brennan Report), 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. Using a simple method of extrapolation the total Chinese population in the Riverina in 1883 could have been about 2200. And 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 presence in these districts occurred well after that in the Riverina, and by 1901 the Chinese population was 2,550.[2] 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 to194. Narrandera's growth was explosive, for in the 1871 Census only 11 Chinese called it home. By 1891, Narrandera's

[2] Cathie May, *Topsawyers: The Chinese in Cairns*, Studies in North Queensland History, No.6, James Cook University, Townsville, p.14; '1871 Census', *Votes and Proceedings*, New South Wales Legislative Assembly, Vol.2, 1872, pp.324-429; Edmund Fosebery, 'Chinese (Information Respecting, Residents in the Colony, 1878), *Votes and Proceedings*, New South Wales Legislative Assembly, 1878-1879, Sydney, pp.469-473; Sub-Inspector Martin Brennan, "Chinese Camps', *Votes and Proceedings*, New South Wales Legislative Assembly, 1883-1884.

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

Chinese population had fallen to 124, and by 1901, even further to 58. An important caveat with the Census figures, however, is that they refer to country of birth, and exclude children born to Chinese or European Chinese families in Narrandera or elsewhere in Australia. This is an important qualification, for several Chinese or part Chinese families lived in the Narrandera district in the 1890s and early 1900s.[3]

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.[4] And the 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 town was Chinese.[5] 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

[3] 1871 Census, pp.324-429; Fosebery, 'Chinese (Information Respecting, Residents in the Colony)', 1878; pp.469-473; Brennan, "Chinese Camps'; *Eleventh Census, New South Wales, Taken on the night of the 5th April 1891*, 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.

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

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

immigrants to NSW in the gold rush and post gold rush years 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 (See) Yap district (counties of Kaiping, Xinhui, Taishan 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.[6] 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.[7] These differences notwithstanding, overall the population was relatively homogeneous. In overseas countries such as the USA many more provinces were represented and the scope for fragmentation and division was much greater.[8] It was also an overwhelmingly male population. As Williams has remarked, the primary role for a Chinese woman on marriage was not to care for her husband but to support his parents. This attitude virtually guaranteed 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.[9]

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. And 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 their overthrow, and the countryside devastated by a succession of highly disruptive events such as uprisings by clan and secret society members, feuds, the Opium Wars, and the Taiping rebellion and its fierce suppression. The rebellion was the most bloody civil war in human history, and in Guangdong Province alone, about one million people died.[10]

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[6] 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, pp.88-91.

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

[8] Cai, Shaoqing, 'On the Overseas Chinese Secret Societies of Australia', *New Zealand Journal of Asian Studies*, 4, 1, June 2002, pp.30-45.

[9] 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.

[10] 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; Frederic Wakeman Jr, *Strangers at the Gate. Social Disorder in South China 1839-1861*, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles,1997, pp.149-156.

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

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, and 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 position, 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 been killed, but some escaped with the help of the foreign legations, and perhaps Clarrie Leslie's father was one of these men.[11]

As the foregoing suggests, the new migrants were not coolies, but rather free or semi free. Most entered 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 native place associations and fraternal organisations such as the secret societies, monitored the migrants until their debt was

[11] *Junee Southern Cross*, 4 November 1999; Pete 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.

paid.[12] 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'.[13]

[12] Lindsay Smith, 'Hidden Dragons. The archaeology of mid-to late-nineteenth-century Chinese communities in south-eastern New South Wales', PhD, ANU, 2006; Lindsay Smith, '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.

[13] 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'. 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 weighted heavily in the employer's 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.[14]

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 John Peter, owner of Gumly Gumly Station. 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' on him when a 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

[14] 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.

request was refused. The men were, however, later fed by other means. [15]

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.[16]

During the court proceedings it transpired that there were important discrepancies between the agreements signed in Amoy and those signed in Sydney. Both sets of agreements provided for a period of servitude of 5 years at 12s a month. However, the Chinese agreement stated that sugar was to be provided, but no mention of this was found in the English contracts, a discrepancy which should have nullified the contracts. Furthermore, on their arrival in Sydney they were not given a translation of the English version of the agreements, which were signed by another Chinese man, one signature making do for all. Neither did the agreements have the signature of their prospective employer, Robert Campbell, which meant that if no work could be found for the men then they could have been turned away to starve. [17]

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 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.[18]

These incidents gave rise to an active correspondence to the editor of the *Sydney Morning Herald*. Writing on 8 May 1852, one writer stated that there was a strong 'preference for English labour' if it could be had, but the difficulties that the pastoralists had felt some 11 months ago were now 'far less

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

than what was expected eleven months ago, and that a large share of this benefit must be allowed to the 1000 Chinese who during that time had been imported. [19]Another writer in the same edition stated that during the last few years, 'thanks to my Chinese', he had been a successful sheep farmer'. He had never been so before, but now with their help he was not afraid of the effect of the gold rushes on his farm. He hoped that they would 'continue to assist the prosperity of the colony by labouring for themselves then, or when they return home, thereby encourage more of their countrymen to come to the 'golden shores of Australia'.

The editor of the *Sydney Morning Herald* was less enthusiastic. On 22 April, he refuted the charges of slave dealing brought by opponents of indentured labour and argued that there was as much fairness in the selection, shipment and conveyance of the Chinese as there was with immigrants from England. He also stated, however, that the 'employment of an inferior race of men as labourers is a great evil'.,and that 'We need go no further than America for an example and a warning'. He considered that because of their 'ignorance of our language, customs, and laws, they become ... hewers of wood and drawers of water'. Deprived of a wife and children the Chinese were 'in a worse position than the negro slave in America, who, though deprived of the blessing of personal freedom, has at least the solace of domestic ties to cheer his hours of rest'. On 24 April 1852, he was even more forthright, referring to the 'sordid traffic' in Chinese labour, the squatters having had to turn to Chinese labour or be ruined. He considered their importation to be a 'grand mistake', for 'every Chinaman who sets his foot on these shores keeps out ten Englishmen'. He considered that 'the encouragement of Chinese immigration is tantamount to the discouragement of English immigration'.

McLeay's role in the use of indentured labour was to haunt him for several years, and 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.[20]

Chu Yin Sum and Hing Gim, the grandfather and father respectively of William Shai Hee, a well known and respected storekeeper in Tumut in the twentieth century, were also indentured labourers. According to William's wife, Chin See Shai Hee, they came out on the same boat with other men from the same village prior to the 1850s gold rushes, and along with 300 to 400 other Chinese men worked for the Victorian Government, building roads, and later the railways, clearing rocks and trees and cutting sleepers. Their pay was low, about 2s 6d a week, but out of that they made enough to cover expenses and send some back to China, ensuring that young William obtained a good education. By the time William arrived in Australia in 1899 Hing Gim had opened a store in Tumut, Chu Yin Sum having returned to China.[21]

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[19] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 May 1852.

[20] *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.

[21] Information from Chris and Jean Chin (née Shai Hee), February 2012; Interview of Chin See by Chris

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.[22] The Chinese miners were integral to this success story, and because their presence eventually impacted on the Riverina, their involvement 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.[23]

Chinese miners also worked on the NSW goldfields, but 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 ten shillings a year, one twelfth of what it had been. Armed with a right, men could also pasture stock and obtain water supplies on Crown Land.[24] Their main destinations in the Riverina were Adelong and the Black Range goldfields near Albury. Elsewhere in southern NSW, they arrived in large numbers on the Braidwood, Kiandra and the Lambing Flat goldfields (near present day Young). The 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 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.[25]

Most Chinese miners in the Riverina were located on the Adelong goldfields. To the horror of some European observers and the applause of others, the Chinese miners were very successful. 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

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Shai Hee, March 1984.

[22] 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.

[23] Cronin, *Colonial Casualties*, pp.135-149; Serle, *The Golden Age*, p.382.

[24] Serle (1977), *The Golden Age*, pp.324-31. In 1855 an entry tax, poll tax and immigration restrictions were introduced into Victoria. 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. The Victorian Government introduced a residence tax in 1857. For NSW legislation see Barry McGowan, *Dust and Dreams, Mining Communities in Southern New South Wales*, UNSWPress, 2010, pp.29-30.

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

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

they have taken up.[26]

The main focus of the Chinese miners was Upper Adelong and the area below the Adelong Falls, and soon they were using their new wealth to buy up claims from the European miners. A correspondent remarked that the Chinese were obtaining all the valuable claims on the Adelong Creek, and 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'.[27] 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'.[28]

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

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

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

PASTORAL WORKERS

The main occupations for the Chinese in the Riverina were in the pastoral sector, particularly once the gold diggings became less profitable. Chinese men were a vital source of labour for pastoralists, who used the services of Chinese contractors to engage large groups to ringbark trees and clear their properties of timber. According to Buxton, ringbarking involved cutting a continuous ring of chips around the trunk which avoided the work invoved in cutting down trees and grubbing stumps afterwards and 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 young tree suckers had to be cut annually for five to six years after ringbarking. Throughout the 1880s newspapers advertised thousands of acres of "ringing and suckering", almost all of which was done by the Chinese gangs.[29] 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 commenting 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.[30] The Chinese were also used 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 on the stations are rare, the most comprehensive being that of George Gow, a station manager and later a stock agent. One of the Narrandera contractors was Wong Gooey.

> 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 "Chinamen's work", and it was usually left to the latter.'[31]
>
> 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 wagon 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.[32]

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

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[29] Buxton, *The Riverina* 1861-1891, pp.247-248.

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

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

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

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 for this purpose.[33] Sam Yett worked closely with contractors such as Wong Gooey and Ah Hem, while Ah Sam engaged the Chinese gardeners and possibly the cooks. Gow tells the story of an incident involving a Chinese gardener, who on being discharged, pulled up many of the plants he had put in and made for Gow with a tomahawk. With the help of another man Gow disarmed the gardener and bundled him into his cart. Not long after, Gow phoned Ah Sam just as the gardener was returning to the camp. On getting Gow's call Ah Sam gave the gardener a good thrashing, some of the proceedings being overheard by Gow on the phone.[34] George Hock Shung, Sam Yett's nephew, succeeded him on his death in 1903, and was often referred to as George Sam Yett.[35]

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. 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 scrubbing. six were working on Bygoo, also scrubbing, 14 were working on Nariah, one on Conapaira, 11 on 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 likely to be the 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 being 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. Here, Ah Gan and Ah Slam were the likely gang leaders.[36]

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 box trees were also ringed, and the work often followed up by subsequent grubbing of the shoots or suckers. Seedlings also had to be dealt with repeatedly.[37] 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 Mr. Clayton was asked to arrange

[33] Barellan Progress Association and Improvement Society, *Early Days in Barellan and District*, pp.35-40.

[34] Hilda M. Freeman, *Murrumbidgee Memories and Riverina Reminiscences. A Collection of Old Bush History*, the author, Emu Plains, 1985, p.141.

[35] Barellan Progress Association and Improvement Society, *Early Days in Barellan and District*, pp.20-23, 50-54; Buxton, *The Riverina*, pp.262-3, 280.

[36] 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, page numbers not available.

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

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.'[38]

When the property was taken over by Gow, so too were Gooey and his gang, who were camped near a dam on the Merribee boundary. Gow remarked that 'they had a good garden going, and when they left the following year vegetables practically grew wild there'. During the course of the contract Gooey would come from Narrandera to visit the camp, and he was held responsible for the proper completion of the work.

> One day, when the contract was well under way he came up and asked for his first draw, which was £1000. He wanted it in cash rather than a cheque as it was easier to divide between the men. He banked the money in Narrandera for the gang who could not leave work to do it for themselves. He did some clearing after at Bynya, but he was failing fast so the Chinese community sent him back to China with some other old men.[39]

The land clearing contracts could be strongly contested, as the Chinese workers were not servile. [40] C.F. McDonald, the manager of Wantabadgery station in the early 1880s, recounted the instance of the Chinese labourers refusing to work at the prevailing rates and bargaining for higher ones.[41] Gow also 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 the men would have lived at the Narrandera camp and belonged to the same district and fraternal associations.[42]

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 area. But a large number of Chinese ringbarkers remained in the Riverina for years 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 by then the main labour contractor.[43] King Fan's obituary writer said that he had a lucrative business as a clearing contractor and employed gangs of as many as 20 or 30 men,

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[38] Barellan Progress Association and Improvement Society, *Early Days in Barellan and District*, pp.22-23; 50-54.

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

[40] Cathie May, *Topsawyers: The Chinese in Cairns 1870 to 1920*, Studies in North Queensland History no.6, James Cook University, Townsville, 1984; Chan, *This Bitter Sweet Soil. The Chinese in California Agriculture, 1860–1910.*

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

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

[43] Tubbo Station, *Ledgers*, 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

his contracts taking him to practically all the district and as far away as Rankin's Springs.[44]

Other than Gow's account, details of the lives of the Chinese labourers on specific stations are rare, but some information can 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. Other workers such as cooks and market gardeners were paid individually at rates comparable with European wages. For instance, 25 Chinese men were engaged during 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. As Ah Foot was paid £61 18s 2d he must have had several men working under him. In 1891, Ah Sam and party and Ah Goon and party were engaged on wire netting, and Ah How and three men were engaged as fumigators. In 1895, Mack Goon was engaged as a cook at the house. The turnover rate was high, however. In 1896 and 1897 Lee Chew was employed as a gardener, in 1898 the gardener was Lee Lay. and in 1899 Ah Ling, The Tubbo Letter Book is also revealing. The correspondence was mainly between the station manager and the contractor, care of Sam Yett or George Hock Shung (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 in 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

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

get the contract done in time he would need to engage 10 more men.[45]

A rare account of the Chinese on Tubbo was published in 1866, when Chong Kow was tried for the attempted murder of Ah Pong, a hawker who had been camped near the Tubbo wash-pen for about four weeks. He had been asleep under his cart when Kow chopped him on the head with a tomahawk, attacking him a few more times and chasing him into a gunyah.[46] A Chinese camp was also located on Devlin's Ganmain station in 1898. Several Chinese men accused Michael Ryan, an occasional visitor to the camp, of firing a gun over their heads, a misdemeanour for which he was convicted and fined.[47] At Deniliquin one of the contractors was Ah Sue. In early 1894 he had about 60 men working at Hartwood and Coree stations. He purchased his goods from a Melbourne merchant and had them sent to Sing Lee's store in town.[48]

In commenting on the way in which the Chinese ringbarked and cleared the stumps, historian Max Leitch 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 pole 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.[49]

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 of the dams do not have steep sides and are gently sloped.[50] A Lockhart resident, Annie Gleeson, recalled the Chinese sinking a round dam on Strathallen station, and 'carrying buckets of dirt out and emptying them painfully at the bank'.[51] 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, 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. According to local informants, the Chinese gardener may have been Ah Ling, who travelled the immediate district selling his vegetables. There are at least three hut

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[45] Tubbo Station, *Ledgers, 1866-1930*; Tubbo Station, *Letter Boo*k, Boxes 21-24, Charles Sturt University Regional Archives, Wagga Wagga.

[46] Wagga *Wagga Express* (*Wagga Express*), 17 November 1866.

[47] *Narrandera Ensign*, 5 August 1898.

[48] Deniliquin *Pastoral Times* (*Pastoral Times*), January 19, 1894.

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

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

[51] Lockhart and District Arts Council, *The Green Street Pavers. Golden Memories*, Lockhart and District Arts Council, Lockhart, 1999, p.368.

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

sites near the small dam, and a large scatter of artefacts such as opium vials.[52]

The Chinese worked on many other properties in the Yerong Creek area. In 1882 some were working Mittagong Station, ringbarking in the Horse Swamp Yards, and felling trees in the Rock, Blue Hills, Plain and Stake paddocks. Dams were also sunk at this time. In his diary, William Ilett stated that he was marking a line for the Chinese, which suggests that they were also engaged in fencing.[53] Chinese labourers were also employed on James Kelly's Cambusdoon Station. According to the Cambusdoon leger in February 1903Chinese grubbers were contracted to clear 160 hectares at 2/6 (about 15 c) per acre, about £50 all up. But they were only paid £46/6/3 because the contract was not completed. In 1905 Jimmie the Chinaman started grubbing. A Chinese market garden was located on the creek.[54]

While the Wagga camp was the main source of Chinese labour in the district, 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 that he went as far as100 miles away and was often away for two and three weeks at a time.[55]

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[52] Black Mountain Projects, *Lockhart Heritage Inventory*, 2008, p.21; Yerong Creek Public School Centenary Committee, *Yerong Creek Public School Centenary 1881-1981*, the Committee, Yerong Creek, 1981, p.24.

[53] Yerong Creek Public School Centenary Committee, *Yerong Creek Public School Centenary 1881-1981*, p.24, 27.

[54] Yerong Creek Public School Centenary Committee, *Yerong Creek Public School Centenary 1881-1981*, pp.24-32.

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

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

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.[56]

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. Although, as will be discussed later, many men used illegal methods to avoid these restrictions, it is

[56] *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, pp.1-15; Rod Lancashire, 'European-Chinese Economic Interaction in a Pre-Federation Rural Australian Setting', *Rural Society*, Vol.10, No.2, 2000, pp.229-241.

difficult to contemplate that a man of Chen Ah Kew's standing would have done so. Historian, Rod Lancashire, suggests, however, 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.[57] 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.[58] 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.[59]

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.[60]

As with the Wahgunyah Chinese, over time, some Chinese labourers in the Riverina were recruited directly from China, under arrangements between leading Chinese merchants in Australia and recruiting companies, some of which were based in Hong Kong. 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; his father had been one of these recruits.[61] 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.[62] 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 were 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 district. In answer to the question, 'why not employ whites?', he was told 'The Chinamen do the work

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

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

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

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

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

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

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'.[63]

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.[64] 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 (sic) 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.[65]

Some Chinese men worked as shearers and wool classers. Andrew Learmonth, the owner of Groongal station, was reported to be experimenting with Chinese shearers (date unknown but perhaps the 1890s) because his white shearers had attempted to strike for better wages.[66] However, in the late 19th century Chinese shearers were generally 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.[67] 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 AWU. Alex Pack from Hay began shearing at Daisy Plains station, and in 1945, 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 was 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.[68] Another Chinese-Australian shearer was Clarrie Leslie (formerly Clarrie Chun). 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 clean, fast shearing. His team shore in sheds such as Glen Iris, Merybindinyah, Yammatree, Caragabool, Brindabella, Wantabadgery, Ballengoarrah, Dollar Vale and Cooba station, travelling as far as western

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

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

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

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

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

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

Queensland. Later, in partnership with Jack Neighbour, he went contract shearing himself. With a two stand portable shearing plant shearing they sheared in the open in the Snowy Mountains for many years.[69]

Mervyn Shung, Narrandera Chinese Camp site, 2009.
Barry McGowan

One of the best known 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, south 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, Pooginook, 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.[70]

Another well-known Chinese wool classer was Eric Doon from Tumut. After a short period in the family business, Eric decided to become a wool classer – which meant studying in Sydney for three years. In previous years, all the wool purchased from the farmers was baled and sent to Sydney or Albury to be classed by experienced wool classers: a very necessary but expensive process. Wool classers were in high demand, so it was celebrations all round when Eric became fully qualified in 1944.[71]

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

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

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

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.

MARKET GARDENERS

The economic value of the Chinese as market gardeners was equally appreciated, not only on the pastoral stations, but also in the towns. In his 1884, report Sub-Inspector Brennan stated that 'As gardeners they have no equals and Europeans are indebted to them for a thorough knowledge in the raising of vegetables [and the like]'. According to Maxwell some families in Narrandera (presumably before the influx of Chinese into the town) added stinging nettles to their cooking to make up for a lack of proper vegetables. Despite their falling numbers, by the 1920s the Chinese still supplied at least 90 per cent of the town's vegetables.[72]

Market gardening and fruit growing could be highly profitable, for it was relatively inexpensive to set up a garden, often on leased land and in partnership with other Chinese men. It was very labour intensive work, and the methods and technology differed little from that used in China for centuries past.[73] Equipment included hoes, shovels, rakes, harrows, ploughs, and heavy wooden shoulder yokes for carrying the watering cans. Sometimes the water was lifted from the creeks and rivers by pumps, but the task of watering the plants was always done with watering cans. The gardeners often raised stock, such as pigs, as well. Almost all town gardens were located near waterways, usually on the fringe of towns near the camps.

In the towns and on pastoral stations the gardeners lived in small huts, usually built of timber and galvanised iron, comparable in comfort with shepherds' huts and some shearers' quarters and with the huts in the Chinese camps. Small market gardener's huts can still be seen at Tupra station, west of Hay, the Homestead station (formerly Kerarbury) near Darlington Point, North Wagga Island, and Tubbo station west of Narrandera. At Tubbo the oldest hut has a shingle roof and measures six metres by two, with three bunks located on either side of the interior, and a bath tub. A larger fibro hut (also disused) with several rooms is located nearby.

Some of the early accounts of market gardening in the Riverina provide important insights into the methods and techniques used by the Chinese gardeners, and tell of the esteem with which the Chinese market gardeners were held by the local residents. 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 now 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.[74] 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.[75]

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[72] Brennan, 'Chinese Camps'; Maxwell,'The Chinese experience in Australia', no page numbers available.

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

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

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

Market gardeners' hut, Tubbo Station, Darlington Point, NSW.
Barry McGowan

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

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

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'.[76] In 1892, a Chinese market garden was established on land leased from the Council, and an engine and pump erected at a cost of £280. The reporter remarked that 'The enterprise of our Chinese friends merits the success which their indefatigable industry will no doubt command'.[77] On the occasion of Chinese New Year at Hillston in 1876, the local correspondent spoke very highly of the Chinese gardeners, of whom there were about 20 working in a cooperative arrangement, and 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'.[78] The first Chinese market garden at Darlington Point was established in 1880, when the town was still in its infancy; a year later it was described as 'fearfully and wonderfully irrigated' and a 'spectacular success'. The garden was 'washed by the Murrumbidgee River, watered by two wells, and traversed throughout by canals'.[79] 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.[80]

An account of market gardening at Hillston by Tom Parr in 1900 provides further insights into the

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

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

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

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

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

The Chinese camp and market gardens, Narrandera.
Parkside Cottage Museum, Narrandera

technology employed in some of the gardens.

> Their method of getting the water up to the surface from the river was by means of small buckets, say perhaps holding half a gallon … These were fastened to an endless chain and the buckets completed the circle, thus circulating a continuous stream of water. This set up was driven by a blindfolded horse going round and round continuously … The Chinamen flood irrigated some of their vegetables such as potatoes, pumpkin, etc., also their fruit trees. But much of the water was run down a drain from where it was pumped from the river, into small holes dug in the garden holding, say, about 300 gallons with a plank running into the water hole on one side and running out on the other side. The Chinamen operating had two huge watering cans on a bamboo stick across his shoulder, one can, one each side, and as he jogged
>
> through, he dipped both cans into the water, the cans having a spray nozzle on the spout.[81]

Most of the market gardens in Narrandera were located near the Chinese camp, on the banks of the Murrumbidgee River, and virtually surrounded the camp on all sides. One of the legendary gardeners was Harry King Fan who had a market garden near the Chinese camp for almost 40 years, delivering vegetables to customers in town. By the 1920s he was also Narrandera's largest labour contractor.[82]

Another well known gardener was Tip Nooey, who from about 1889 had a flourishing vegetable garden by the river on the outskirts of Narrandera. Joan Palmer remembered that her father got his cabbage and cauliflower seedlings from Tip rather than plant the seed himself, and Tip would happily drag them out by the roots, with father protesting that he would 'like a little earth with them'.[83] In 1925,

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

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

[83] Joan Austin Palmer, *Memories of a Riverina Childhood*, New South Wales University Press, 1993, pp.102-103.

Market Gardener Frank Agnea with his truck and a load of vegetables at Borambola Station, Wagga Wagga, NSW.
Private collection

he sold his business to Charlie Ah Kew and Kin Ho, and retired to Sydney.[84]

Joan Palmer remembered that for years at Canoon station, later Lake Midgeon Station

> We employed Chinese vegetable gardeners and they were all industrious men who wore frayed and faded denim before it became a fashion item and who spent all day among their plants, using their own system of irrigation, leaving in the evening for their primitive cottage on the edge of the swamp. As children we were concerned about these lonely little men, trying to earn enough to pay their fare back to the land of their birth and take enough money with them to confer kudos on the family they had left behind. That is what we thought at the time, but later evidence revealed that they were in a 'no win' situation from which only death or extreme age would release them. Scrub cutting work dwindled, and by the time we went to Midgeon, Chinese were employed almost solely as gardeners and hut cooks.[85]

At Wagga, the most extensive area of market gardening was in the lagoon area known as North Wagga Island, on the property of Mrs Brown, although some gardens were located at the Chinese camp in Fitzmaurice Street, on Tarcutta Street and elsewhere. The North Wagga gardens were still occupied in the 1940s, if not beyond. Gardeners in the 1930s and 1940s included Charlie Wong Hing, Frank Angnea, and his relatives George Amber Moy and his son Keith.[86]

At Albury, most of the 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

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

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

[86] Information supplied by Keith Moy, 2009, 2010; Claire McMullen, *Transcript of interview with Frank Rynehart*, Museum of the Riverina, Wagga Wagga, 2013.

The Chinese camp and gardens in flood, Narrandera, date unknown.
Parkside Cottage Museum, Narrandera

garden is still in situ, with water canals, mounds and barrow ways still visible. At Junee, almost all the Chinese gardens were located in the wet land area behind Broadway.[87]

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 gardens come from the flood reports in the local press. One of the most devastating floods in the district 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

> 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 and drowned even the roaring of the flood with their ceaseless jabber.[88]

At Darlington Point in 1900 a correspondent remarked that the 'poor unfortunate Chinese gardeners on the river banks are simply swamped out, their gardens a few days ago so full of produce and promise utterly ruined'. The police had considerable difficulty in persuading the Chinese to leave their dwellings.[89]

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87 Personal observations, the author, 2008-2010.

88 *Daily Advertiser*, 4 May 1870.

89 *Narrandera Ensign*, 20 July 1900.

> The ownership of the celestial gardens changed hands a little while ago, and the gardens were in splendid order previous to the inundation. The loss to the owners is great - estimated at £150 - but John is, for the most part, a resourceful creature, and when rallied out of his fatalism, will make a supreme effort to right himself again.[90]

A week later, however, the correspondent reported that the gardens were not as ruined as first thought.[91] In the 1925 flood the council and townspeople assisted the Chinese gardeners to wall in their garden, thereby saving a considerable crop of vegetables.[92]

In 1931, the Chinese gardens and homes at Narrandera were also flooded, along with many other gardens along the Murrumbidgee, particularly at Gundagai.[93] In 1951 floods again ravaged much of the Riverina. King Fan, the leading Chinese market gardener in Narrandera, remarked that the flood was the highest he had ever seen in the town, including the 1891 flood. 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. Further floods in June 1952 caused the evacuation of the Chinese market gardeners in Narrandera.[94]

[90] *Narrandera Ensign*, 20 July 1900.

[91] *Narrandera Ensign*, 27 July 1900.

[92] *Narrandera Ensign*, 13 June 1925.

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

[94] *Narrandera Argus*, 31 March 1950; *Daily Advertiser*, 21 June 1952.

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 Narrandera district. However, tobacco growing was an important industry in the Riverina 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. Other Chinese soon followed.[95] Almost certainly the first farmers were from the King Valley and Yackandandah areas of north east Victoria, where farming for tobacco, maize and hops had been commonplace for some time.[96]

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.[97] 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'.[98] Dang Ah Chee was one of the main tobacco entrepreneurs. In addition to Mr Wilkinson's farm at Springfield, he had leased about 300 acres [120 hectares] of alluvial land from John Jenkins of Nangus for tobacco growing.[99]

In 1887, a correspondent remarked that large quantities of tobacco were on road to the market, and that the growers were doing well, production being 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 devoured it.[100]

By 1888, the Chinese tobacco growers were firmly established in the Tarcutta area, at Hillas Creek and Lacmalac. But in other respects these were not happy times for the Chinese tobacco growers, as anti-Chinese feelings were running high in many parts of the colony. An Anti-Chinese League was established in Tumut in late 1887, and one of its main aims was to discourage European landowners from leasing land to the Chinese farmers. By the 1890s, a depression in the tobacco industry had forced many Chinese tobacco growers to leave.[101]

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

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

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

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

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

[99] *Gundagai Times*, 5 October 1886.

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

[101] *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

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 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.[102]

Some Chinese men turned to wheat farming and grazing on their own farms. One such man was James Fong of Broken Dam near Ariah Park. In 1876, he selected 40 acres [16 hectares] near the Broken Dam, where there was a hotel, but little else. Later, he built a store and outbuildings near the hotel. His selection was surveyed in 1881, by which time he had improved it with the construction of a house and store (which also acted as the receiving office for local mail).

He augmented his income from the store by selecting 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 over the next 18 months the boundary of the block was fenced and divided into three paddocks. An earth tank (dam) to provide stock water was added, and he commenced ringbarking and grubbing, with the use of Chinese contract labour. After his death in 1885, his wife Margaret married Millington Clarke. Millington died in 1897, leaving Margaret to run the property

[102] 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.

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

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 "O"

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

Margaret Clarke (formerly Fong) and her younger children outside the store at Broken Dam.
Private collection

and store on her own. By 1906 she owned over 1000 acres (405 hectares).[103] Bill Clarke, the second youngest of her sons, also farmed at Broken Dam on a 900 acre (360 hectares) property. He later sold out at and purchased a large holding at 'Dungary', to the west of Dubbo.[104] Several other sons also became farmers. Walter Fong sharefarmed for Mr I. Fisher at Beckom, and later, on the Thompson Brother's 'Murrill Creek' holding, near Ardlethan. When 'Murrill Creek' was eventually subdivided, Walter purchased a block and farmed there on his own account until 1947. Harry Fong established himself as a farmer on 'Jasper Woods' at Mirrool.[105]

Closer to Narranderra, Betty Menzies (née Choy) recalled the story that her maternal grandfather William Quong, worked with a farmer after school and asked him if one day he could have the corner of the main paddock, to which the farmer agreed on condition that he continue to work for him. He subsequently acquired the property and grew wheat on it. Later William 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.[106] The ubiquitous James Ah (Wong) Chuey owned a 600 acre [240 hectare] property near Junee, and was a wealthy grazier and wheat farmer.[107]

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[103] Bill Speirs, *The Beehive and the Broken Dam*, J.A. Bradley & Sons, Temora, 1987, pp.12-36.

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

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

[106] Discussions with Betty Menzies, Wagga, 2010.

[107] 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

Many Chinese were storekeepers. Some stores were located in the Chinese camps and others in 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 hired Chinese labour. 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 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.'[108] In October 1901, a rival store, Hun Chong, advertised themselves as 'The cheapest house in Narrandera'. In the same issue Sun Hong Shing advertised 'Better goods for less money', 'Better quality at less profit' and 'Better value with more satisfaction'.[109]

The Man Sing store at Temora was established in 1882, and was one of the first and most popular in the town. It was originally owned by George Mee Ling senior and his brother. Later, after George's death in China, it was managed by his daughter Annie, and her brothers, Albert, Andrew and George

[108] *Gundagai Times*, 25 December 1888; *Narrandera Ensign*, 17 August 1900.
[109] *Narrandera Ensign*, 25 October 1901.

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

Junior.[110] The Mee Lings frequently ran large advertisements, proclaiming in November 1895 that the store was '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 the family had established a store at West Wyalong. In January 1912, the Mee Lings advertised 'The Greatest Sale ever held in Temora', with 'Sensational Reductions in Prices'.[111] Later, many stores embraced other forms of advertising, such as calendars and matchboxes, with the company's name and logo. This occurred at the Mee Ling store at Temora and the Choy Brothers' businesses at Grong Grong.

To all appearances, it all seemed good healthy competition, but as with so many of their endeavours the success of the Chinese provoked resentment. At the monthly meeting of 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 principle of the Association by refusing to sell on the regular half holiday and after 6 pm on business days. Members visited Hun Cheong (Hun Chong?) and Sun Hong Sing (Shing?), who immediately promised to accede to the demand. 'Their readiness to comply with the request was a pleasant surprise to the deputation'.[112] 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

[110] Temora Centenary Committee, *Temora Yesterday and Today 1880-1890*, Temora Historical Society, Temora, 1980, p.250; discussions with Meredie Mee Ling, February and May 2012.

[111] *Temora Independent*, l6 November 1995, 20 January 1909, 12 January 1910.

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

country. The campaign was not successful and most Chinese stores continued for many years more.[113]

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, did not just rest with the provision of imports and other produce, but had a much wider social importance, particularly if reinforced by district and fraternal linkages. Like their Sydney counterparts, the country storekeepers helped with finding lodgings and jobs, an easy task where the storekeeper was also a labour contractor and/or a market gardener. They would also have helped in the purchase of travel documents such as shipping tickets and, applications for Certificates of Exemption from the Dictation Test (CEDTs), and with translation, the writing of letters and banking and remittance of money to China or elsewhere. Most remittances were in the form of bank drafts, arranged by the store and transmitted to a Hong Kong business or bank, and converted into Hong Kong dollars.[114] There were many such stores in the Riverina. One such store in Narrandera was owned by Sam Yett and his successor George Hock Shung. It was located in the main Chinese camp, and ideally placed to help the Chinese men. Another such store was owned by James Wong Chuey in Junee. [115]

An account of Dang Quong Wing's store in Tumut sheds some light on the way in which these stores operated:

> 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.[116]

William Shai Hee's Yee Hing Company store at Tumut was multifunctional too. His father, Hing Gim, 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 recalls that the store served as a type of headquarters for the Chinese people in the district. Jean remembers that many local Chinese men stayed at the store before returning to China, and that her father looked after the men, 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 remembers wooden cubicles at the back of the old shop and some opium containers, which suggests that the cubicles were sleeping quarters.[117]

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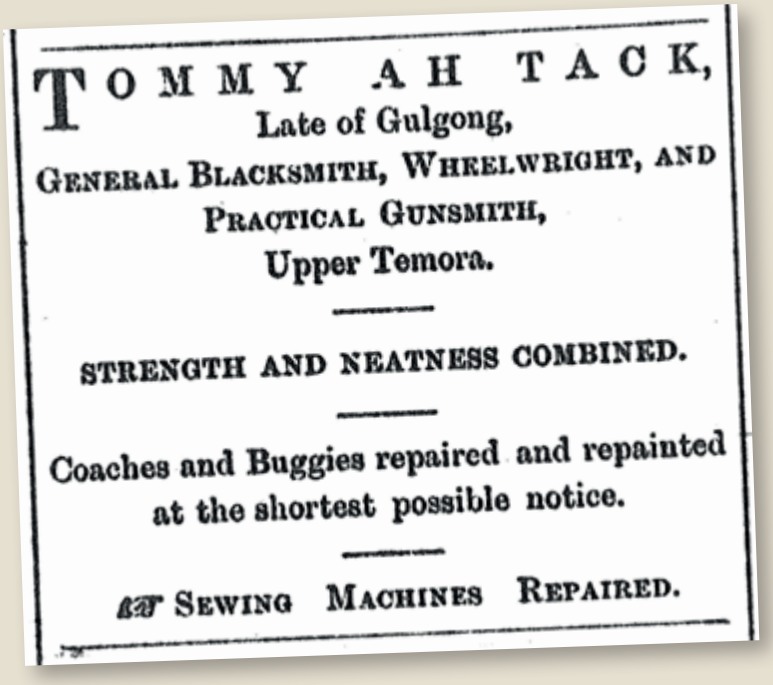
[113] Wilton, *Golden Threads*, p.26.

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

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

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

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



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.*

Sam Yett's store in the Chinese camp, Narrandera.
Parkside Cottage Museum, Narrandera

William and George Hock Shung.
Parkside Cottage Museum, Narrandera

Chun Cheong brothers' (later Hook's) store, Narrandera.
Barry McGowan

Sun Hong Shing store advertisement from the Narrandera Ensign*, October 25, 1901.*

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. Dr Young Lee, a resident of Temora, was one such practitioner.[118] Some were more ambitious. In an undated advertisement in the *Deniliquin 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. Others, such as Tommy Ah Hack from Temora, were blacksmiths, wheelwrights and gunsmiths, repairing and repainting coaches and buggies, and repairing sewing machines.[119]

Perhaps the best known storekeeper in Narrandera was Sam Yett. Sam Yett married in China at an early age and had three sons, the family remaining in China, while he migrated to Australia, where he made his fortune mining in the Beechworth and Chiltern areas for 10 years. Later, he commenced storekeeping, contract labour hiring and other businesses in Narrandera, where he lived for over 20 years. His store was located in the Chinese camp. On his death in 1903, he was described 'as a good businessman, and scrupulously honest in all his transactions'.[120] He was helped in his business by his nephews George and William Hock Shung.

George arrived from Guangzhou in 1874 and lived in Melbourne for six years, Sydney for two years, and in Narrandera for over 50 years until his death in 1944. He succeeded Sam Yett in his business.[121] William came to Australia in 1886 and lived in Narrandera for 10 years before moving to Sydney, where he became a commission agent and cabinet maker.[122] The Hun Chong family store was in East St, Narrandera and was subsequently taken over by their relatives, the Hook family.

In 1903, there were 21 owners of the Sun Hong Shing business, only one of whom was from Narrandera. Six of the owners were from Hong Kong and the remainder from Sydney and other country towns in NSW. The profits of the business were distributed on a pro rata basis. The owners were Chu Hon from Narrandera, Tung Ping Quong and Wong Ying Ting, See Yet Ink, Wong Dockson and Chung Tuck Lung from Hong Kong, Leong Sun from Walgett, Lee Ki Way from Moree, Sun Chong Shing, Chang Chow Fan, Chang Ping Nam, San Foon Chung, Wong Hen You, Sim Hang Fong, Wong

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

[119] Deniliquin and District Historical Society; *Temora Star*, 10 March 1883.

[120] *Narrandera Argus*, 26 June 1903; *Narrandera Ensign*. 26 March 1903; Series SP42/1, C17/4531, National Archives of Australia (NAA), Sydney.

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

[122] Series SP42/1, C17/4531, NAA, Sydney,

Hen Yung, Go Wai War and Go Ki from Sydney, Wong Chong Tai and Wong Foon Nam from Glen Innes, and Sim Chew Chong and Sim Hang Fong from Tingha.[123]

An idea of the size of some of the Chinese stores in down town Narrandera is provided by a report of a huge fire in December 1896, which destroyed Foley's buildings and the store of Sun Tung Shing & Co, despite all efforts to save it. It was a double storied wood building 'which burnt like so much matchwood'. The store had been doing a 'capital business at the time having secured many good customers in the town and neighbourhood by their civility and attention and keeping articles of excellent quality'. They had just received a heavy stock of goods for Christmas in drapery and groceries, but were insured for only £1000, and sustained losses of £800; They did, however, manage to retrieve cash and cheques from the safe and a few personal valuables.[124] This may well have been a forerunner to the Sun Hong Shing business mentioned above. That store had its brush with fire in 1899 and sustained losses of between £50 and £100; mainly perishable goods such as flour and sugar. However, the stock was insured.[125]

And if labour contractors and merchants such as Sam Yett could move men around as pawns, so too could the larger city-based merchants. In his autobiography, Kwan Hong Kee tells of his experiences working as a shop assistant in various stores in Sydney and regional NSW, including at Narrandera. He arrived in Sydney in the mid 1860s, borrowing money from his brother to pay for the boat trip and from a friend to buy some clothes and send some money back to his family in China. He worked at first as a cook in a Chinese store in Newcastle, and as a hawker, before working in the Sarm Choy store in Sydney, which imported and sold Chinese goods. After two years he was promoted to salesman and paid £1 a week. He worked for four years in that position and was then sent to the company's branch store in Narrandera, which was called the Sarm Hing store. The manager was Lee Chun, and Kwan Hong Kee's job was serving customers and delivering goods around town. In the evenings after work he studied English. His wages were £1 5s, increasing after 3 years to £1 10s. He worked there for seven years before returning to China, then returning to Australia in 1894 and rejoining the Sarm Choy firm in Sydney. He later worked at the Kwong Sing War store in Glen Innes, after being introduced by a friend to the manager, Wong Hoon Narm. It is not clear if the Sarm Hing store was the same as one of the other Narrandera stores. Regardless of whether it was, the story only goes to show the strong connections between many city and country stores, and the importance of networks in finding employment.[126]

Two other successful Chinese merchants in the Riverina were Dang Ah Chee and James Wong Chuey. Dang Ah Chee was not only a prosperous tobacco merchant and landowner in the Gundagai and Tumut area, but also a very wealthy storekeeper. He was originally a gold miner and later a teamster transporting goods from Sydney to Tumut and a storekeeper at the Upper Adelong goldfield. Later, he moved to Tumut, establishing very large stores at that town and at 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

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[123] *Narrandera Argus*, 8 May 1903.

[124] *Narrandera Ensign*, 24 December 1896.

[125] *Narrandera Ensign*, 19 December 1899.

[126] Kwan Hong Kee, *Autobiography of Mr Kwan Hong Kee*, Hong Kong, January 1938, from Golden Threads web site: http://amol.org.au/goldenthreads/stories.

[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.

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

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

James Wong Chuey was a wool, skins and hides dealer, commission agent, general storekeeper, contractor and wool scourer. In the early 1900s, his main business was in Junee, but he also had branch stores in Cootamundra, Tumut, Wagga, Wyalong and Barmedman. Like Dang Ah Chee he was also heavily involved in farming enterprises. As a wool buyer he built up a large trade between Australia and the east, and in 1916 his turnover was £200,000. He was also a partner in Willie Shai Hee's Yee Hing store in Tumut.[129]

Further into the 20th century the Chinese people diversified into many other businesses such as garages, theatres, trucking and dry cleaning. According to Maxwell, in Narrandera such men included J. T. Thompson, T. Gough (owner of the Royal Mail Hotel), C. Lewis (owner of the Royal Hotel) and R. Forbes.[130] The Choy family played a very significant role in the commercial life of Grong Grong. Originally from Wagga, the patriarch Charlie Choy was a market gardener and hawker, travelling long distances in his horse drawn wagon. His sons (and step sons) went on to own 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 sometime in the 1930s.The garage was a dealership for Lloyd Hartnett and Studebaker cars and Rambler push bikes. Harry also

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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, *The New Gold Mountain*, p.161; *Braidwood Review*, 8 August 1916; Sydney Szue Yup Kwan Ti Temple, *Sydney Szue Yup Kwan Ti Temple 100 year Centenary*, Sydney, 1998, p.21.

[130] Maxwell, 'The Chinese in Australia, with particular reference to Narrandera', no page numbers provided.

Bill Choy senior & junior outside their Sunshine Dry Cleaners, Narrandera, NSW.
Barry McGowan

ran a garage with his son Bill, which later became an engineering and steel fabrication business. Bill's brother in law, Bob Menzies, joined the business around 1960, which by then concentrated on steel fabrication, two of the specialties being the 'Choy bins' and harrows, along with steel crates, sheep and cattle yards and barns. At its peak the business employed nine locals. Bill Choy also ran a mail service before winning a tender for the local school bus service, and Harry ran picture shows in the local hall every Saturday night. Prior to that, the town depended on visiting movie shows. Bill and Jean Choy began Choy's bus service in 1960, primarily conveying students from Grong Grong to Narrandera High School. They began with a modified Volkswagen before acquiring other buses and extending the service in 1969 to cater for secondary school children from the Matong area. The service was later extended to include students from Cowabbie West when that school closed. By 1976, the Choys were catering for 120 children, and servicing the Grong Grong public school, Narrandera High, Narrandera East and St Joseph's Catholic School. In March 1992, the service was catering for 80 children. The bus service was sold to Bob and Marilyn Manning in 1993; they in turn sold the business in 2011.[131]

The shop and deli next door to the Reliance garage was owned originally by Florence Choy (Harry's wife), and sold vegetables and groceries. Florence and her aunt, Mrs Yum, cooked the 'best meat rolls' for school children and the shop was used by the school to supply lunches. The shop was later called the Blue Bell Café by Mick and Shirley Watters. It closed in 1963, but was reopened in 1965 by Betty Menzies (Florence's daughter and a former operator at the local telephone exchange), Jean Choy (Florence's daughter-in-law) and two other ladies. They also employed a number of part time staff. Albert Choy ran a garage in Griffith, later shifting to Narrandera where he opened the Sunshine Dry Cleaners. His descendants still operate the business today. Percy eventually moved to Leeton, where

[131] *Narrandera Argus*, 6 April 1993, 17 May 2011; Grong Grong History Committee, *Grong Grong. The Spirit of a Small Town*, Grong Grong History Committee, Grong Grong, 2003, pp.34-130, 169-170; discussions with Bob and Betty Menzies, Wagga, 2009-2010.

Left to right: Stan Hancock, Lesley Ah Wah, unknown and Linda Ah Wah.
Junee and District Historical Society

he also opened a dry cleaning business.[132]

Another garage operator was Tommy Ah Wah (originally Ah War) from Junee. Originally from Tumut, he later settled in Wagga in the early 1900s, where he was a successful market gardener. Later he moved to Junee, where he opened a skin, hides and wool dealership and ran a market garden on the Junee Flats. In 1928, he built a garage and service station, and a boarding house. The garage was rented out until 1933 when the family took it over, running dealerships for cars, trucks, tractors and a wide range of farm and other machinery and equipment. It also had a petrol delivery service to district farmers and a fully equipped panel beating and spray painting shop. From the 1930s to the 1950s, the family also owned a garage in Fitzmaurice St, Wagga, called the Grand Garage. Thomas Allan, the youngest son, took over the family's taxi business sometime in the 1940s. He also ran picture shows in the Athenaeum at Junee (the theatre was owned by his sister, Linda) and a newsagency.[133] Another Chinese garage owner in Junee was Clarrie Leslie, who owned Mcdonald Motors in North Junee. He was also a part owner of the Loftus hotel in Junee.[134]

Another successful business man in the Riverina was Dang Charles Doon from Tumut. He was a cook at the Reno goldfields, later a market gardener and tobacco grower on the Tumut Plains and a cook at the Royal Hotel, Tumut, before setting up a store and a wool and skin buying business, transporting skins to Sydney, and bringing back goods such as hardware. His sons Bob, Eric and John helped Charles on his buying and selling runs around the district. Later still he opened the Four Star Dry Cleaners, and C Doon and Sons Transport. The transport company carrieded pine and hardwood for the local mills and for projects such as the detour for Canberra's Commonwealth Avenue Bridge, and the Snowy Mountain's Scheme. But perhaps their best known venture was a very successful horse syndicate, horses from their stables winning many races in the Riverina district, and no horse better known or loved than Arwon, the winner of the 1978 Melbourne Cup.[135] Grace (formerly Grace Doon)

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[132] Grong Grong History Committee, *Grong Grong. The Spirit of a Small Town*, pp.34-130, 169-170; discussions with Bob and Betty Menzies, Wagga, 2009-2010.

[133] Information from Russell Danswan, Junee. 2010; information from Meredie Mee Ling, May 2012.

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

[135] *Tumut and Adelong Times*, 10 November 1978, 28 August 2007, 21 May 2010.

and Raymond Ching had a shoe repair business in Tumut, and were agents for Clarion Drycleaners (which had bought out 4 Star Dry Cleaners) and a luggage agency for Myco. Later, Ray serviced black and white TV sets and installed antennas for A. J. Kain of Railway End Mixed Business, Tumut.[136]

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 at Deniliquin was Louey Wee. 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 drink ginger beer.[137]

An iconic Chinese storekeeper on the Adelong goldfields was Foo Lee from Upper Adelong. In her reminiscences, Constance Sullivan remembered that at the back of Foo Lee's shop

> 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.[138]

Another popular Chinese storekeeper was Lee Loong, also known as 'Deafy', who lived at Middle Adelong. According to Will Carter, Lee Loong's little store stood close to the Adelong Creek, whence he drew his water supply for an acre or two of tobacco cultivation.

> He was a very intelligent, genial, generous, obliging and extremely humorous character ... and practically taught himself, with the aid of his Anglo-Chino books, and hints from a school child, or a customer, to write English well enough to make out his bills in readable type.[139]

According to Constance Sullivan, Deafy was a wealthy man after years of buying and selling on the creek, and helped his young countrymen to come out to Australia and work for him on the tobacco crops. When most of his co…untrymen returned home, or moved on to other fields, Deafy, like Foo Lee, chose to stay on the Adelong, and lived for many years alone in his old store.[140] There may have been comparable storekeepers in the Narrandera district, particularly at the camp, though they certainly did not include the likes of Sam Yett, George Hock Shung and the Chinese storekeepers on East Street.

Perhaps the best illustration of a successful Chinese trader was John Egge, a very early settler of Wentworth. Historian Morag Loh described him as 'a key figure in the development of Murray-Darling-Murrumbidgee navigation and the river trade, which opened up the west of New South Wales to non-Aboriginal settlement'. Egge was born in Shanghai in 1829 or 1830, and left China as a crew member on a ship commanded by Captain Francis Cadell, who had been in China during the Opium Wars, and was at the siege of Canton and the capture of Ningpo, near Shanghai. Egge arrived in Australia in 1852 and initially served on boats trading between Port Adelaide and Melbourne under the command of Cadell. Egge began working on Cadell's river boats in 1854 and was a cook on the *Albury*, which was named after the town of the same name. Later he was a cook on the Gundagai, and a cook and steward on the *Lady Augusta*. Egge's Chinese name is unknown. On board the boats he was known as John Bull; Egge was based on a Scandinavian word for harrow. Egge's compatriot, John Ling, was

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[136] Recollections from Grace Ching, September 2011.

[137] John E.P. Bushby, *Saltbush Country. History of the Deniliquin District*, the author, Deniliquin, 1980, pp.276-77.

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

[139] Alan Turner, Looking Backward. The Adelong Goldfield, unpublished manuscript, 1998, pp.28-29; *Gundagai Times*, 27 April 1880.

[140] Barnes, *There's Gold*, pp.156-157.

John Egge was born 26th April 1829, at Shanghai, China 'on the banks' of the Yangtze River - he died on 11th September, 1901 at Wentworth, NSW, 'on the banks' of the Darling River.

Wife Mary (nee Perring), born 3rd October, 1839, either in Totnes, Devon, UK or South Australia - she died 1st June, 1891 at Wentworth, NSW.

www.murrayriver.com.au/paddleboats/john-egge/

known as Sam Chinaman. Egge met his wife Mary at Goolwa, where he courted her by swimming across Goolwa Arm from the mainland. In 1859, Wentworth was proclaimed as a town and the first sale of crown allotments took place in 1860, one of which was bought by Egge. Both John and Mary worked their way up the river, John as a cook and Mary as a stewardess. In Wentworth, Egge opened several businesses, at first baking little pies and pasties in a camp oven for sale on the streets and door to door. In 1861, he opened a bakery, operating as a general dealer in partnership with Elizabeth Botten, and later a butcher shop and boarding house.

In 1866 or 1867, he chartered his first river boat, the *Teviot*, and carried on a successful hawking business. Next, he chartered the *Moira* and in 1868, bought the *Endeavour*, which was one of the first boats to run regularly between Echuca and Albury. By now Egge was employing as crew people he had formerly served as a cook and steward, and by the early 1870s he was established as one of the biggest traders on the Murray – Darling, a position he held until his retirement 30 years later. His boats also traded along the Murrumbidgee River. Over this period, he owned and chartered at least six boats and three barges. His onshore business interests expanded at the same rate as his river trade and he ran a general store at Wentworth and a store on the wharf, which supplied station properties with bulk goods and served as a depot for his boats. He leased or owned four hotels over these years, held shares in various companies and owned residences in Wentworth and property in other towns along the rivers. In 1891, Egge combined the styles of both onshore and river trading. His SS *Murrumbidgee*, originally used to transport wool, and later adapted to take passengers, was reconstructed as a floating department store with showcases, polished counters and wholesale sections. The grocery and hardware departments offered every 'conceivable article in these lines'. Later, as a new venture, he sold boots and shoes, drapery and fancy goods from the boat. The *Federal Standard* claimed that the stock

was sold at 'prices so low that as to be hitherto unheard of'. Morag Loh has commented that the river boats, by carrying goods more cheaply than the overland bullock teams, were crucial to the opening up of western NSW for non-Aboriginal settlement. Household supplies went into the hinterlands for at least two-thirds, and sometimes at much less than the cost of overland transport. By offering household goods at regular intervals and reasonable prices the boats made life more tolerable for women and their families.[141]

[141] Morag Loh, 'John Egge: A Champion of the Rivers,' *Hemisphere*, No.28, 1983, pp. 35-39; Geoffrey Egge's papers, Box 3173/5, MS12707, State Library of Victoria; *Adelaide Observer*, 21 September 1901.

Beliefs, fraternities and factions

The Chinese immigrants brought their traditions and beliefs with them. They could hardly have done otherwise, for they were integral to their lives, particularly as the majority of emigrants entered Australia on the 'credit-ticket system'. In a form of indentureship, headmen or bosses, in association with native-place associations and fraternal organisations such as the *hui* or secret societies, provided for the immigrant Chinese 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.[142] In every respect, from transport to labour supply to living conditions, these organisations played a crucial role.

Native place associations were formed by men with the same district or county of origin, the most common in NSW being the See (or 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. They also established meeting places and lodging houses, and 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 migrants to Victoria and NSW. The only building in the Riverina specifically associated with the Sze Yap Society was at the Chinese camp at Tumut. Almost all the Riverina Chinese were from the Sze Yap district, and even if not formally affiliated with a particular branch, would have had a strong loyalty to others from the same district, reinforcing the strength of clan and lineage ties. All the headmen and merchants in the camps such as Sam Yett, for example, would have been members of the Sze Yap Society, and their stores would have served as 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. In 1904, he 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. He had had two buildings built on the left and right hand side of the temple, which was located in the Sze Yap complex, and was a founding member of the Chinese Masonic Society (or lodge), which is located in Surry Hills, Sydney[144] His Riverina stores would have served as Sze Yap meeting places.

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 loyalties to the *hui* These loyalties would be challenged soon enough by other allegiances, such as the

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[142] John Fitzgerald, *Big White Lie. Chinese Australians in White Australia*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2007, pp.64-65. See also Smith, 'Hidden Dragons. The archaeology of mid- to late-nineteenth-century Chinese communities in south-eastern New South Wales', pp. 1-5, 14-15; Huck, T*he Chinese in Australia*, pp.3-4.

[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.

Christian Church, and by the rise of a merchant oligarchy, but they were never entirely dislodged.[145] Traditional Chinese influences were very resilient.

In China the secret societies or *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. He has likened the League to an unofficial Chinese consulate.[146] Many members of the Hung Men were strongly opposed to the Manchu Dynasty and its fierce repression of disturbances such as the Taiping rebellion. After 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. [147]

One of the strongest supporters of the republican movement in the Riverina was James Chuey. In February 1912, the Chinese community in NSW celebrated 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 Citizen's Committee, was attended by more than 3000 people, both Chinese and European. James Chuey, President of the Young Chinese League, and a resident of Junee, occupied the chair at the luncheon, together with several members of Parliament and other notables. Alluding to the existence of political and factional discord between different Chinese factions 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.[148]

The evidence for the Hung Men or *hui* in the Riverina is overwhelming, and indicative of a strong

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[145] Mei-fen Kuo, *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*, David Ownby and Mary Somers Heidhues, (eds), M.E. Sharpe, New York,1993, pp.38-44. Fitzgerald, *Big White Lie*, pp.81-82; Cai, "Overseas Chinese Secret Societies": pp.36-45.

[147] Fitzgerald, *Big White Lie*, pp.81-82.

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

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

connection between the *hui* and the temple, or as it was commonly called in Australia, the 'Joss House'. In Narrandera, the subscription board for the Hung Men society has only recently been recovered, having served time as a book shelf 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). About half of Narrandera's Chinese were members. A signboard 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.[149] Masonic Lodges were also located at Hay and Wagga. The business partnership between James Wong Chuey and Willie Shai Hee in their Yee Hing Company store in Tumut is further proof of the ubiquity of these fraternal associations in the Riverina.

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 dais'. 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 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.

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

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.[150]

Despite this seeming homogeneity and the overarching oversight of the fraternal and district associations, factional discord amongst the Riverina Chinese occasionally erupted, the incidents suggesting regional and kinship differences. In 1874, a riot broke out in the Wagga Chinese quarter between members of two rival factions. 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. Once he was joined by several other policemen the fight soon ended. In a court case at Narrandera in 1892, the local correspondent commented that the local Chinese appeared split into cliques; some 'real Chinamen', and some 'Tartars'. 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'.[151]

For white Australians, the most visible signs of Chinese traditional life were the New Years 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 use in ceremonies. The oven was built on the surface of the ground, of brick, about a metre high, with an opening or fire door at the bottom. After the fire and ashes are withdrawn up to three pig carcasses would be slung in from the top, head downwards, the top put on and the edges "plugged up".[152] 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.[153] 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 at the end holding the dough. 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 paper, incense smoke, noise and the aroma of cooked pork and other delicacies adding a touch of the exotic to the otherwise

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

[151] *Wagga Express*, 18 November 1874; *Gundagai Times*, 17 July 1869; *Narrandera Ensign*, 2, 9 December 1892.

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

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

Wooden moon cake moulds. Mooncakes were made to eat at the mid autumn (Zongqiu) festival, traditionally one of the four most important Chinese festivals. The filling inside pastry is usually made from lotus seed paste.
Private collection

The motifs from the moulds are imprinted on the top of the mooncakes.
Private collection

staid surrounds of most towns.

The only report to hand of a New Year function in Narrandera was in 1899, when it was reported that:

> Shortly before midnight on Thursday, a regular fusilade of crackers were exploded, followed at intervals with volley after volley. Friday was spent as a holiday at the camp. A dinner was given in excellent style on Thursday evening by Sam Yet, to which several prominent townspeople were invited, and who expressed themselves in complimentary terms regarding the hospitality displayed.[154]

That there are so few reports on Chinese New Year festivals and other functions in Narrandera is curious given the size of the Chinese camp, but then the Chinese did not write the newspaper reports, and many earlier newspaper files are not available. Reports from other towns can, however, provide some guidance on the nature of these functions, and they are recounted here for that reason.

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.[155]

In 1887, over 200 Chinese from all parts of NSW were in Wagga to commemorate the opening 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. [156]

At Albury in 1876, the opening of the new temple was attended by many Chinese and European visitors; 'Pigs roasted whole, fowls, rice, and Celestial delicacies unknown to and indescribable by any outer barbarian, were freely offered up'. In the evening a collection of Chinese banners and other 'paraphernalia', the property of the Chinese residents of Beechworth, was exhibited in a large marquee erected near the court house, and was 'largely visited by the European residents of Albury and neighbourhood [sic].[157] The celebration of Chinese New Year in the Riverina lasted for many years yet. At Wagga in 1907, a reporter from the Wagga Advertiser was invited to the Chinese camp for Chinese New Year. He stated that at first he was unable to ascertain that anything like a festival was taking place. The Chinese houses wore an 'exceptionally desolate appearance; their shutters were up, and there was absolutely

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[154] *Narrandera Argus*, 17 February 1899.

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

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

[157] *Albury Banner*, 9 December 1876.

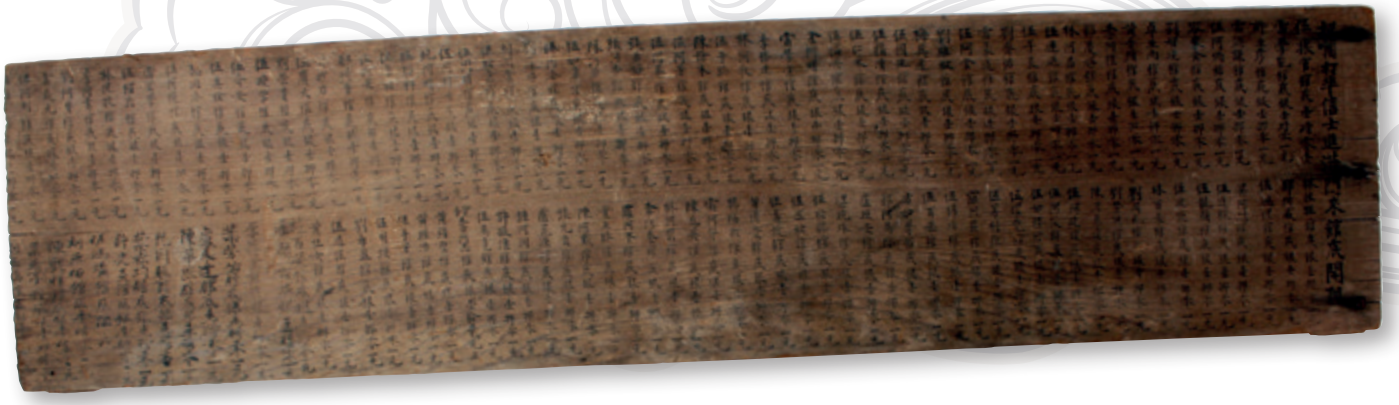
Incense burner used in temple rituals.
Private collection

Incense sticks made of plant tubers
Hay Gaol Museum

nothing to indicate that the birth of a new year was being heralded in … 'He described the invitation to enter Foon Kee's house as an 'oasis in a desert of uncertainty'. In the reception room a table was 'exquisitely decorated in the most artistically designed Chinese paper tablecloth', and 'Cherry brandy, and the choicest spirits, fruit and ginger, and all manner of Chinese delicacies were on view'. He found it difficult to choose. Foon Kee stated that it was the custom in some communities to keep the festivities up for a month, but in Wagga they would only last two or three days at most. New Years Day was the chief festival of the year, and the church house was thronged throughout the day with the devoted. Prayers were generally indulged in during the forenoon, even from the early hours of the morning, while the afternoon was given over to festivities. The Chinese residents then visited each other. Fruits and wines, ginger and other delicacies were served, and open house was kept all day.[158] Similar celebrations would have occurred at Narrandera in the early 20th century.

Lodge or *hui* functions were much more secretive. No accounts exist of the lodge functions at Narrandera, which again is curious given that at least half of the Narrandera Chinese were members. Some examples taken from other centres, however, give some idea of the nature and importance of these activities. At Wagga in September 1881, the correspondent saw what appeared to be a religious ceremony, but upon making an inquiry from one of the Chinese men robed in white, whom he assumed was a priest, he was informed that it was not a religious rite, but a ceremony similar to that of the Freemasons. The Chinese participants strictly forbad any person to approach the building during

[158] *Daily Advertiser*, 14 February 1907.



Subscription board for members of the Hung Men secret society in Narrandera. It was located in the Narrandera Chinese temple or lodge. The heading on the right hand side of the board reads: 'The subscription for the believers of Narrandera town entering Hung Men as listed below'. Under the heading are the names and their annual subscription of one guinea.
Parkside Cottage Museum, Narrandera

the ceremony, and the police provided a plain-clothes constable to see that they were not molested. In 1892, a function was held concerning the installation of office bearers in a society (almost certainly the Lodge), of which 'nearly all the Chinese of Wagga are members'. 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, but the dispute was settled amicably. Many of the Chinese had come from neighbouring towns to take part in the ceremonies.[159]

At Hay, a very elaborate Freemason's Lodge was opened in 1903 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 the Hay body. As descriptions of the lodges are rare, a report on the building and part of the proceedings is quoted below.

> 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.[160]

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. These would have been regular events at the Narrandera cemetery, though again there are few accounts of them. The earliest account of a Ch'ing Ming ceremony in the Riverina took place on Mid'en (possibly Midgeon) 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'.[161]

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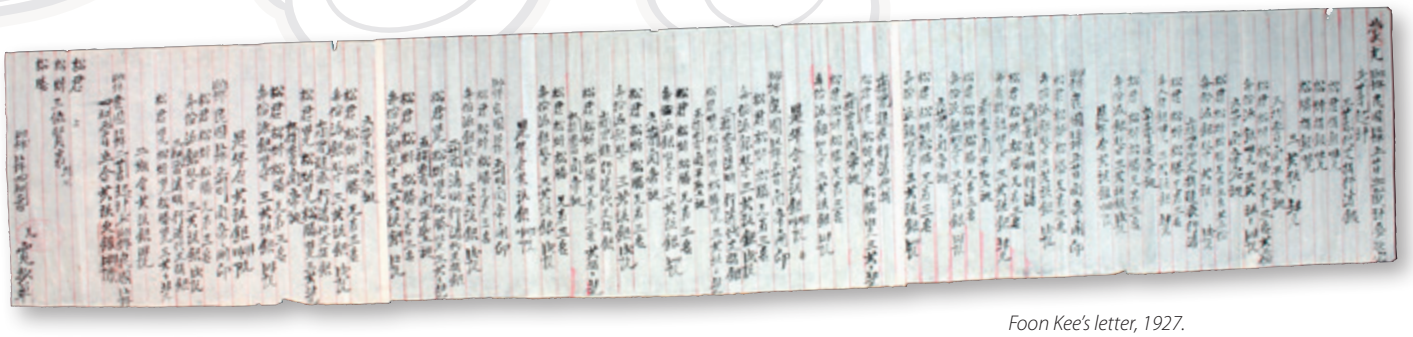
[159] *Daily Advertiser*, 20 September 1881; 5 March 1892.

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

[161] *Town and Country Journal*, 18 September 1875.



Foon Kee's letter, 1927.
Private collection

> 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, & 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 brandy 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.

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 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 it was 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.[162]

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

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

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.[163]

Many Chinese were Christian converts. In the 1890s a number of Chinese churches (or missions) and Sunday schools, were established in the larger towns such as Narrandera, Albury, Wagga Wagga, Tumut and Hay. On 10 May 1888, the *Narrandera Ensign* correspondent remarked that the Chinese Captain of the Salvation Army had already made several converts, and that 'Last Sunday the Army stormed Shanghai, and after preaching and singing, spread out the flag for that inevitable collection which is so important in all religious "corroborees"'. [164]

However, not everyone was happy with these evangelical efforts, a letter to the Council from L.S. Donaldson referring to the

> disgraceful proceedings of the Salvation Army in our streets on the last few Sundays. For some time they were content to walk along merely singing, but lately they had added a drum, tambourines and cornets: and an apparently insane Chinaman has added to the discord by making vile noises on some barbarian instrument.

It was described as a 'grief and a scandal to the entire Christian population of the borough'.[165]

At the Church of England Synod in 1891, it was resolved that the church should make some special effort towards the evangelization of the Chinese in the 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 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. The St Thomas choir helped with the singing. Leong Bong addressed his own countrymen and 'seemed to be much appreciated by them, although it seemed very funny to Europeans'. The Chinese part of the congregation passed around a hat for a collection. They had already paid for most of the building.[167]

At a service conducted by the Rev. Eldrid in 1896, nine Chinese were baptised, among whom were several of the best known and most respected Chinese residents.[168] A night school for the Chinese

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

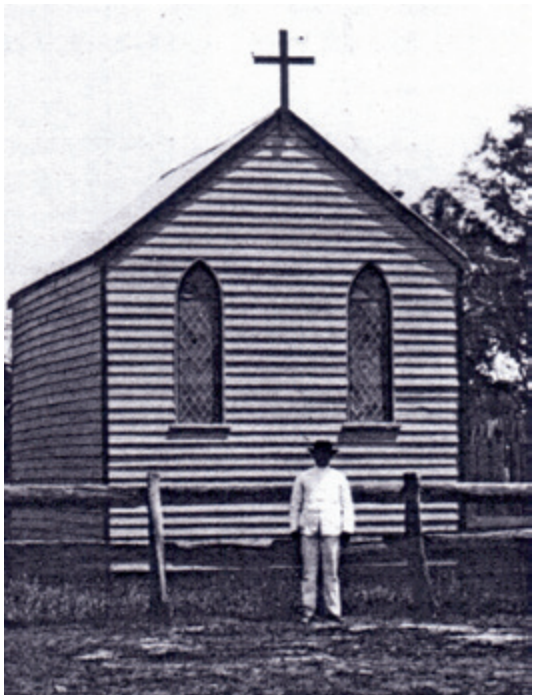
[164] *Narrandera Ensign*, 10 May 1888.

[165] *Narrandera Ensign*, 31 May 1888.

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

[167] *Narrandera Ensign*, 23 November 1894.

[168] *Narrandera Ensign*, 26 June 1896.



Church, Narrandera Chinese camp, probably with Leong Bong out the front.

Walter J. Fenn, The Anglican Church of St Thomas, Narrandera

converts was opened in February 1900 for the purpose of teaching English to the converts so that they could better understand the gospel. As a prelude to the opening, the Chinese invited the local congregation to a tea meeting and social, the whole of the arrangements being attended to by the Chinese. After the meeting, addresses were made by the Vicar, Mr Nobbs, and others, and solos rendered in Chinese by the visiting missionary to the 'infinite delight of the younger portion of the audience'. Mr Nobbs made a passionate plea for assistance with teachers, and must have been successful in his goal for when the first class opened a few days later there were several more teachers than the five pupils who attended.[169]

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 districts. Arriving from Albury, where several successful meetings had been held, he addressed meetings in the Presbyterian Church. At the Sunday afternoon service he spoke to his own countrymen in Chinese, and gave an address to the children in English, and in the evening service baptised a convert. The church was crowded with an 'interested and interesting congregation'. On the following Tuesday evening, the Chinese class gave a social to Mr Wai in honour of his visit, and on the Wednesday evening a social was held in the Presbyterian Church to which 'All Christian friends who are interested in the Chinese' were 'heartily invited to attend'.[170]

Elsewhere in the Riverina, 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 proceeded to the camp for 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, the Rev. Armstrong, assisted by Leong Bong, conducted the opening service for a new mission room.[171] At Albury in the 1890s, probably 1897, 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

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169 *Narrandera Argus*, 23 February 1900.

170 *Narrandera Argus*, 11, 15 August 1899.

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

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

> 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 and so he was always, you know, very sympathetic.[172]

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

At Tumut in 1898, the Rev. S.E. Owens-Mell established a Chinese mission at Tumut Plains, and along with other members of the congregation personally taught the Chinese. A cottage was rented out and about 70 men came under the influence of Andrew Young, a devout catechist who accidentally drowned in Hong Kong a few years later. The Christian Missionary Society later removed the headquarters of the mission to Wagga, and the work in Tumut languished and finally expired.[174]

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, and in the evening about nine or ten Chinese were present. The reporter commented with some disdain on the disrespect of some of the white

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

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

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'.[175] Several days later the Rev. Moy Ling gave a two hour address in the Wesleyan Church on the subject of mission work in China.[176] Foremost amongst the Junee converts was James Wong Chuey. In January 1902, he held a banquet at his house 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.[177]

Chinese cemeteries were another visible sign of traditional life, and observers sometimes commented upon the burial ceremonies. The Chinese cemeteries, in contrast 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. Offertory tables remain at Wagga and Albury. The importance of traditional Chinese burial customs, including the practice of fengshui, is evident in the location and orientation of the graves and the very strong evidence of exhumation.[178]

The funeral in 1903 of Sam Yett, the Narrandera merchant and 'King of Chinatown' was an elaborate affair, and 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.[179]

Where the deceased Chinese were Christian converts, both Christian and Chinese rites often occurred. 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. 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.[180] Comments from a correspondent for the *Junee Democrat*, however, were very biased. He stated that:

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

[176] *Junee Democrat*, 23 August 1900.

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

[178] Smith, 'Hidden Dragons', pp.146-151.

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

[180] *Junee Southern Cross*, 20 March 1903

The Chinese section of the Albury Pioneer cemetery contains a burning tower, an offertory table and a large number of headstones displaying Chinese characters.
Genevieve Mott

> 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.[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 more wealthy 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] The first account of exhumations in the Riverina was in 1882 when 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. The removal

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

[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', pp.67-69; Lydon, *Many Inventions*, p.89.

The remains of Chinese headstones at the Narrandera cemetery, NSW.
Barry McGowan

of the bones was accompanied by funeral ceremonies organised by Chinese residents, and the remains carefully cleaned, and after soaking in gin, placed in boxes. Similar ceremonies took place in 1904 when 26 Chinese were exhumed from cemeteries at Cootamundra, Gundagai, Tumut, Adelong, Adelong Crossing, and Hillas Creek. The bones were placed in a hermetically sealed leaden case. The last such event recorded in the Riverina took place in 1917.[183] Many of the bodies of the Chinese buried at Narrandera would have been exhumed, but no accounts are available of the ceremonies.

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 vandalised, and the temples and lodges eventually dismantled and removed. The cemeteries were particularly vulnerable. In the early 1980s, Wendy Hucker, a Wagga resident, wrote to the Wagga City Council, pointing out the state of disrepair of the Chinese cemetery and the need for restoration. 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, although intact, had been abused over the years. As a result the cemetery was further tidied up, the burning tower and offertory table restored, and the border lined with the headstones behind a fence. Further damage occurred in the first weekend in October 1994, when the remaining 23 headstones were damaged in a frenzied and 'unexplainable' act of vandalism. Two of them were smashed beyond repair. With the permission of the Council, stonemasons J. Shephard and Son undertook restoration of the Chinese headstones as a community service project. The work was completed in 1998.[184]

A similar process of degradation and restoration has taken place at Narrandera. The Chinese cemetery at Narrandera was located within the main cemetery grounds and would have had a burning tower

[183] *Gundagai Times*, 17 July 1882, 15 August 1883; *Tumut and Adelong Times*, 1 July 1904, 4, 10 May 1917.
[184] *The Leader*, 2 November 1883; *Daily Advertiser*, 4 October 1994, 27 August 1898.

and offertory table, though those had long since been destroyed, and many of the remaining graves fallen into a state of disrepair or otherwise vandalised. Between 1879 and 1905, there were 67 burials in the Chinese cemetery. 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. Key contributors to this work were the former Mayor, John Sullivan, Gary McLean, who donated his labour and use of equipment to do the border edging, R.K. Fraser and Co, and Bob Mathieson of Area Premix, both of whom were very generous in the donation of material, and Steve and Karen Menzies, who donated aggregate and grit.[185]

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

Camp Life; Food and Leisure

A pen and ink drawing of the Narrandera Chinese camp from the Town and Country Journal, *March 19, 1881.*

Most 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. Even if they lived elsewhere, for instance, on pastoral stations, in the smaller Riverina towns, or within the town area proper, the camps were still important in their lives, for that was where the temples, lodges, churches, gambling houses and most Chinese shops were located. In his 1884, report Sub-inspector Brennan provided an important snapshot of these camps 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. The camps 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 entertainment and recreation for others in the form of drinking, gambling and prostitution.[186]

The Narrandera camp, on the banks of the Murrumbidgee River, was the largest in the Riverina. In 1883, it had 340 residents, of whom 303 were Chinese, nine European married women, 10 children and 17 prostitutes. Of the Chinese men, 14 worked in stores, 20 in opium shops, 10 in cook shops, 20 in gaming houses and 12 were gardeners; most of the others were labourers. At some periods the population was much larger, when the Chinese employed on the pastoral stations returned from their work assignments. The village had streets and lanes, and contained stores, a temple, a very large cook

[186] Pauline Rule, 'The Chinese Camps in Colonial Victoria: Their Role as Contact Zones', in Sophie Couchman, John Fitzgerald, Paul Macgregor, (eds), *After the Rush, Regulation, Participation and Chinese Communities in Australia 1860-1949*, Otherland Literary Journal No.9, Kingsbury, 2004, pp.119-131.

The verandah floor of Sam Yett's store in the Narrandera Chinese camp, 2008.
Barry McGowan

shop, two lottery houses and several fan-tan rooms. Although not mentioned by Brennan, the camp was surrounded by market gardens. Later it had a Christian church.

Like all other Riverina camps, the Narrandera camp faded over time in line with the declining Chinese population, but it was not dismantled until the 1950s. In 1929, Gow said that in its way it was 'most picturesque'. It once had a few good stores, but now all was gone except a 'few tumbledown humpies and a number of decrepit old Chinese'. Even the joss house had disappeared.[187] But the camp had a little more than ordinary buildings on it, as the police found in 1894 when searching for the whereabouts of an Indian hawker, Sam Grand Mahommed, who had been charged with embezzlement. He was found at the Chinese camp concealed in a secret chamber at one of the stores.[188]

Today the camp site is on private land, and used mainly as a horse paddock. It is on the periphery of the township near the Murrumbidgee River and the old bridge site. It is located on a corner of two dirt roads, Adams and Augusta Streets. It is a level site of about one hectare, and is surrounded by three other fields of a similar size. Despite its vacant appearance there is much to interest the archaeologist. A recent surface survey by ANU student, Diana Osborne, found the remains of a minimum of 18 structures and several other features, which may or may not have been buildings. Evidence was also found of an arrangement of streets and lanes within the camp. Amidst some of the modern discarded items there are clear indications of several earthworks, along with depressions, some of which may have been cellars, and scatters of bricks and other building materials associated with the past. The earthworks include building foundations, bricks, concrete slabs, postholes, dams and banks, with some mounds suggestive of fireplaces or kitchens. In the south east corner of the site there are no less than six buildings, this area containing about 40 per cent of all the surface artefacts. Chinese artefacts

[187] Barellan Progress Association and Improvement Society, *Early Days in Barellan and District*, p.21.

[188] Narrendera Ensign, 16 November 1894.

The entrance to a market garden, Chinese camp, Narrandera, 2008.
Barry McGowan

include ceramics, opium pipe fragments, coins and gaming pieces. One site has the remnants of a verandah with a concrete slab and postholes, quite possibly belonging to Sam Yett's store (and later George Hock Shung's store).[189]

The evidence suggests that there were as many as six stores at the camp, and that some of them were used for gambling. Other activities at the stores would have included opium smoking and worship. The largest building site in the camp complex was the temple. Its form, size, orientation and location indicate a quite different use from that of the other buildings at the camp. It is large compared to all the other buildings, and is a long and relatively narrow structure. Although some distance from the temple, one other site was a probable pig oven. One building site had a number of Chinese medicine bottles and small European tincture bottles, suggesting that it may have been used by a Chinese doctor.[190]

Elsewhere in the Riverina, homes and businesses have been built on the sites of the Chinese camps, but this has not happened in Narrandera, and the site has the potential to yield much further valuable archaeological evidence. The existence of a number of other Chinese sites near the camp suggests a wider Chinese occupation beyond the main camp. To the east of the camp are the remains of a large wooden fence and gate posts, which were part of the fencing surrounding one of the gardens. More than likely the garden belonged to Harry King Fan.

The Wagga camp was the second largest in the Riverina. Located on the banks of the Murrumbidgee

[189] 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, pp.39-100.

[190] Osborne, The Archaeology of a Riverina Chinatown at Narrandera, pp.39-100.

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. Of the men, 12 worked in stores, 13 in opium shops; 30 were gardeners, six were fruit dealers, 124 ticket sellers and labourers, and six were proprietors of lottery rooms. It also had a temple and lodge.[191] The third largest camp was at Deniliquin. 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. The population was 134, including 113 Chinese, 11 married European women, 17 children and four prostitutes. At Hay, the camp was located on the banks of the Murrumbidgee River, and had a total population of 124, including 100 Chinese, five European married women, 14 children, and five prostitutes. It had a temple and lodge and later a Christian mission. At Albury, the camp was located near the banks of the Murray River and had a total population of 110, of whom there were 90 Chinese, five European married women, 11 children and four prostitutes. The camp contained three stores, 12 fan-tan tables, a temple, and cook shop, and later, a lodge. From the early 1860s, on a large camp was located at Upper Adelong and a smaller one at Middle Adelong, both camps fading with the fortunes of the diggings. Camps were also located at Hillston, Booligal, Gundagai and Tumut. At Narrandera, some Chinese, in particular the large merchants, lived in the main town, and some of the Chinese working as cooks may have resided in the hotels. However, other Chinese employees and most market gardeners lived in or near the camps.

Brennan was less than impressed with the general setting of the camps, stating that

> All the camps visited are situated on the banks or near to the banks of the rivers mentioned, on flats; no natural drainage and no artificial means appear to have been employed to carry off stagnant waters or putrid substances which accumulate around all camps and which are so well calculated to generate fevers. The wonder therefore is that more sickness does not prevail in hot weather amongst persons residing in the camps.[192]

While he was scathing on the sanitary condition of the camps at Wagga and Albury, Brennan had no particular comments on the Narrandera camp, which presumably was at that time less dilapidated and more sanitary.[193] Sanitation was still, nevertheless, an issue. In June 1888, the Mayor and Alderman Hunt inspected some bad places where culverts were needed. They visited the Chinese camp, which 'was in a very bad state: Shanties, wood-heaps, and other nuisances blocked the roadway, and they considered that notices ought to be served to remove such obstructions and to fill up a drain across the road'.[194] The issue of 'nuisances at the Chinese camp' came before the Police Court later that year, one case involving buildings on the street, and one for cutting a drain in Cadell St. In the former case, a conviction was obtained as far as a pigsty was concerned, but there was not enough evidence to show who had erected a kitchen. In the latter case, it was not clear who had made the drain. At a Council meeting, Mr Donaldson remarked that there were other drains in the borough even worse than those at the Chinese camp – and that it was better for the Council to fill in the drain at the camp and summons them for any nuisances they might cause afterwards.[195]

In June 1891, Alderman Sullivan commented on the bad state of road between the Chinese gardens,

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[191] Brennan, 'Chinese Camps', p.1.

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

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

[194] *Narrandera Ensign*, 14 June 1888.

[195] *Narrandera Ensign*, 16 August 1888.

and recommended that a drain be cut to carry away the water. The Inspector of Nuisances reported on the sanitary condition of the camp, pointing out the difficulties in providing a proper system of drainage, and the inadvisability of getting residents to erect closets, as the space was so small that their erection would endanger the health of the occupants. The northern end of camp was lower than the river end, but because of a high bank there was no way for the water to drain.[196] In December 1892, Alderman Sullivan made a strong indictment of the camp, saying that it 'was in a disgraceful state, and the smells arising from bad drainage and other sources would not be tolerated if they were Europeans'. Alderman Manning, who managed the boiling down works, stated that his works was a 'cinnamon grove' compared to the camp. There were, however, differing views on the need for a drain, at least one Council member saying that Chinese should not be allowed to 'carry on like this'. The Mayor suggested that a report be drawn up, but no account is available of any further action taken. [197]

Some Chinese were also concerned at the condition of the camp, for in July 1893 Sam Yett wrote to Council complaining of the disgraceful state of the road at the Upper Chinese camp and requesting a few pounds for its repair, but the request was rejected. The subsequent debates on this matter reflect differing views, some very sympathetic, towards the Chinese in the camp.[198] In August 1894, Sam Yett and Sun Quong Fat and other Chinese renewed their application for 50 yards of gravel which they intended to spread on the street at the camp. Alderman Armstrong described the Chinese as good ratepayers for many years, and said that the trifle they asked could be given if only on sanitary grounds, as the street was in a very deplorable state. Aldermen Feint and Abrahams agreed, stating that trades people used the road, which in its current state was impassable. Alderman Elwin also agreed, stating that although it was on private property it was used as a town street, and would only cost £5. Some members disagreed and the matter was set aside for the next meeting.[199] At the next meeting the motion was put and lost on the Mayor's casting vote. Some members had opposed the proposal as the road was on private property, and it would be illegal to grant the request; the proper party to apply to was the owner of the property.[200]

More of an issue in the years to come was the flimsy nature of many buildings in the camps and their crowded condition, which made them very susceptible to fire. In these instances all differences in ethnicity were cast firmly aside, with people of all class, creed and race assisting the local fire brigade. At Hay in March 1891, a fire destroyed three houses, and another was almost entirely pulled to pieces and removed to prevent the fire's progress. None of the buildings or contents were insured, as the companies were reluctant to accept the insurance risks of Chinese camps.[201] Much worse was a fire in March 1893, which destroyed five houses, a lodging house, and a clubhouse where a number of destitute Chinese were provided with lodging free of charge by the Chinese Freemason's Lodge. The temple was itself partly destroyed. None of the buildings or their contents were insured. The inquest found that the fire had been deliberately lit.[202]

In October 1897, it was the turn of the Narrandera camp. The *Narrandera Argus* reporter stated that the town's unenviable reputation for the 'regularity of its fires was again upheld on Thursday when

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196 *Narrandera Ensign*, 25 June 1891.

197 *Narrandera Ensign*, 23 December 1892.

198 *Narrandera Ensign*, 21 July 1893.

199 *Narrandera Ensign*, 27 August 1894.

200 *Narrandera Ensign*, 10, 14 September 1894.

201 *Riverine Grazier*, 24, 26 March 1891.

202 *Riverine Grazier*, 28, 30 March 1893.

The remains of the Narrandera Chinese camp after a cataclysmic fire in 1897.
Sydney Mail, October 23, 1897. National Archives of Australia

the main Chinese camp was reduced to ashes'. 'The fire started in the premises recently occupied by Fat Hock, next to Sam Yett's store on the east side of the street, and as all the buildings were built entirely of wood the fire 'spread with fury to the north and south, the whole side of the street being demolished in double quick time'. The flames then swept round the south end reducing the cook-shop, and quickly made their way up the west side of the street, devouring house after house until the fifth from the end was reached. The fire was only stopped after chopping down one of the buildings before the flames reached it. All that was left of the camp were the first five buildings on the right side at the entrance. Little property was saved and nothing was insured. Sam Yett was an 'exceptionally heavy loser'. The subsequent enquiry could not find the cause of the fire.[203]

The *Sydney Mail* correspondent was less than sympathetic, referring to the

> great impromptu display of Chinese fireworks, that in the end left 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.

According to the writer the camp had about 40 buildings and at New Years Eve when festivals were on, as many as 600 people would be there. 'And ever there was gambling and ever there was vice',

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

bewailed the correspondent, 'Why are such places allowed to foul our fair land? But fire is a great purifier, and the Narandera [sic] camp is now quite clean.'[204] By the following year, however, the camp had been largely rebuilt.[205]

A similar fate befell the Deniliquin camp in January 1900, and 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 at that end of the town. When the fire was finally brought under control, only three buildings remained. About 20 buildings were completely destroyed. None of the buildings or stock were insured.[206] As at Narrandera, not everyone was sympathetic to the victims, a local resident, George Sloper, expressing the wish that the camp, which he called 'Rats Castle' would not be reconstructed.[207]

The camps were predominantly male domains, which meant that social and family life was pursued largely outside a family environment and that sexual relations meant crossing the racial and cultural divide with partners and prostitutes sought from the local non-Chinese population.[208] 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. But there were other levels of mixing as well. Margaret Faunt, the mother of Violet McKinty from Lockhart, was born in Narrandera in 1910, and became friends with a Chinese family at the camp, and at the age of two years could speak some Chinese. Margaret and some other children in the town followed a large water pipe down to the camp to play with some of the Chinese children, obviously on many occasions without the knowledge of their parents.[209]

Many observers, particularly those from outside the district, found the camps a source of wonderment, puzzle and scorn, often viewing them as dens of iniquity, and posing a moral threat to the local youth. Their comments provide a snapshot of racial attitudes, and a glimpse of Riverina society and its Chinese migrants. With few people to champion their interests, the Chinese men and their camp followers were portrayed in an overwhelming negative light. A correspondent for *The Daily Advertiser*, visiting Narrandera in 1880, probably for the first time, was scathing. Commenting on a recent case before the Narrandera Police Court he stated that

> John Chinaman ... has found his way to Narrandera, where he has set up his Chinese camp, which is inhabited, as in all other places, by the vilest of the vile. John has succeeded in establishing on a firm footing his ideas of civilisation. By some means or other he has managed to decoy a number of European girls, who prefer the society of the heathen Chinee to those of their own nationality, and have imbibed that noxious habit of opium-smoking, which they seem to relish with feelings of angelic delight ... one witness testified to the fact that he saw in a room at the Chinese camp two young girls, who were suffering from the effects of the fumes of opium, lying on a bunk in one of those wretched hovels. The police are deserving of great praise for endeavouring to ferret out these houses of disrepute and to bring their owners to book for attempting to violate the Publicans Act. John may be a very good citizen as far as the production of cabbages are concerned, but when he settles down and endeavours to establish in our midst such dens of infamy as the Chinese camp presents, we say, hesitatingly, that he should be summarily ejected or transported to Timbuctoo, or some other place where he may follow

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[204] *Sydney Mail*, 23 October 1897.

[205] *Narrandera Ensign*, 8, 22 April 1898.

[206] *Pastoral Times*. 27 January 1900

[207] *Pastoral Times*. 3 February 1900.

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

[209] Information from Violet McKinty, Lockhart, 2010.

the bent of his imagination to his heart's desires.[210]

In March 1888, a local correspondent known as 'Whaler' remarked that the Narrandera camp was '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'. Ah Fee accused Smith of interfering with her trade and made some remarks about Smith's 14 year old daughter and a Chinaman called Ah Hen. Smith's husband (of Chinese descent), came to her assistance, Smith in the meantime threatening to tear Ah Fee's 'drunken liver' out. The combatants were then 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. While the dispute raged, 'several hundred Chinese' emerged to witness the proceedings.[211]

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', was a former Caucasian resident of the Beechworth Chinese camp, where she had been described by one policeman as the worst woman of her class in the camp and by a Chinese witness as 'a desperate character ... common to all men'. In March 1893, she appeared on a charge of destroying property belonging to Mary Todd of Gillenbah, having come to Todd's place uninvited and on being asked to go away, 'abused her in a shocking manner', breaking the door and smashing two chairs. She later admitted to the court that she had been drinking at the time.[212] Some months later she was fined for using insulting language to Tommy Ah Chick. After the summons had been served she went to his house upbraiding him for taking offence at a 'little silly woman's talk', and in the process throwing half a brick at his head, which instead hit a pane of glass.[213]

The exploits of camp followers such as Lizzie Ah Fee filled many columns of the Riverina newspapers, and brought the camps and their inhabitants into instant disrepute. Often, with so much conflicting evidence, the courts found the fights between the camp women very difficult to adjudicate, but it made entertaining reading in the local press. In one such incident in 1888, Rebecca Goddard, 'a quick-tempered looking young woman', appeared on a charge of unlawful assault and battery committed on 'Dame Sarah Jane Hendrick' at the Chinese camp. Hendrick stated that she had visited Goddard asking payment for work done, but got 'a great deal of abuse, besides being struck on the mouth with a cup, which split her lip and broke one of her teeth'. Some Chinese men and a white man called Taffy Hall were present, Hall later taking the cup from Goddard after the assault. Hendrick stated that she had some drink that day; 'she took her beer regularly, just as other working women do, and liked it, but she was not tipsy, neither did she give any provocation to Goddard'. Mrs Elizabeth Ah Fee corroborated this story. She stated she was not on good terms with Goddard 'and did not associate with persons of her class'. Mrs Charles Lewis, who was visiting Mrs Ah Fee, corroborated the story. The doctor who examined Hendrick stated that 'she appeared to be pretty full up with beer when she called on him'. Goddard stated that Hendrick had abused her the previous day because she had declined her invitation to "shout". Hendrick abused her again the next day, calling her a 'prostitute, bastard' and struck her three times on the head with her fist, challenging her out to fight and spitting in her face. Goddard then punched her, and her face hit the verandah post. Taffy Hall stated that Hendrick had

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[210] *Daily Advertiser*, 24 August 1880.

[211] *Narrandera Ensign*, 29 March 1888.

[212] Vivian McWaters, *Beechworth's Little Canton. The History of the Spring Creek Camp and its residents*, the author, 2002, pp.109-111; *Narrandera Ensign*, 10 March 1893.

[213] *Narrandera Ensign*, 15 September 1893.

called Goddard very bad names, struck her with her fist and spat in her face. Goddard did not strike her with a cup, but hit her with a fist. The case was dismissed.[214]

In another incident in September 1891 'The brilliant damsels Miss Hargraves, Madame Ah Wee and Annie Ah Pew', all of whom were represented by Counsel, were charged with assault and battery upon one another. In the first round, Ah Wee was fined 20s and 8s 4d costs, and the case against Hargraves was dismissed with 21s costs against the complainant. In the second round Ah Pew was fined 40s with 8s 4d costs, with 21s to be paid to Ah Wee. In the third round Margaret Ah Chun sued Amy Ah Wee for wilful damage by breaking windows, but this was dismissed, and lastly Annie Ah Pew was fined 20s with 4s 10d costs for abusing Amy Ah Wee, 'the language used being choice but not elegant'.[215] No doubt the costs were borne by their long suffering Chinese partners or husbands.

Brennan had quite a bit to say on the European women at the camps. He remarked that there were 37 European women married to Chinese at the five camps inspected. Some of them 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.[216]

He had even more to say about the prostitutes and some of their clientele. There were 37 prostitutes in the camps, all between 18 and 30 years, but occasionally the camps contained twice that number. The females occupied one or two rooms each in the camp, where they were visited by Chinese and Europeans, men *and sometimes boys* [sic]

> 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 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. On those occasions most of the married women act more defiantly towards the police because of the greater security which they think they enjoy from being made amenable to the *Vagrant Act* - in having husbands.[217]

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 they have been instrumental in most of the cases for which the Chinese have

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[214] *Narrandera Ensign*, 19 January 1888.

[215] *Narrandera Ensign*, 24 September 1891.

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

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

been prosecuted. Of the 74 women in the camps, 50 were confirmed opium smokers. On the subject of Chinese seduction, Brennan attested that 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. He stated that all the women denied the allegation that they had been seduced emphatically. Some of the women were married but had left their husbands because of alleged cruelty, and others had been prostitutes for years. All 'preferred the nomadic life of the camp with its licentiousness to the quiet repose of settled habitation. 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.[218]

His views were echoed some years later by Sir Frederick Darley, the Chief Justice, in a letter he wrote to Sir Henry Parkes. The letter was cited by a member of the Legislative Council in May 1888 in the debate on the *Influx of Chinese Restriction Bill*. Sir Frederick stated that when on circuit in April of that year he was

> Much struck with the crime traceable to the existence of the Chinese camps at the different towns, particularly Deniliquin, Narrandera, and Wagga Wagga. I found that these camps are frequented not only by the Chinese, but by the low criminal class of the white population; these latter encouraged there by a number of white women (prostitutes) who have their abode in the camps.
>
> These women, when interfered with by the police as vagrants, claim some Chinamen as a husband, or actually go through the ceremony of marriage with a Chinaman, so as by this means to obtain as it were a letter of license to live and pursue her avocation in the camp. I need not say that these women are nearly all opium smokers, and the most wretched and abandoned of their sex ...I tried one case of bigamy, a woman having married two Chinamen, in order to be allowed to live in the camp.[219]

Sir Frederick wasn't the only person writing to Sir Henry in these terms. Foremost among the local citizenry was Alderman C. H. Hunt, who said that he considered it his duty 'as an Alderman of this town to acquaint you of the way in which the camp is carried on ... and also to show you the numerous vices which is [sic] carried on in the Chinese camp here, and which the Chief Justice cannot possibly know anything about.' Hunt's letter reinforces some of the findings in Brennan's report.[220]

> Narrandera's active camp had about 9 or 10 brothels containing about 20 prostitutes and in every one of them you can purchase Beer or Spirits and the quality sold is of the vilest description.
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> ...if men get two or three drinks of it [sly grog] they become howling Maniacs for hours, and when they come to their senses they find that they have been robbed of all their money. It is also the resort of a great number of young men of the worst larrikin type.
>
> ...I believe and it is the opinion of a great number of the residents that there is more drink sold in the Camp than any 4 []Licensed Houses in the town.

Hunt cited cases of 'several young men who came here [to Narrandera] industrious and respectable but before long they have been induced to visit the Camp and the consequence has been that they have become drunkards and constant frequenters of that place'. He went on to say

> It is a common case here for men to come in from the stations with cheques for a considerable amount and cash them in town and get a few drinks then, they are off to the Camp and in a few hours they return robbed and without a shilling left. The consequence is they are in a state of stupidity from the

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

[219] *New South Wales Parliamentary Debates*, NSW Legislative Council, Vol.33, 1887-1888, p.5188.

[220] Quoted in Maxwell, 'The Chinese in Australia, with particular reference to Narrandera', Hunt's comments can be found in Sir Henry Parkes, *Parkes Correspondence*, Reel 70, Volume 48, pp.269-280, Mitchell Library, Sydney.

drink that has been given to them while down there, and then they loaf about the town begging drink almost from everyone they meet.

Hunt also referred to the riverside location of all the Chinese camps in the Riverina 'showing the great facilities at the disposal of desperate characters, male and female, who frequent the camps in getting rid of unfortunate victims whom they might have robbed or murdered'.

But these comments need to be put into perspective. Some of the European women in the camps were escaping bad marriages and others poverty or both, for the plight of women perceived as having no lawful means of support was fearful. They were outcasts from society, totally marginalised and under constant surveillance by the police. It is no wonder then that they saw the camps and the Chinese men as refuges, and even less wonder that some of them embraced such activities as prostitution, sly grog selling and the mesmeric delights of opium smoking. In an example of the former, a woman known at different times as Annie D'Enery, Annie Stuart, Annie Cowley and Annie Borget was charged in 1888 with illegally marrying William Borget, her first husband, William Stuart, being still alive. She was arrested at the Chinese camp. Annie replied 'she came there to get away from Borget, and said she would rather live in gaol all her life than live with him'.[221]

The case of Mary Newcome, aged 24, says it all. In court under a charge of vagrancy in 1901, one of the police claimed that she had been frequenting the camp for the last two months, and had been seen 'only half dressed lying in a bunk with a Chinaman'. She had been cautioned about being there, and when asked about her means of support replied that a Chinese man, whom she had lived with for some years, was keeping her. According to the policeman, she always appeared to be in a state of stupor from smoking, perhaps from opium, her character by repute being that of a common prostitute. Another policeman claimed he had also seen her on two or three occasions lying in a half dressed condition in a bunk with Chinese men. Several complaints had been made of her conduct, and on one occasion a man claimed she had robbed him. The Chinese community closed ranks in an attempt to protect her. Pen Kang swore that she had been living with him for three years at Temora and three years at Narrandera as his housekeeper and was living with no one else. He had a wife in China, but the girl was 'all the same as wife to him here'. He bought her clothes, and if she needed anything she had credit on his account at the Chinese store. She sometimes washed for other Chinese men who were his friends, and was not in the habit of making rows or keeping out at night and he was 'perfectly satisfied to keep her'. Sam Yett, the leading Chinese merchant in Narrandera, also gave evidence in her favour, saying that he had never seen her 'real drunk', nor heard any rows from her or ever seen any men going home with her. But the Bench was not satisfied and sentenced her to three months gaol.[222]

More fortunate was Violet Calvert, who was charged with vagrancy in 1899. Constable Cahill stated that she had been a camp resident for about 18 months, during which time frequent complaints had been made of her conduct and men had been seen visiting her abode at night. He stated that she had never been known her to do any work. Constable Allen had known her for three years and latterly living with different Chinese and Europeans at the camp, although she lived mainly with Charlie Ah Kim; her reputation was as a common prostitute. Calvert said she had been Ah Kim's housekeeper for 18 months and he supported her, and she got partial support from her brother in Melbourne. Ah Kim said she had lived with him for 18 months; he kept her and supplied her with money, and no Europeans came to his place. His share in a garden supplied means to keep her and he did not gamble.

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221 *Narrandera Ensign*, 12 January 1888.

222 *Narrandera Ensign*, 13 September 1901.

'Violet was his first love, never had one before.' The case was dismissed.[223]

In another instance, Agnes Ah Tong, formerly a resident at the Chinese camp, and who claimed to be married to a Chinaman, was charged in 1897 under the *Vagrant Act*. She lived at Gillenbah and frequent complaints had been made to the police of her conduct. She stated that a man named Murray at Tubbo sent her money and he could prove that he kept her. The case was adjourned to await Murray's attendance, but as Agnes had left town by time of the next hearing the charge was withdrawn.[224]

Sometimes young girls were brought before the court, allegedly for their own protection. In 1894, a 14 year old girl, May Shing, was charged with resorting with common prostitutes in the camp. She was the daughter of a European woman who had married a Chinese man named Shing at Wagga. The man had since died, and the mother was known as a loose character at the Wagga and Narrandera camps, with the girl often seen in company with 'common women', who lived with Chinese men next door to her mother's place. The police arrested her 'to save her from total destruction', and the Rev. Eldrid arranged for her temporary reception by a lady in the town. Later the police withdrew the prosecution and the accused was discharged.[225]

Two further comments can be made about the European women in the 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. In this regard women such as Lizzie Ah Fee may have been the exception rather than the rule. But the high profile of 'Tiger Lil', and others like her, in the press and court reports, meant that they were rarely out of the public gaze, confirming for the casual visitor and many local residents 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 from 1850 to 1880, it 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'.[226] Few, if any, of the women in her study lived in camps the size of those at Wagga and Narrandera, but lived in the main town precincts or elsewhere. In the Riverina, many of the European women married to Chinese men lived in the camps, but a large number also lived in the main town and were not part of the fracas that sometimes occurred in the camps. However, the local press was not interested in them, but rather their more disorderly and newsworthy sisters.

The most frequently commented upon leisure activities of the Chinese men in the Riverina in the late 19th 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 attending. By the mid 1900s many Chinese families were involved in horse, harness

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[223] *Narrandera Ensign*, 10 February 1899.

[224] *Narrandera Ensign*, 20, 26, 27 August 1897.

[225] *Narrandera Ensign*, 26 October 1894.

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

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

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 Riverina camps all year round. 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. The banker deducted two pence in every shilling. Chinese coins were used as tokens; large numbers of coins have been found in several camp sites, in particular Upper Adelong, Tumut and Wagga. One of the Chinese habitués was Ah Hem, a labour contractor and rival of Wong Gooey. According to Gow he had a contract at Cowabee and drew the money, meaning to change it in Narrandera and hand it to the men. But he lost it all at fan-tan and when he returned the men nearly killed him. Wong Gooey was also a keen fan-tan player.[227]

A fulsome account of the lotteries appeared in the *Riverina Grazier* of 5 August 1890. The reporter remarked that five or six of the wealthier Chinese formed a bank by putting in about £50 each 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. The drawings were conducted in a partly partitioned room known as the bank. First, the eighty papers were posted on a board, taken down one at a time, rolled into pellets

[227] Barellan Progress Association and Improvement Society, *Early Days in Barellan and District*, p.23.

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 holder of the tickets compared them with the result tickets to see if they had won; the minimum correct numbers was five. No matter what the profits of the bank were, the original capital was not augmented, 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'.

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 on European men and boys. He stated that

> Gaming in its entirety is carried out at the Narrandera camp at present to a much greater extent than it has ever been known before; and I was informed that the Chinese carried their lottery tickets about the streets and houses for sale, and even sold them to children. Many of the Chinese live by gambling, the principal game and that which most persons – European and Chinese - indulge in, is called pak ah pu, or my pow chong ... commonly known as the Chinese lottery. Very few Europeans take part in the fan-tan games.

According to Brennan, the police had been, up to September 1881, fairly successful in checking the prevalence of gambling until an unfavourable ruling in a case in Wagga in July. Once the Wagga decision became known at Narrandera 'gambling commenced with renewed vigour', and headquarter benches were erected in the streets for the ticket sellers. The games were frequented by Chinese camp females and occasionally European men. Boys sometimes showed 'a strong disposition to be present, but this propensity was checked by the police, who ordered them away'. He lamented that the law as it stood provided for the prosecution of persons keeping common gaming houses, but because of the very ingenious nature of the Chinese games the law did not apply to Chinese gaming.[228]

These concerns were common to other Riverina towns, in particular Wagga and Hay, and the press comments provide unique insights into local attitudes towards the Chinese people. At Wagga in 1882 a visitor remarked that

> The one blot I noticed on the fair face of the town was the prevalence of Chinese gambling. There are two banks at the lower end of the town, and it was pitiful to see the anxiety displayed on the faces of young and old while the bank was being drawn. Boys yet in their teens hustled middle aged and old men in their desperate endeavour to obtain a better view of the interior of this Chinese hell.[229]

The following year an observer commented that there were no less than two Chinese 'banks' in Wagga with a 'roaring business'. One Chinese resident had said that one banker had netted £600 since arriving in Wagga, about 12 months ago. As far as the game was concerned it appeared to be carried on honestly enough, and drew a large crowd of onlookers and gamblers

> Numbers of Chinese residents are so fairly successful that they follow the occupation 'professionally', others who are induced into its enticing mesh spend their all, and then go begging. Apprentice boys and others have been known to invest monies that have puzzled many to know where they got it from

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

[229] *Daily Advertiser*, 28 December 1882.

> ... A young man employed in the town was so successful as to invest a few shillings and won £15. Others have made various sums ... All this is very well so far as showing the honesty with which the bank is conducted, but is it not demoralising to those children of our own race who rush off daily to buy tickets? If Chinamen were to confine these banking operations to themselves Europeans would not complain, but when it attracts children of tender years, and these become so infatuated with the game (if it may be called so), then it is time for the law to step in and stay any further proceedings of the kind.[230]

At Hay, the 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. On 5 August 1890, a correspondent for 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 that 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'. Some residents could probably afford to throw their money away, but there was no doubt that the greater number of those affected could not.

Further, according to the newspaper, some lottery draws were held at night, and witnessed by large numbers of people, of whom the greater number were youths. This gave the youths an opportunity to 'stroll around the camp', and be 'brought into contact with the degraded beings and demoralising scenes for which Chinese Camps everywhere are notorious'. He concluded that the 'lotteries should go on if it is thought unfair to stop the Chinese gambling while we ourselves are permitted to bet and shake dice and play cards at our clubs. But for the sake of decency this illegal and iniquitous traffic should not be allowed to be a house to house one as at present'.

The perceived prevalence of gambling in Sydney led to the establishment of the Royal Commission into Alleged Chinese Gambling and Immorality in 1891. Gambling was a point of contention within the Chinese community, the wealthier Chinese merchants seeing it as a threat to their own interests.[231] The 1891 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 concluded 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.[232]

In a statement given to the Commission, one witness, Robert Kee Lam, stated that very few Europeans gambled; it was mainly the Chinese. 'the shearers go amongst the girls – the prostitutes of the Chinese camp – but they do not do much gambling'.[233]

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[230] *Daily Advertiser*, 31 May 1883.

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

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

[233] 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 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

In the 19th century opium smoking was not illegal and to a large degree substituted for the practice of alcohol drinking, which was largely the preserve of Europeans. The use of opium in China dated 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) ensured 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 related to the consumption of opium have been found at Narrandera, Upper Adelong, Tumut, Wagga, and Grubben Station near Yerong Creek. The items include pipes, parts of opium tins, opium scales and the ubiquitous tincture of opium vials. Just how widespread the practice, or more importantly the level of addiction, was, 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.[234]

Opium smoking was a time consuming activity, and often indulged in while lying down and in company. Wilton quotes the comments of a local journalist in Deniliquin, which conveys a sense of what it was like inside one of the opium shops.

> 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 ...

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

> the delicious languor which is said to supervene maybe judged from the idle ... aspects presented.[235]

Another insight into the practice of opium smoking was provided by an official report on the Albury camp in 1881, in which it was stated that:

> In several bunks Chinamen were found indulging in their besotting narcotic, but the surroundings in these cases were not calculated to raise any very violent feelings of revulsion. That is to say everything about was clean and decent and, beyond the aroma peculiar to opium, there were no obtrusive smells. The inmates of the camp were found pursuing their avocations, and displayed a good humoured indifference as to the presence or object of their visitors. [236]

Brennan and Quong Tart made particular reference to the use of opium in the Chinese camps in the Riverina, particularly by the women. They stated that

> An infatuation for opium has sunk those females to a "lower depth" of social degradation. Of the seventy-three females in the camps visited, fifty at least are confirmed opium-smokers; some few are endeavouring to wean themselves from this abominable habit, and are, they say, taking medicine with that in view; others however not only indulge in the practice but add the additional luxury of smoking ... and cigars. Opium acts as narcotic, and answers the purpose of a stimulant; hence it is there is hardly a Chinese house that does not contain all the requisites for opium-smoking. All the Chinese smoke opium, and many of them are poor, owing to the purchase of this expensive drug to satiate their longings ...[237]

By the early 1880s a few Chinese clergymen and respectable merchants began to voice their opposition to opium smoking and agitated for the opium trade to be prohibited. Quong Tart was an active campaigner and in 1883 launched an anti opium crusade which resulted in a petition with 4,000 signatures to the Executive Council of NSW. In his submission to the Brennan report he 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.[238]

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.[239] Brennan was a little more ambivalent, recognising that opium smoking had been imposed upon the Chinese and was now a part of their way of life.[240]

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. After some attempts by religious bodies to eliminate opium smoking, the Chinese in Victoria began to play a part in the anti opium movement through the Chinese Empire Reform Association and the Chinese Anti-Opium League of Victoria. The League's actions aroused enthusiasm among Chinese merchants in Sydney, in particular Thomas Yee Hing, who was also President of the New South Wales Chinese Empire Reform Association, and the Chinese Anti-Opium League of New South Wales was formed. It soon gained

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235 Wilton, *Golden Threads*, p.70.

236 *Border Post*, 25 June 1881.

237 Brennan 'Chinese Camps', p3.

238 Brennan, 'Chinese camps', pp.7-8.

239 Brennan, 'Chinese camps', pp.7-8.…

240 Brennan, 'Chinese camps', p.3.

support from influential Australian organisations such as the Masonic societies and churches, and 61,000 signatures for a petition were obtained in August 1905. Federal legislation passed 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, and led to a rise in the price of opium, which made smuggling more profitable.[241]

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'.[242] 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'. On the subject of gambling he commented that Fan-tan was 'played by those in a position to play – storekeepers, cooks, ringbarkers, etc'. He considered that the Chinese lottery was also beneficial, 'for most Chinese give a proportion of money to the local hospital. 'Last year £10 was given, this year £16'. On the camp women he remarked that

> They are for the most part poor, weak-minded creatures, whom perhaps trouble, drink, or some cause had driven for their homes, and the soft-hearted Chinaman cannot refuse them admittance. In no one case have I ever heard of a Chinaman in any way trying to induce a respectable girl to leave her home and live an immoral life. Some of these poor, deluded creatures fly to opium as a source of relief to a troubled mind; but in no way does a Chinaman encourage them to smoke, and much less to drink. In many cases the Chinese have been known to reform some of these women, and even make good wives of them. Such instances are few, but the general rule is when these girls get all they can from the Chinese of one camp, under pretence of love, they leave that camp, go from place to place, and are far from being a benefit to the Chinese.[243]

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, and for domestic use. Chinese men were rarely ever drunk and even more rarely prosecuted for such. Unfortunately, the mere presence of alcohol on their premises was pretext enough for a police raid, particularly if the defendant was a storekeeper, and therefore in a good position to sell it.

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

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241 Yong, *The New Gold Mountain*, pp.179-188; Wilton, *Golden Threads*, pp.65-71.

242 *Daily Advertiser*, 8 January 1884.

243 *Daily Advertiser*, 17 April 1884.

cuisine'.[244]

Rice was the staple diet and complemented other foods such as chicken, pork, fish, beans and a variety of green vegetables, of which there was little shortage in the Riverina, with its many market gardens in the towns and on the pastoral stations. 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, Dang Ah Chee from Tumut and Gundagai, the Mee Ling brothers from Temora, and the famous Sydney tea saloons of Quong Tart. Outside the main festivals such as Chinese New Year, accounts of the day to day culinary experiences of the Chinese men are rare. In one such account Will Carter recalled that the Chinese storekeeper at Middle Adelong, Lee Loong, or 'Deafy',

> killed a couple of pigs each week-end, chiefly for the supply of his fellow country-men, the fossickers, who usually came along in strings, with their poles and baskets, or sacks, for their weekly supplies disposing of it most of it on Sunday afternoons.[245]

A further insight into the eating rituals of the Chinese is provided by a report on the Albury camp in 1881 in which it was stated that:

> men were seen at their dinner plying their chopsticks over some savory [sic]vegetable curry, accompanied by rice, and washed down with the very weakest infusion of "flowery pekos"; others were found superintending culinary arrangements over cleanly-swept hearths; in the lottery house a crowd was collected evidently intend upon some "combination"; and in the butchers' place was to be observed half a pig hanging with several joints of other kinds of meats.[246]

By all accounts the Chinese labourers lived very well on the stations. 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.
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> They are fond of fish, either fresh or dried – I remember once Gooey had a camp on a dam on Warri, 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 ....[247]

Mrs Ruth Genat, the daughter of Walter, the second son of James and Margaret Fong, from Broken Dam near Ariah Park 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.
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> 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

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

[245] Turner, *Looking Backward. The Adelong Goldfield*, pp. 28-29.

[246] *Border Post*, 25 June 1881.

[247] Barellan Progress Association and Improvement Society, *Early Days in Barellan and District*, p38.

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

packages of Chinese rice and tea.[248]

Mr I. C. Fisher from Ariah Park 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'.[249]

Along with the dietary staples a wide variety of other ingredients peculiar to Chinese cuisine was consumed. Two of the most common were soy sauce and ginger. Other ingredients included chestnuts, melon seeds, black beans, bean curd, shark fin, canned fish, preserved duck, preserved plums, moon cakes and cooking lard.[250] Jars of ginger were often given as presents to Europeans on Chinese New Year. In her reminiscences, Joan Palmer recalled the Chinese market gardener on Midgeon Station approaching her and her siblings as children with a smiling face as he handed them a pot of ginger as a New Year's present.[251] Constance Sullivan, in her account of her childhood at Upper Adelong, recalled that 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.[252]

Along with the food came the distinctive Chinese cooking utensils, eating crockery and storage jars.

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

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

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

[251] Palmer, *Memories of a Riverina Childhood*, p.105.

[252] Sullivan, *There's Gold*, pp.131-132.

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 of the wide mouthed or shouldered variety, and could hold preserved vegetables, sweet gherkins, sweet bean paste, shrimp paste, salted garlic, salted onion and pickled lemon. Because of their thickness, the jars were used to hold prepared foods such as pickled vegetables. Ginger bottles were distinctive, 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 bowl had a distinct blue green glaze, with a mark on their 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.[253]

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 work done by archaeologists 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 innovative incorporation of local produce and products. A comprehensive archaeological survey of Chinese mining camps and settlements in south east NSW, conducted by the late Dr Lindsay Smith, revealed evidence of mixing and sharing at a number of sites. Evidence of sharing and mixing was particularly strong at the Narrandera Chinese camp. The archaeological survey by Diane 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 remains of 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 fragments from alcohol bottles. Elsewhere in the region, at Grubben Station near Yerong Creek, objects found included a ginger jar with its lid and the remains of celadon rice bowls. Objects found on other Chinese sites have included glass medicine bottles.[254]

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

[254] Smith, 'Hidden Dragons'; Osborne, The Archaeology of a Riverina Chinatown at Narrandera, pp.39-100; Lydon, *Many Inventions*, pp.92-101.

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 an enquiry in NSW into crowded dwellings and another into common lodging houses. The trigger point, however, was a decision in 1878 by the Australian Steam Navigation Company (ASN) to replace Australian crews with 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.[255]

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'.[256] 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.[257]

As demonstrated by the events of 1878, racial attitudes in the Riverina differed from those in the

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[255] 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, *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'; Andrew Markus *Fear and Hatred. Purifying Australia and California 1850-1901*, Hale & Iremonger, Sydney, 1979, pp.78-84.

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

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

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 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 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, early 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'.[258]

In January 1879, the editor of the *Riverine Grazier* commented favourably on the pamphlet issued by L. Kong Meng, Cheok Hong Cheong and Louis Ah Mouy. He stated that there had been 'hitherto far too much senseless condemnation of the Celestials, whom we have invited and encouraged to come to

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

our shores, and far too little recognition of that just claim to be regarded as part of the human family'.[259]

These mixed, perhaps more relaxed, attitudes were a matter of bewilderment to some outside observers, a Victorian visitor to Wagga Wagga in 1879 commenting 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 "boots", 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 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 ...[260]

In June 1880 the editor for the *Wagga Wagga Daily Advertiser* (hereafter, *Daily Advertiser*), writing in the aftermath of recent race agitations in the metropolitan cities, stated:

> 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?'[261]

And, in commenting on a recent violent attack on three Chinese men in Melbourne, he remarked that the

> Chinamen living in our midst should be protected by the law, under whose protection they seek their livelihood; and all right-thinking men will gladly hail that legislation which will determine as to whether Chinese are to be allowed to immigrate and sojourn in the land, or be altogether prevented form so doing.'[262]

The following week he referred to the harsh anti-Chinese legislation in California, stating that

> We, with the more deliberate action that marks our legislation on important questions, are 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 ... They may urge, with equal truth, that, in their opinion an introduction of a large number of the disciples of Confucius into our (to them) half barbarous centres of civilisation will eventually tend to improve us in sundry particulars, in which, to tell the truth, there is room for improvement, viz., thrift, temperance, and economy.[263]

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 September 1881, when he stated that:

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[259] *Riverine Grazier*, 1 January 1879.

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

[261] *Daily Advertiser*, 10 June 1880.

[262] *Daily Advertiser*, 10 June 1880.

[263] *Daily Advertiser*, 17 June 1880.

> 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 in 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 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 Johan can indulge in the seductive pleasure of fan-tan without fear of interruption, and tempt fickle fortune so long as his cash holds out.[264]

Despite the obvious biases in this article, it was, for its time, rather more balanced than many others, and to a degree, informative on country life. It provided a country-metropolis contrast that few other journalists attempted. But 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,

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

which was attended by 10,000 people.[265] The Riverina press could no longer ignore these sentiments. In June 1881, the editor of the *Daily Advertiser* commented 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 [obviously Narrandera] 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 "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.[266]

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 fear generated by 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.

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

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

The new immigration 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'.[267] It was inevitable that the Riverina newspapers would be swept up in this general wave of hysteria and xenophobia, some of them coming 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 to Europeans, was an integral part of the argument ...[268]

Indicative of these hardening views were the comments of Judge Forbes, who was 'exceedingly severe on the Chinese'. At the end of a case at the Wagga Quarter Sessions he stated that there were between 300 to 400 Chinese at Narrandera.

> One man rented the ground and sublet it to his countrymen, there were some 6 to 7 white women living there. Some were married but the majority were living in adultery. Chinamen got their living in various ways. There were stores and boarding-houses, and opium shops. There were continued brawls among the fraternity, and frequently they brought their disputes before the Police court for settlement. The police had several of the Chinese and European women summoned before them for riotous behaviour, but they seldom succeed in getting a conviction.' He stated that it was a 'disgrace to our civilisation that Chinamen should be allowed to come into this country, bringing with them their vices and diseases, and polluting innocent young European girls, thereby leading them to degradation, and ultimately ruin and death ... He had rid Hay of the pest, and he would do the same with Narandera [sic] as opportunities occurred.[269]

Such changing sentiments led to the holding of anti-Chinese 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. The editor of the *Temora Star* reminded the aggrieved European miners that they needed to proceed with 'the greatest moderation' as the Chinese had the same legal rights as Europeans to be on the field.[270] A large public meeting was held, but floundered when the chairman was asked whether one of his sons was apprenticed to a Chinese man. The editor of the *Temora Star* pointed out that there were many Europeans, including some at the meeting, who would be only too happy to patronise a Chinese storekeeper or blacksmith if he could get a better deal than that done by Europeans.[271]

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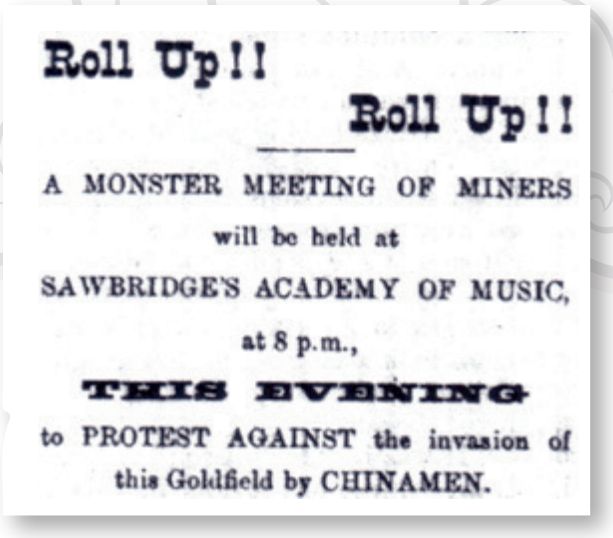
[267] Markus, *Fear and Hatred*: pp.121-127, 136-139. In September 1887 the agitation was further stimulated by the reorganization of the anti-Chinese League, which distributed 20,000 handbills outlining its objectives; McGowan, "The Economics and Organisation of Chinese Mining in Colonial Australia", pp.119-138.

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

[269] *Daily Advertiser*, 26 July 1883.

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

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


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.

Call to rally by the anti-Chinese miners from the Temora Star, *April 7, 1883*

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.[272] 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.[273] However, the League's effectiveness was blunted by the unwillingness of many landowners to embrace its central proposition, for many landowners regarded the Chinese farmers as their bread and butter.

Following the passage of the Influx of *Chinese Restriction Act 1888* in May 1888, the justification for the League's continued existence began to waver, and a widely reported meeting of the League in August 1888 drew well-merited scorn from the editor of the *Riverine Grazier*. One resolution sought to procure another resident doctor in Tumut, because the current doctor, originally a League supporter, had subsequently let land to the Chinese. More remarkable still was the notice of resignation by a Mr C. Dean, a committee member, because he had allowed 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'.[274]

Further immigration restrictions were imposed in 1888. The debate on and passage of the *Influx of Chinese Restriction Act 1888* was driven by a deep seated fear of a resurgent China and racial xenophobia, 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'. 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 was now pleading the case for British justice, and criticising the extreme measures

[272] *Town and Country Journal*, 24 December 1887.

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

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

contemplated in the legislation.[275]

One instance of these conflicting views was provided in April, 1888 by the editor of the *Riverine Grazier*, who reminded his readers of the colony's wider treaty obligations, stating 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.[276]

A little over a month later, on 22 May,1888, 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's 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.

Similar sentiments were expressed by almost every other newspaper editor in the Riverina. The editor of the *Gundagai Times* remarked that the Premier had thrown

> to the winds all treaties or obligations of the mother country - all this to please a turbulent Sydney mob who waylaid him at Parliament House. He has brought contempt and ridicule upon the country by his hasty action, and whereas he sought to float once more upon the sea of popularity, it would, instead, seem to foreshadow his downfall ... We are favourable to blocking the Chinese in a fair and legitimate way and in conformity with the beautiful idea of British justice. The Chinese came here under our existing law and should be treated so in all honour, it is a contemptible act to pass any retrospective measure after these men had actually arrived in British waters. Any law dealing with the Chinese should respect the vested interest of those who are here, as it is against all a white man's ideas of justice

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[275] The *Afghan* arrived in Sydney in early May with several hundred Chinese passengers, who had earlier been unable to land In Melbourne. On 3 May before the arrival of the Afghan, a public meeting was held in the Town Hall, which was attended by 5000 people, and a second meeting held on the streets for those who could not gain admission. Following the meeting there was a march to Parliament. The very next day Parkes set aside the existing legislation under which Chinese without naturalisation papers could disembark on payment of the then £20 poll tax, and proceeded to rush his new retrospective legislation through Parliament. The Supreme Court invalidated these actions by ruling that Chinese possessing exemption certificates and those willing to pay the £20 poll tax could land. Popular agitation continued for some time, however. In June a Grand National Anti-Chinese demonstration attracted about 50,000 people, and protests soon commenced against the employment of Chinese on the Sydney-San Francisco run, accompanied by serious boycotts of Chinese businesses, including vegetable sellers. On 30 June the League organised a demonstration which attracted between 6,000 and 50,000 people. However, the anti-Chinese League failed to attract sufficient financial support from the unions and the public and by August it was largely inactive. Markus, Fear and Hatred, pp.81-148; *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.

[276] *Riverine Grazier*, 18 April 1888.

> and fair dealing between man and man to hunt them without giving them a chance of defending themselves.[277]

Contradictory comments were also uttered by the editor of the *Narrandera Ensign*. In April 1888 he stated that:

> There is not the least doubt that the Chinaman is an undesirable citizen, if citizen he can be called ... The future Australian race must be a composite one. For this reason we would not object to the Chinaman as a Chinaman. If he would only conform to our ways and advance with our civilization, if even he would only play a passive part like the poor Aboriginal, and not interfere with human progress, we should not very much cavil at him. Our great aversion to his presence proceeds from a conviction that he is a menace to advancement, who will only use his powers to throw the world back into a state of semi-barbarism, such as prevails in China itself, which has been aptly termed a "Dead Sea of man" ... 'It will be found that those who take part with the Mongolian really see in him but one good quality, which is his cheapness, and this is where he threatens the white race' ... 'Let him once get strong enough and he will fly at higher and bolder games than gambling and opium smoking, and brothel-keeping'.[278]

In commenting on the Imperial Government's attitude the editor stated.

> If then England could not employ Australia as a rubbish pit for her own undesirable population, how can she reasonably have a voice in forcing us to admit the refuse of another nation.[279]

However, a month later he attacked the proposed legislation, stating that

> Legislation by panic is a further description for the recent proceedings of our Government on the Chinese question. Nothing can be more contradictory than Sir Henry Parkes's recent energetic action, and his policy as enunciated at Wagga and elsewhere a few weeks before. Then the Celestials were described as by no means undesirable elements of our civilisation, and caution and calmness in dealing with the question were strongly recommended. Now a revolutionary measure is forced through the house in a few hours, and international rights are set at naught, while the Assembly comes into collision with the Council, and the Ministry with our Supreme Court ... The present would have been the right and proper policy had it only been adopted a few weeks ago. The Premier had ample notice of the gravity of the question, and there was no need of that hasty legislation and the scandalous disregard of existing rights and laws which is likely to produce future embarrassments ... Above all, instead of playing a lone hand, he should have secured the cooperation of the other colonies, or at any rate consulted them, since the demand of a United Australia, would secure a different hearing in Downing street or elsewhere, the colonies appearing as nothing more than mere municipalities.

In his concluding remarks he questioned the alleged inferiority of the Chinese, and referred to the obvious deficiencies in Australia's social system, which, in his view, encouraged their immigration. He stated that:

> It is humiliating that we should be forced to legislate at all against what are termed an "inferior race". If the Chinaman is inferior, why is his presence such a danger? ... Preserving Australia for the British race is the reason generally given, but the sentiment is not pretty, and the sense is ridiculous. As we have recently explained, the Englishman knows nothing of viticulture, or industries peculiar to a semi-tropical climate and, consequently, other races are necessary for the full development of this continent. Mob orators may allude to the uncleanliness and vices of the Mongolians, but these utterances are not worth serious consideration, and remind us of Satan abusing sin. The Chinaman is a menace to our civilisation, but the cause rests with ourselves ... 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

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[277] *Gundagai Times*, 22 May 1888.

[278] *Narrandera Ensign*, 19 April 1888.

[279] *Narrandera Ensign*, 19 April 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 of R. N. Chinese
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	£150 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, Sydney

> 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 ... At the root of the Chinese trouble are the old sores of the social system, the distribution of wealth, the relations between labor and capital, the training and improvement of the masses and above all the tenure of lands. In our day a man has arisen to propose a remedy, and though he has been scoffed at and reviled like all social reformers from the Nazarene down yet his doctrines area making headway'.[280]

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.[281] 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.[282]

Wholesale evasion of the poll tax soon became commonplace, as did the large number of police and customs officers and informers needed to enforce it. People smuggling and border evasion was a 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.[283]

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. 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 it.[284] The *Albury Banner* commented on 25 August 1893 that

> That Chinese and Hindoos and others of that ilk are an undesirable class scarcely any respectable European will deny, but once in Australia, what does it matter to the people generally whether they reside in one colony or the other. Make the coast's laws against them as strict as possible to make them uniform, but don't perpetrate the absurdity of interfering and punishing harshly these unfortunate beings merely because they cross a defined or an imaginary boundary line between the colonies.

The practical application of the immigration restrictions aroused considerable anger when prosperous merchants and other well respected Chinese men were caught in its web. One of the more notorious cases involved Way Lee, the 'untitled Chinese mandarin of Adelaide', who in 1889 wished to visit NSW following a fire at Broken Hill, which destroyed one of his businesses. He was allowed to enter the Colony without incurring the poll tax after numerous representations, and only after the personal

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

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

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

[283] *Daily Advertiser*, 31 August 1893, 18 October 1894; Williams, *Chinese Settlement in NSW*, p.32.

[284] Bruce Pennay, *From Colonial to State Border*, Charles Sturt University, Albury 2001, pp.37-39.

intervention of the South Australian and Victorian Premiers to Sir Henry Parkes, whom Way Lee met in Melbourne, while Parkes was visiting there. Both men later crossed the border on the same train, but in different carriages.[285] Even more infamous was a case involving the Rev. Chue, a clergyman from Ballarat, who was described by one correspondent as 'an indefatigible worker in the cause of moral and religion' in Victoria, he also being a naturalised citizen of that colony. The editor of the *Sydney Morning Herald* went on the attack, and his remonstrations were adopted by at least one Riverina newspaper.[286] He remarked indignantly that

> it is not enough for us to impose restrictions on the vessels that bring any more of them, and to compel the incomers to pay a heavy fine at entrance, but we must pursue these "strangers within our gates" with drastic treatment of this sort, harassing them with restrictions on their movements from one colony to another, as if they were criminals that had to report their whereabouts to the police. There is something extremely unmanly in this sort of persecution of colour, and though panic legislation of that sort may take place when people lose their heads and strike out blindly, the continuance of worrying legislation such as this, over a quiet and thoughtful period, is entirely discreditable. Let it be enough to exclude Chinese from the colonies, but let us not dishonour our mood by persecuting them when they are here, and when they have become by naturalisation our fellow-citizens.[287]

The Rev. Chue was on his way to China via Sydney, where he was entertained at a gathering of prominent clergymen and Sydney Chinese merchants, who met at Quong Tart's King Street premises. His visit coincided, ironically with a visit to China by Way Lee who intended to present a petition to the Governor of Hong Kong for transmission to the Chinese authorities on the injustices of the current legislation. In commenting on these events, Quong Tart remarked that a petition was to be presented in due course to the NSW Parliament by the leading Chinese residents of Sydney, who would not just plead the harmful effects of the legislation on their businesses, but the sadder instances where their countrymen had been dying but unable to be visited and consoled by their friends and relatives in other colonies.[288]

The cudgels were well and truly taken up by one of the principal writers of the *Albury Banner*, Lippon Dairn, and are worth recounting in some detail as an illustration of the difficulties faced by all Chinese living in the Riverina, and also the generally favourable attitudes towards their plight by the local press. Following the arrest of three longstanding Chinese residents of the Corowa Wahgunyah area, he stated that

> it could hardly make much difference to anyone, whether they pitched their tents on the north bank of the river or on the south. Even in the case of the Chinese arrested at Albury, the facts disclosed only tend to show the necessity for federal action. The men were already in Australia, and presumably were entitled to be in the country. Under federation they would, being here, be free to go to any colony. Under our present system of provincialism they are forbidden to take the opportunities that offer for gaining an honest livelihood. Worse than this when they do in defiance of the law seek for work … they are "punished" by being fed for two years at the cost of the taxpayers. … The whole trouble shows the difficulty in the working of the Restriction Act … and points to an urgent necessity for joint action among the colonies regarding the admittance of alien races from other countries, without punishing unoffending foreigners, who in any case are bona fide residents in one or the other of the two principal colonies.[289]

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[285] *Albury Banner*, 15 February, 10 March 1889.

[286] *Albury Banner*, 10 March 1893.

[287] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 February 1893.

[288] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 February 1893.

[289] *Albury Banner*, 18 August 1893.

Later that year, with the arrest of another group of Chinese attempting to cross the border, the Banner correspondent protested vigorously, stating that the cost of maintaining one Chinese man in gaol was £70 per annum, 'and in these hard times of depression it seems … that the game is not worth the candle'. He questioned whether there was any 'desire on the part of any large number of the Celestials to quit Victoria for New South Wales'. In February 1894, the correspondent again went on the attack following the death in gaol of a Chinese man imprisoned for evading the poll tax. He posed the question that regardless of whether in the next century the colonies would get federation or a custom union, 'one thing that in the interests of decency ought to be arranged for with as little delay as possible, and that is - intercolonial free trade in Chinamen'. He argued that once in Australia they should be allowed to roam at free will. 'At the worst they are self-supporting and sober'.[290]

The correspondent had another opportunity to question the legislation when a Chinese man, a former servant of a Mr Stuckey for more than 15 years, was denied entry into NSW in 1894 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. He commented that 'surely this is carrying out the provisions of the *Chinese Restriction Act* to a degree never contemplated by its authors'.[291] 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![292] 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 his return after living in Victoria for five years. The authorities only withdrew the case against him when he agreed to return to Victoria.[293] Another ridiculous instance occurred in 1898 when Lie Cook, Long Poy, Lie Hung and Lee See were arrested for attempting to travel from Broken Hill to Sydney. There was no direct rail route between the two cities and the Chinese men were arrested after detouring through South Australia and Victoria to get to Sydney.[294]

The Albury correspondent was particularly scathing when a group of Chinese men were arrested at Deniliquin in 1898. He stated that in Albury there had been numerous incidents of Chinese men being sentenced to imprisonment only to be discharged a few weeks later. In most instances the men had been well known residents of the district who had merely committed a technical breach of the law. He argued that the law was in urgent need of amendment and that the 'rights of Chinese long domiciled in the colony should be properly defined and protected'.[295]

John Egge, the Chinese riverboat captain, was severely affected by the colonial immigration restrictions. Under the 1881 legislation, he had to pay £20 every time he entered NSW from either South Australia or Victoria, which in the latter case was frequent, as he made many trips to and from Echuca to places such as Albury and elsewhere in the Riverina. After 1888, it was a very expensive £100 every time he did so. He was also caught up by the immigration restrictions imposed by the South Australian and Victorian Governments. According to historian Morag Loh he was eventually granted an exemption from the poll tax when the governments of Victoria, South Australia and New South Wales

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290 *Albury Banner*, 1 December 1893.

291 *Daily Advertiser*, 1 February 1894; *Narrandera Ensign*, 2 February 1894; *Albury Banner*, 1 December 1893, 2 February 1894.

292 *Albury Banner*, 10 January 1896.

293 *Albury Banner*, 3 January 1896.

294 *Albury Daily News*, 3 June 1898.

295 *Albury Banner*, 11 November 1898.

agreed to recognise him as an Australian merchant.[296]

While the 1888 restrictions impacted most immediately on those Chinese already in Australia, like its successor legislation in 1901, it also impacted severely on Chinese Australians with family ties in China. An instance of the above is provided by the autobiography of Kwan Hong Kee, who worked as a shop assistant and salesman in various stores in Sydney and regional NSW, including at Narrandera, where he worked in a branch store of the Sydney-based Sarm Choy business. After seven years in Narrandera, he returned to China, where he married a Miss Joh from Loong Toh Warn village, where he lived for two years. However, on his return to Australia in 1894, he could not bring his wife with him, and she died two weeks after his arrival in Sydney, 'heartbroken at our parting'. Her inability to come with him was almost certainly a consequence of his inability to pay the heavy impost of £100 (there were no other legal impediments). [297]

[296] Loh, 'John Egge: A Champion of the Rivers'; *Adelaide Observer*, 21 September 1901.

[297] Kwan Hong Kee, *Autobiography of Mr Kwan Hong Kee*.

Law and Order

The evidence for prejudice and discrimination in the legal system is mixed, for although the law courts were generally even-handed in their treatment of the Chinese, the police were less so. Unlike California in the 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, who had aggrieved them by assault, stealing or refusal to pay debts. But the sudden increase in court cases involving the Chinese was a challenge. A case at Gundagai in 1869 illustrates some of these issues. It involved a prosecution by Ah Coot against Margaret Feehan, whom he accused of stealing three cabbages and a watermelon from his garden. The case took a long time to resolve owing to the court's difficulty in selecting an interpreter and understanding the answers as interpreted, and making the interpreter understand the questions. 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 fewer difficulties in adjudication'.[298]

But not all observers were as understanding, the editor of the *Wagga Express* stating in 1873 that

> The undesirable immigrant whom we have encouraged to dwell amongst us, who raises our cabbages and cooks our mutton, appears to possess as fatal a facility for mixing himself up with criminal proceedings as for availing himself of legal protection if he imagines himself wronged. That he generally succeeds in gaining the sympathy of the court, no one, who has ever "sat through" a case in which a Chinaman was involved, will deny.

The editor implied that difficulties in language and getting reliable witnesses prevented searching scrutiny by lawyers and the Bench, and remarked that instead of

> inviting him to tell the truth under pain of being spiritually snuffed out [a reference to the practice of giving evidence by lighting and blowing out a match] ... some stronger pressure were brought to bear upon him. Prison discipline with light work and plenty of food is but little punishment to him. The Chinaman is a difficult subject for legislation, but he is a subject, nevertheless.[299]

Others, however, had different views, a Narrandera writer commenting that he had listened to conflicting statements in court all day, in which wilful perjury must have been committed by one side or another. He thought that the Chinese practice of blowing out a match was preferable to swearing on the Bible, with men calling upon God to be witness to 'what are manifestly outrageous lies'.[300]

Another example of the dilemma often faced by the courts arose in 1884 when Martin Callahan, Margaret Ling Kim and Elizabeth Robinson were charged with assaulting and robbing Dick Shing, a fruit dealer, at the Narrandera camp. 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.

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

[299] *Wagga Express*, 26 July 1873.

[300] *Narrandera Ensign*, 2 December 1892.

The trio were found guilty; Callanan got five years gaol, Robinson four years and Kim three years.[301]

Working in the Chinese men's favour was the perception by some judges and magistrates that the Chinese were inoffensive or defenceless, a back-handed compliment at best. 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'.[302] A similar, less than flattering, comment was made by the Police Magistrate in case of assault brought by Tu Hock against Alexander Neil for assault at Adelong, the incident involving four Europeans and two Chinese. 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.[303]

Although the courts at least tried to be even-handed, at times the administration of justice by the police appeared to be heavily weighted against the Chinese and the female camp occupants, who were very visible and therefore easy targets. The prosecutions for sly grog dealing and gambling are a good instance of this discrimination. Many local residents viewed the gambling prosecutions with disdain and acted as advocates or character witnesses for the accused.

In December 1898, Charley Kimm, George Nooey and Yee You were charged with conducting an unlawful lottery at the Narrandera camp. The defence asked that provision of the *First Offender's Act* be extended as the lottery had been fairly conducted and Europeans conducted and advertised big sweeps which were subscribed to by the public.[304] The offenders were given the benefit of the *First Offender's Act*, a correspondent for the *Daily Telegraph* (reported in the Ensign) stating that this would to some extent

> disabuse the public mind of the idea that this law is administered chiefly in the interest of the nicest first offenders. No back-blocks Chinaman who grows vegetables can possibly come under that classification or be regarded as having mesmerised the Law by his social influence. This act of clemency will square some others that seemed a trifle one-sided, and may even leave something over. Nobody will believe that the Narandera [sic] crime was a first offence or that the criminals were unaware of the lawlessness in a Christian community by trying to clean each other out by the agency of games of skill or chance.[305]

There were conflicting views on these offences, for while the *Argus* correspondent admitted of similar wrongdoings by Europeans, the *Telegraph* writer stated that

> They [the Chinese] must have seen that gambling in all its forms is abhorrent to the people among whom they have cast their lot: that to the ragged small boy in the streets and the bejewelled member of the big turf clubs it is equally debarred by laws which we all respect. Justice may be tempered with overmuch mercy if we let the inferior races down lightly for doing evil things which we avoid.

Gambling endured for many years more, however, for in 1906 Ah Toy was sentenced to 14 days imprisonment under the new *Gaming Act* for selling pak a pu tickets. The Police Magistrate stated that had the accused been previously warned of the offence the penalty would have been much more severe.

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

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

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

[304] *Narrandera Argus* 3 March 1899; *Narrandera Ensign*, 23 December 1898.

[305] *Narrandera Ensign*, 5 March 1899.

To put these conflicting views into context, the comments by a Wagga correspondent under the pseudonym of 'Justice' are relevant. He remarked 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.[306]

A case in Hay in August 1890 provides further insights into the tactics of the police and the circumstances surrounding the lotteries and the convictions. Constables Thorncroft and Barnes, both of whom bought two tickets each for six pence a ticket, apprehended ten men. They attended the drawing of the lottery, and described the proceedings to the court in intimate detail, Constable Barnes winning nine shillings for his little flutter.[307] Several weeks later the secretary of the Hay hospital acknowledged receipt of £23 14s from Long Jim and Ching Lee, the proceeds of pro rata deductions from winnings in the Chinese lotteries.[308] 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 respectable men of wealth. Several Europeans came forward as character witnesses for the accused. The judge acknowledged that the men had been engaged in a charitable occupation and gave 'a light sentence' of a month's gaol each.[309]

In February 1892 it was the turn of the Hay fan-tan devotees to draw the attention of the police. In the ensuing case 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 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.[310] In another gambling case a few weeks later, Crang stated that the offence had taken place on Chinese New Year and the men were playing for fruit not money. He 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. The men were given a 'light sentence' of £5 each. Mr Crang advised that as neither of the men could pay the fine, he had taken up their case without payment and would arrange a collection to pay the fines.[311]

The police would not have had as much success in making arrests for sly grog dealing, leave alone securing successful convictions, without willing informants, both European and Chinese, who were

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306 *Daily Advertiser*, 16 February 1888.

307 *Riverine Grazier*, 8 August 1890.

308 *Riverine Grazier*, 2 September 1890.

309 *Riverine Grazier*, 21 November 1890.

310 *Riverine Grazier*, 2, 12 February 1892.

311 *Riverine Grazier*, 12 February 1892.

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.[312]

Sometimes the Chinese were informers, revealing a breakdown in traditional loyalties or perhaps reflecting clan differences or economic hardship. One such informer was Thomas Lee. At Gundagai in 1869, he assisted the police in the arrest of a Chinese sly grog seller. Lee was a Christian convert and a regular if not professional informer, having informed in Victoria, Tumbarumba and Tumut on sly grog cases. He said he was motivated by a desire to defend the publicans, although he still expected to get half the fine as an informer, which no doubt was the prime incentive.[313] Often, but not always, the offenders were European women living with Chinese men.

In Hay, the presence of Chinese informers in the early 1890s appears to have been particularly prevalent. 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 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 Nim 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'.[314]

In April 1892, a well known Chinese man, Wong Pack, was charged with sly grog selling. The police had been accompanied by a Chinese informer, Han Won, who was given a shilling to purchase liquor, and returned from the house 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 but been denied. He 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 gave 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. 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 because the alcohol was kept under the bench it was intended for sale.[315] 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. Wong Pack stated that he had left the store before the alleged offence was committed to attend the Chinese Freemason's Lodge, and did not return until the next morning. A witness, Ah Cheong, stated that Ah Foon had paid for some opium and Chinese medicine, and had been given the brandy for free. The

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

[313] *Gundagai Times*, 29 May, 12 June 1869.

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

[315] *Riverine Grazier*, 1 April, 1 July 1892.

case was dismissed.[316]

Another case involving a Chinese informer, Ah Seong, a cook and rabbiter, was heard by the Hay court in May 1894. The usual ploy of using an empty bottle and coin was employed. The accused, Un Chun, sold Chinese herbs and opium for a living and had been imprisoned previously for keeping a disorderly house and for sly grog selling. He was fined £30. Ah Seong was described as a 'respectable Chinaman, who had saved some money. Seong said it was the first time he had informed.[317]

In August 1881, Charlotte Walker, a young woman living at the Narrandera Chinese camp, was summoned for illegally selling liquor. She did not appear and a warrant was issued for her arrest. Constable King went to arrest her, but when he got there she was in bed under the pretence of a serious illness. He called in a doctor, who pronounced her to be in a fit state to be taken to the lock-up. She refused to go and covered herself with blankets. The constable had to pull her from the bed gently and dress her as best he could, the doctor being a spectator. Finally finished, the patient and prisoner were marched 'to the hovel which has to do duty for a lock–up'.[318]

Elizabeth Smith, a married woman at the Narrandera camp, was fined £50 and 4s 10d costs for illegal grog selling in January 1892. Mary Ping Can gave evidence, along with several Europeans, that alcohol had been sold. Smith was also up on a charge of feloniously cutting and wounding Mary Ping Can with a pair of scissors. According to Mary Ping Can, Smith asked her to sleep with a strange man, which she refused. Smith then abused Ping Can, took the man in question's hat and cut it to pieces, then took hold of Ping Can and shoved her. A Chinese man then pulled Ping Can by the hair and struck her, and Smith also struck her several times with the point of some scissors. Mary Ping Can said that she was sober at the time, although she may have had a dozen drinks. Smith also claimed that she was sober as she only drank tea and water. A European witness stated that there were three Chinese men present at the time, but could not say which one pulled Can's hair. He did not see the attack with the scissors. The case was committed for trial at Wagga, but no account is available of the outcome.[319]

Also in January 1892 in Hay, Tick Sing was fined £30 4s 10d plus costs for sly grog selling. Two European men were the informers and had gone to the store to catch him.[320] And in September 1893, Cecilia Page (Mrs Ah Que), a resident of the Camp, was also fined £30 for sly grog selling.[321] A near 'textbook' version of informing took place in December 1894, following the arrest of Fong Kee for selling liquor without a license. Constable Mason went to the Narrandera Camp with a man named Edward Davis, sending him to Kee's store with a marked shilling and a marked bottle. Davis purchased some brandy and paid for it with the marked shilling, the police waiting outside while watching proceedings, then entering the store. Kee and two Chinese witnesses, Ah Ham and Ah Foos, stated that Davis had asked for tobacco, which he paid for with the shilling. He then asked for some brandy, saying that his mate had a belly-ache. Kee said he had none, and Ah Ham stated that he gave him a little brandy, but took no money for it. The bench gave Fong Kee the benefit of the doubt as to the identity of the man that had served the liquor and he was discharged, with Davis leaving the court unrewarded.[322] A similar

316 *Riverine Grazier*, 20 September 1892.

317 *Riverine Grazier*, 8 May 1894.

318 *Daily Advertiser*, 16 August 1881.

319 *Narrandera Ensign*, 7 January 1892.

320 *Narrandera Ensign*, 14 January 1892.

321 *Narrandera Ensign*, 1 September 1893.

322 *Narrandera Ensign*, 14 December 1894.

incident occurred in 1896 when Lucy Ah Leeong was prosecuted for sly grog selling. John Jones, the informer, and Constable Woodbury in plain clothes, went to Ah Leeong's house and bought drink with a marked half crown. Another policeman, Sergeant Barnett, watched the place at the time. The girl's husband, a part Chinese man, denied that Jones or Woodbury had paid for the drinks, but nevertheless his wife was fined £30 and £2 costs. The informer got £10.[323]

In 1897, Augusta Smith, 'an aged fat lady', and a girl named Lena were charged with sly grog selling at the camp. Smith was fined £30, but the Police Magistrate said he would recommend remission of the penalty to the Minister for Justice on account of the advanced age of the defendant. Ah Cook was also fined £30, but as he could not pay the fine he went to gaol. An informer named Joseph Simpson was used. Ah Duch was also charged on information from Simpson, but it was insufficient to convict.[324] In 1898, Selina Harris and Mrs Ah Teck were fined £30 for sly grog selling. Two constables, Brown and Williams, suitably disguised, went into the house, Williams pretending to be sick when he entered. Harris stated that the men had asked if any girls were there and whether they could have beds. Brown asked that if he got a girl would Harris stay with his mate, but she refused. They then asked for a drink of whisky.[325] In February 1900, Fan Kee (Fong Kee?), a storekeeper at the camp, was charged with selling sly grog and fined £30, in lieu of going to gaol for three months. He decided to save his capital and took the latter option.[326]

The court reports provide many examples of the types of offences committed against the Chinese and the attitudes of the courts. In December 1891, David Morgan was arrested for assaulting Ah Sam in East Street, for which he was fined £3 and gaoled for one month hard labour in Wagga gaol. In June 1895, Robert Rae was charged with assaulting Poo Mon. The struggle took place outside the Royal Hotel in Narrandera, with Poo Mon accusing Rae of trying to rob him; he did not strike him or harm him, but accosted him on his way back to camp, asked for money and tried to go through his pockets. The accused had been drinking and claimed it was a practical joke, and was discharged with a reprimand and warning.[327]

In July 1898, John Swan and Robert Smith were charged with attempted robbery and assault of Ah You at the Narrandera camp. Ah You was living near the Chinese church, when the defendants met him and asked for money. On saying that he had none, one of the men struck him and the other seized him by the necktie and hit him again. After Ah You cried out for help the men ran away and hid behind a tree where they were spotted by Ah Fat, a cook at the camp. The men were then followed into Sam Yett's store, and later positively identified by Ah Lung, a clerk in the store. The evidence provided in defence of the Europeans was dismissed as unreliable. Swan got three months gaol and Smith two months. Of interest in the evidence was the reference to the old camp and new camp, presumably the former being the burnt out camp area and the latter the new one which replaced it.[328]

The case against Arthur McMahon in November 1891 shows just how difficult it was to get convictions with so much conflicting evidence, and unreliable if not unstable witnesses. McMahon was charged with inflicting grievous bodily harm on Ah Jack at Lizzie Ah Fee's place in the lower camp, (the location of the lower camp is uncertain but it may have been across the road close to the river). On arrival at the

[323] *Narrandera Ensign*, 7 February 1896.

[324] *Narrandera Ensign*, 2 & 9 July 1897.

[325] *Narrandera Ensign*, 21 January1898.

[326] *Narrandera Ensign*, 16 February 1900.

[327] *Narrandera Ensign*, 21 June 1895.

[328] *Narrandera Ensign*, 8 July 1898.

camp, the police found Ah Jack lying on a bed in Ah Fee's house, just under a broken window. There was a large amount of blood on his hands and neck, a large cut over his right eye, his eyes blackened and his cheeks and lips swollen, nose flattened and his head bandaged. Ah Jack said he recognised McMahon because he had been a cook for his father. In court the proceedings soon descended into high farce. Ah Fee as a witness was 'spirituously overcome', refused to give evidence and was removed to the lock up. Ah Jack in his turn objected to the line of questioning from the defendant's lawyer, which he considered threatening and removed himself from the box twice. He was also locked up. The next day both Ah Jack and Ah Fee gave evidence to the effect that McMahon was one of three men who had committed the offence. But two other witnesses came forward who slept in the same room as McMahon at his parent's hotel, the Crown, saying that he was in bed at the time of the attack. There can be no doubt that Ah Jack was set upon fiercely and more than likely by McMahon or one of his mates, but for lack of conclusive evidence the case was dismissed.[329]

A slightly similar case arose in December 1893 when a man named Lawrence went into Mee Kin's shop in Narrandera and asked for a plate of soup, which was given to him with some mutton in it. He then asked for chicken instead of mutton and when this was refused threw the soup over Mee Kin and struck him a violent blow on the head with the plate, causing a bad scalp wound and lacerations. A summons was issued for the assault, but in the meantime the assailant had left town, and the final outcome of this incident is unknown.[330]

Fruit stealing, usually by youths, was a common offence against the Chinese, and almost a rite of passage among the Riverina youth. At Narrandera in 1899, 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.[331] In June 1900, Thomas Bennett was charged with stealing fruit worth 4s from Fan Foon, and was fined 5s plus the price of the fruit.[332]

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 could not be identified as being in the garden.[333] Ken Lean, a Narrandera resident, recalls his own exploits in these endeavours. Along with two of his youthful mates, he ventured into King Fan's garden to sample some of his nectarines. One of the boys was up the tree throwing down the fruit to the others who put them in their shirts. Their exploits were interrupted by the sight of an irate King Fan charging across the garden with a meat cleaver in his hand. The boy in the tree took fright, fell out and, winded himself, and was hurriedly carried away by the others. In another instance. Essie Dale has recalled that she and other children sometimes took quinces from King Fan's garden on their way to school. Essie's house was located at Gillenbah over the river and next to Tip Nooey's market garden. They walked to the school via the railway bridge, which took them over the river, and close to King Fan's garden.[334]

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329 *Narrandera Ensign*, 12 &19 November 1891.

330 *Narrandera Ensign*, 23 December 1893.

331 *Narrandera Ensign*, 13 January 1899.

332 *Narrandera Ensign*, 1 June 1900.

333 *Narrandera Ensign*, 13 July 1900.

334 Discussions with Essie Dale, March 2012.

But it wasn't just the gardeners who suffered from theft. For in December 1893, John Newton, a youth of 'dissipated appearance' was charged with several instances of theft, including stealing a pair of pants and two coats from Sam Hing and Co. He later sold the goods to a Mrs Smith in the Chinese camp, and was sentenced to a month's hard labour in the Cootamundra gaol.[335] And in December 1904, Frederick Bowman was fined 10s for stealing three pairs of boots from Hun Chong's store in East Street, Narrandera.[336]

The press and the courts were scathing on the larrikins, who sometimes assaulted the Chinese by throwing stones or stealing or damaging their vegetable produce. The relative paucity of such crimes at Narrandera may be a reflection of the greater numerical strength of the Chinese compared to other towns, and perhaps a greater degree of acceptance of them as a people, or simply that the press accounts are unavailable, particularly prior to 1888. Press reports of court proceedings from other Riverina towns, however, provide further insights into the types of crimes against the Chinese and the attitudes of the courts and the press. Similar sentiments would have prevailed in Narrandera. 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 complaining of 'ruffianism running riot during the band promenades', and expressing his relief to see the magistrates prepared to deal severely with such cases.[337] 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 later incident, a European youth was fined £2 6s 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'. [338] In September 1881, a correspondent 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'.[339]

But the Chinese also committed their fair share of crimes, some against each other. For instance, in March 1891 Fon Hok (Ah Lim) was charged with inflicting grievous bodily harm upon You Why. The complainant had approached the police showing evidence of a cut lip and blood on his clothes. The defendant said he had seen You Why 'knocking a woman about' at lower camp and so hit him in the face and cut his lip. You Why said he was a cook in town. After leaving work he had made his way to the 'celestial city', and went to Fonk (Fong) Kee's store, and while sitting on a stool Lizzie Ah Fee came in to 'jaw him and fight him', which he declined. She then called out for the defendant and another Chinese to come and fight the witness. After that an 'all round row ensued', and in the scuffle a lamp was knocked over. You Why said he did not know who cut his lip, and it was because of what someone had told him that he laid the information. The witness's statement created a deal of amusement in court, even more so when on his exit he dispensed with his bandages. The defendant was dismissed.[340]

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335 *Narrandera Ensign*, 29 December 1893.

336 *Narrandera Ensign*, 30 December 1904.

337 *Daily Advertiser*, 29 March 1876.

338 *Daily Advertiser*, 13 January 1881. A similar incident took place in Gundagai in 1882; *Gundagai Times*, 21 March 1882.

339 *Gundagai Times*, 6 September 1881.

340 *Narrandera Ensign*, 12 March 1891.

In 1895, George Fat Hock was charged with assaulting a woman, Lucy Harrison, with a butcher's chopper at the camp. Harrison had gone to Mrs Fat Hock and revealed to her 'certain intimacies that had formerly existed between Fat Hock and herself', and the husband was upbraided for his faithlessness. Mrs Fat Hock then went to Harrison's place and committed the assault, using 'most unbecoming language to her'. He was fined 10s with costs of 7s 8d, and bound over to keep the peace for six months.[341] In 1904, Eva Lacey proceeded against Ah Toong and Hock Long for assault. She was at one of the stores in the camp when the accused men molested her, knocking her about and striking her with sticks. They were each fined £1 and costs of £1 16s 5d.[342] In January 1906, Charles Long was cited to show cause why he should not be bound over to keep the peace towards his countryman, Stanley South. He had been locked up on a charge of riotous behaviour, and on his way to the lock-up had said he must kill Stanley, then himself, and then go down to hell. Ah Sam said he saw Long at Stanley's house on New Year's Eve, and that his behaviour was strange. Long had said he wanted to murder Stanley, and was always following him about. He claimed that whenever he had a job Stanley wrote to his boss and had him sacked.[343] Some of these conflicts and fights between the Chinese indicated an impulsive and hot-tempered dimension to life in the Chinese community that was evident elsewhere in the Riverina. It is noted, not without surprise, that the camp women were often implicated in these rows.

Neither were the Chinese innocent in the area of theft, particularly on the goldfields, where the police were often absent. At Upper Adelong Mr Watson's store appeared a favourite target. 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. In September, Watson's store was again robbed of £14 while several Chinese were making a purchase.[344] Chinese men were also accused of selling spurious gold, and were not averse to stealing fruit and livestock, although these crimes appear to have been more of a European specialty. [345] In Narrandera in May 1901, Ah Fook was charged with receiving four ducks from two young boys, knowing that they had been stolen, for the sale price was a very cheap 6d each, the correspondent commenting that he would have very little need of them now as he would be doing three months hard labour in the local gaol, which was regarded as a rather light punishment.[346] And in February 1905, Ah You was fined 40s for having a quantity of fruit reasonably supposed to be stolen.[347]

Some of the Chinese crimes were very Australian, such as sheep, horse and saddle stealing, and occurred in the bush or on the stations, and were often committed against their own countrymen. In February 1888, James Ah Lick, a rabbitter, 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.[348] 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.[349] The three men were rabitters on the station, and were seen cutting up a sheep near the Chinese camp on Oxley Creek. Each was sentenced to a year in gaol.[350]

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[341] *Narrandera Ensign*, 25 October 1895, 1 November 1895.

[342] *Narrandera Ensign*, 15 January 1904.

[343] *Narrandera Ensign*, 12 January 1906.

[344] *Wynyard Times*, 25 February, 15, 18 July, 26 September 1862.

[345] *Sydney Mail*, 16 September 1865.

[346] *Narrandera Ensign*, 31 May 1901.

[347] *Narrandera Ensign*, 10 February 1905.

[348] *Riverine Grazier*, 7 February 1888.

[349] *Riverine Grazier*, 21 February 1888.

[350] *Riverine Grazier*, 9 March 1888.

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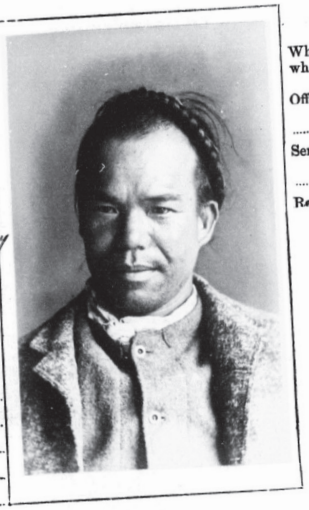
Gm 30—92

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 Reads 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 S / 2 February 93
Offence Sheep Stealing
Sentence 2 years H.L. Albury Gaol
Remarks:— Convicted with Charlie at Howe & Ah Pong

(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

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 paling into insignificance compared with the racial free for all 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. 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'.[351]

The most infamous incident in the Riverina was the 'Battle of Hillston Bridge' in 1895, in which one Chinese man was killed and two severely injured. The fracas occurred on Chinese New Year and involved about 30 Chinese men and about 20 Europeans, some of whom 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. The perpetrators were brought to trial, but the lack of reliable witnesses meant that all were acquitted of manslaughter.[352] Another fatality occurred at Grahamstown near Adelong in 1880, when Michael McNamara assaulted Sin Lee Yong. The local reporter commented that the judge, in his directions to the jury was 'somewhat favourable to the prisoner', the jury finding McNamara guilty of manslaughter, for which he was sentenced to12 months gaol, a result which satisfied many locals.[353]

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. The 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 a young 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 his 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, and the owner, Dan Lewis, appointed Ted as a type of enforcer. 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'.[354] But happily that tended to be the worst of it, and he met with very little discrimination

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

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

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

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

afterwards. His sister Kay had a harder time of it as she had darker skin and she was teased endlessly. For some, the experience was much worse. Members of a 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 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,[355] In Narrandera, there seems to have been very little harassment, although Geoffrey Shung recalled that some minor niggling and name calling occurred in the town at about the time of the Korean War, when the Australian armed forces were fighting the Chinese.[356]

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

[356] Discussions with Lorna and John Hunt. and Geoffrey Shung.

Families, Friendship and Influence

The historian A.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'.[357] 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 one aspect of their lives. More edifying was the mixing of the two races in the more happy circumstances of the Chinese New Year, for while white Australians were largely observers in these celebrations, occasionally they were invited to the feasts. At Hillston in 1876, some Europeans attended a banquet at the gardens, and 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.'[358] 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.'[359]

In a similar vein, 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'.[360]

At Junee in 1903, the well known James Wong Chuey celebrated Chinese New Year in style, the Chinese members of the Junee Wesleyan Church (ten in number including Mr and Mrs Chuey) entertaining over 60 friends, mainly European, at a banquet at his residence. The celebrations differed from those held elsewhere in the region, and were characterised by a heavy emphasis on the benefits of the Christian religion.[361]

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. For instance, at Narrandera in June 1888, it was reported that £30 had been contributed to the hospital fund by Chinese residents, under the name of the Chinese Camp Company.[362] The same generosity was evident elsewhere in the Riverina. 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. [363]

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

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

[358] *Riverine Grazier*, 2 February 1876; *Gundagai Times*, 13 February 1880.

[359] *Gundagai Times*, 28 January 1887.

[360] *Narrandera Argus*, 17 February 1899.

[361] *Junee Southern Cross*, 6 February 1903.

[362] *Narrandera Ensign*, 21 June 1888.

[363] *Gundagai Times*, 31 January 1879.

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

the names of 30 Chinese at the small town of Booligal, plus the contributions of those residing on iconic stations such as Burrabogie.[364] In 1892, the subscription list included 18 Chinese contributors on Tupra station and 25 on Ulonga station, to name but two.[365] At Deniliquin, the Chinese were equally generous, with 52 contributors from the town in 1875 and 66 in 1899.[366]

Chinese men also took part in local concerts, fetes and processions, particularly where fund raising was involved and were ready contributors to other worthy causes. At Narrandera in 1891, a member of the St Patrick's Day hospital sports committee, Mr Cohen, stated that subscriptions collected by the Chinese should go direct to the hospital funds and not be placed in the sports account. Another committee member stated, however, that when the Chinese subscribed 'they had always expected the money to go towards the sports as they took great interest in them, formed processions in their native costumes, etc., and we must not be surprised if they still wished it be so'. It was eventually agreed that funds given by the Chinese should be used as the donors wished.[367]

At a subsequent meeting, it was noted that the Chinese had expressed a wish to give material assistance and 'form a procession in national costume to the music of tom toms and other celestial instruments'. The writer asked whether they could introduce some of their national sports, if they had any, or give a Chinese theatrical performance, which years ago was a great feature at the Bendigo Easter Fair, including the lopping off the heads of some of their obnoxious rulers in their own country, following a lynch law trial.[368]

A similar level of participation occurred in other towns. Of particular note was a holiday and public

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[364] *Riverine Grazier*, 8 February 1879.

[365] *Riverine Grazier*, 16 February 1892.

[366] *Riverine Grazier*, 8, 16 February 1879; Deniliquin and District Historical Society, *Chinese subscriptions to the Deniliquin hospital 1872-1908*.

[367] *Narrandera Ensign*, 22 January 1891.

[368] *Narrandera Ensign*, 29 January 1891.

parade in Albury in 1876 of almost all town bodies and associations 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 … '[369]

At Hay and Hillston the Chinese were very active in local concerts, fetes and processions; particularly where fund raising for the hospital was involved. They were also 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, and in August 1892, a Chinese orchestra and singers performed to a mixed audience at the Athenaeum Hall in Hay.[370] In 1894, a number of Chinese people 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. In 1897, the three main storekeepers at the Hay 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. Hop Cheong, another storekeeper, donated 4,000 crackers.[371] Chinese gardeners also entered and won prizes in the horticultural shows. For instance, in 1891, Ah Poo, one of the Yabtree station growers at Mundarlo, took first and third prize at the Wagga show for his tobacco, and in October 1894 Ye Yen and Wong Park both won prizes at the Hay show in the garden produce and fruit sections.[372]

Although Asians and Caucasians in the 19th century led largely separate lives, exceptions occured, and many times genuine affection and regret was expressed at the departure of a long term Chinese resident for China, or at his death or the death of his wife. There were many such instances in Narrandera. In addition, Chinese alliances and associations began to change over time along with the slowly dwindling Chinese population. Many Chinese men, particularly the storekeepers, were members of one of the Christian churches and were married to European women, although a good number also married Chinese women. For these men, the fraternal associations became less important, and were replaced by allegiances and friendships forged in the churches, sporting, social and cultural associations and the armed forces, and by family ties. Mixed marriages bridged the racial divide; as did church membership. One of the telling characteristics of the Chinese people during these transitional years was the strength of these family ties and the interconnectedness between different Chinese families throughout the Riverina. Despite their new allegiances, these men did not abandon their fellow, often less fortunate, countrymen, or even their traditional beliefs and allegiances. 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.[373] For these men, tradition and family ties in China were still very important. Many Chinese men created miniature dynasties within their local

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

[370] *Riverine Grazier*, 7 April 1891, 12 August 1892.

[371] *Riverine Grazier* 3 April 1894, 23 April 1897, 2, 12, 16 May 1899.

[372] R.F. Horsely, Diaries, 1876-1891; Emily Horsely. *A Gleam of Sunshine. The story of the Horsely family of Yabtree, Gundagai, NSW*, unfinished manuscript; *Riverine Grazier*, 19 October 1894.

[373] 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*, Anna Epstein (ed), Scribe Publications, Melbourne, 1998, pp. 25-28.

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

district, emboldened by an intricate system of inter-marriage, clan and family allegiances, networks and friendships. Some of the families became household names, even amongst white Australians.

The river boat captain, John Egge was one of these men. According to Morag Loh, he was hugely popular and highly respected along all the rivers. Contemporary newspapers described him as 'highly reputable', 'Wentworth's most popular resident', 'without a single enemy' 'an old friend'. When he left Wentworth in 1888 to live for a period in Adelaide, the town citizens, led by the Council, presented him with a valedictory address signed not only by the mayor and aldermen, but other town notables including justices of the peace, solicitors, the doctor, postmaster and customs officer. The testimonial was accompanied by a gold ring in which was set a large diamond surrounded by twelve smaller ones. Morag Loh has commented that an important factor in the general admiration for Egge, was that unlike many of his countrymen he was not a sojourner but settled very early in Australia and put his Chinese background aside in order to succeed. His early acquisition of land, change and choice of name and total adoption of European clothes were evidence of this. As an apparent plus point he was also reported to have known little or nothing of his own language. However, many Chinese men retained their names, or at least modified them only slightly, and did not forget their language or customs, with no detriment to the standing in the white community. Perhaps more importantly, Egge fitted well into the tradition of the rivers, where skippers often worked as hard as their men, and turned their hands to many tasks. His generosity was legendary. All religious denominations, sporting clubs and social groups used his boats for fun and fund raising, with dances on board, evening cruises, picnics and weekend outings. His reputation for giving free rides to stranded or penniless bush workers was repaid during the shearers' strike in 1894. Strikers camped on the river banks attacked boats suspected of aiding station owners or carrying scab labour, and one boat was burnt. Egge's boats passed unchecked and were cheered from the time they came into view until they disappeared from sight around the next bend. His obituary in the *Federal Standard* stated that he 'earned ... and

William and Adelaide Ah Kinn (née Lamonte)
Parkside Cottage Museum, Narrandera

retained the utmost respect and goodwill on all sides and the working men, in particular, thought much of their old friend'.[374]

One of the strongest family networks in the Riverina district began at Narrandera, with the prosperous merchant Sam Yett, and his nephews George and William Hock Shung. Described as the 'King of Chinatown', Sam Yett was held in very high esteem by Chinese and European 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.[375]

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 countrymen, over whom he exercised much influence ... 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.[376]

George Hock Shung married Jessie Lamonte, the daughter of Adelaide Lamonte and Willie Ah Kinn of Urana.

George had four children; Mervyn, Hilton, Keith and Heather, and on his death was buried with Church of England rites.

The *Narrandera Argus* stated that he 'was respected by all who knew him. He had many good qualities,

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[374] Loh, 'John Egge: A Champion of the Rivers; Geoffrey Egge's papers; *Adelaide Observer*, 21 September 1901.

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

[376] *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

George and Jessie (née Lamonte) Hock Shung.
Private collection

Dr Wong Gooey on his graduation.
Parkside Cottage Museum, Narrandera

Thelma, Dorothea and Hazel Hook, Narrandera.
Parkside Cottage Museum, Narrandera

Mrs Hook and her daughters and young friend, Narrandera.
Parkside Cottage Museum, Narrandera

Hilton Shung in his airforce uniform.
Parkside Cottage Museum, Narrandera

and in past years had been a contributor to the Hospital and other movements.'[377]

Jessie died three years later.[378]

The Shung family had very strong connections with other Narrandera-based Chinese people. One of these was Wong Goo…ey, the famed land contractor, whose son later became a doctor.

Other families were the Hun Chong and Hook families. The Hook family had three girls, Thelma, Dorothea and Hazel. Heather Shung, Thelma and Dorothea ran a dressmaker's shop in East Street 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 was posted to Ascotvale and later Darwin, before being stationed at 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. Hilton and six other crew members of a Beaufighter were killed when their 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. Services were held simultaneously at St Thomas's, St Mel's and the Methodist churches, the funeral cortege beginning at the former church then continuing to the other two. Hundreds of people lined the streets and attended the graveside service.[379]

Hilton's brother Keith passed away in 1950. He had an 'uncanny knowledge' of greyhound dogs, and his judgment was respected by all connected with greyhound racing. He had owned the well-known performers, Golden Bronze and Miss Bronze, and shortly prior to World War II, owned Bushie Lad, with whom he won 54 races. He also owned Sylvia Andy, which he later sold, the dog later becoming famous as the dam of Sentinel, world record breaker and the holder of 14 track records.[380]

Another son, Mervyn, was educated at St Joseph's Convent school in Narrandera. On leaving school he 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 and identify 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 joined the Narrandera cricket club in the early 1930s and played for many years in the Austin Cup competition. However, his wool classing job took him away a

[377] *Narrandera Argus*, 23 May 1944.
[378] *Narrandera Argus*, 4 February 1947.
[379] *Narrandera Argus*, 7 September 1945.
[380] *Narrandera Argus*, 1 September 1950.

lot so he did not play as much sport as he would have liked. In 1949, he joined the Masonic Lodge (Lodge Leopold) in Narrandera and was awarded with 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.[381]

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

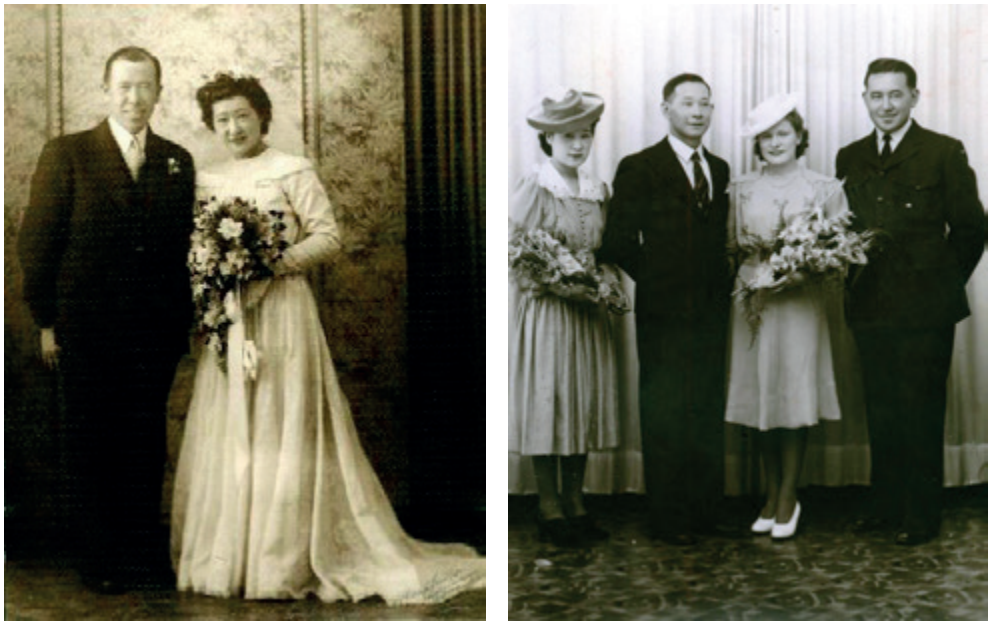
But the Shungs are not the only descendants of Willie Ah Kinn in the Riverina. Aside from Jessie, Willie and his wife Adelaide had five other children; Ivic, Archibald, Adelaide, Emily and Annie. Annie's descendants live in Narrandera, and her lineage illustrates the difficulties in tracing the genealogy of Chinese Australian families, and suggests 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. Alton, a steam train driver, was the father of Bob Hoban, who also lives in 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.[382]

Two other highly respected Chinese identities in Narrandera were Harry King Fan and Tip Nooey. Harry King Fan, a market gardener and labour contractor, 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

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

[382] Discussions with Lorna and John Hunt and Norman Lett, 2009-2010.



Two Shung family weddings. Left: Hector Kenn and Heather Shung. Right: Mervyn's marriage to Francis McMahon with Heather on left and Hilton on right as attendants, c 1944.
Parkside Cottage Museum, Narrandera

> appeals. King generally made his appeal to the Chinese residents, who readily responded. He also gave generously to the hospital in the days when appeals were made to the public for support.[383]

Tip Nooey was a market gardener and married to a European woman. He was remembered fondly by Joan Palmer, whose 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* stating 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'.[384] Tip died in 1939 and was buried in the Narrandera cemetery beside his wife's parents.[385]

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 Wagga. Ah Pack and his wife, Margaret, who was of Scottish and Chinese parentage, had 18 children. Margaret's mother, Maria Yew, passed 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 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 when he returned to see his family. Margaret remained in Hay, where she raised the children.

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

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

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

A son, Alex, spent most of his working life as a shearer.[386]

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

Harold, one of Alex's brothers, 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 on 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, later working at the Hampton Cafe in Hay for several years, and then in the building industry. In his obituary, Harold was described as a good horseman and a strong supporter of the Hay Rodeo Club. He was also a member of the Hay Services Club, and did a 'lot of charitable work in an unobtrusive manner'.[387]

One of Alex's sisters, Amy, married into the Rooks's family in Hay, who made their livelihood from fishing on the Murrumbidgee River. Another sister, Florence, married Harry Choy from Grong Grong.

They had two children, Bill and Betty. Betty lived in Grong Grong and worked both there and at 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.

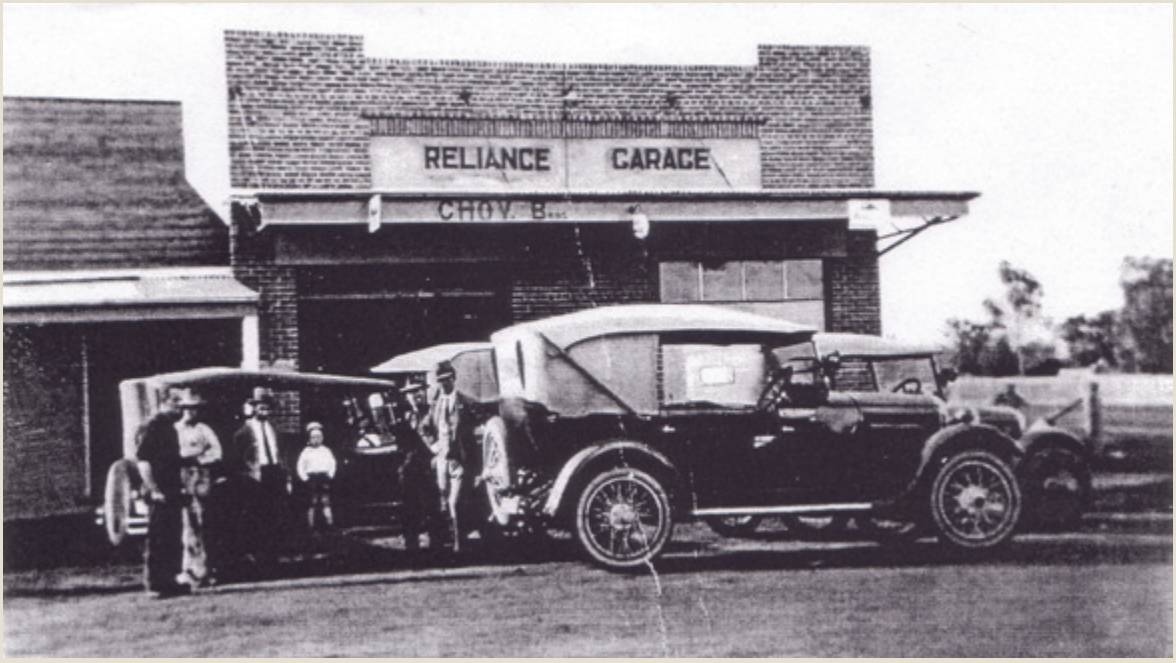
Betty helped run the nearby Bluebell café. Both Bob and Betty retired to live at Ashmont, Wagga where they still live at the time of publishing. On her father's side of the family, Betty's grandparents were William and Susan Quong. They had three children, Percy, Albert and William (Harry), who became Betty's father. On William's death, Susan married Charlie Choy, and they had two children, Bert and Lavina.

The Choy family was very highly regarded in Grong Grong and Narrandera. Albert Choy owned a laundry in Narrandera and died in 1949 at 60 years of age when his coat was caught in a piece of machinery, and he could not free himself. His obituary writer stated that he 'interested himself with the progress of the township and was held in high esteem by all who knew him'. He was described as possessing 'a retiring disposition and was a good resident'.[388] 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

386 *Riverine Grazier*, 6 November 2002.

387 *Riverine Grazier*, 1 July 1969.

388 *Narrandera Argus*, 3 February 1948, 11 October 1949.



Choy family's Reliance Garage and Eclipse Café, Grong Grong, 1930s. The family also own the building to the left of the garage which housed a pool hall.
Private collection

Alex Pack, Hay, 2009.
Barry McGowan

Florence Choy (née Pack).
Private collection

Hand coloured studio portraits of Betty & Billy Choy.
Private collection

Susan Quong and two of her sons, Albert and William(Harry) who took their stepfather's name, Choy.
Private collection

Harry Choy and Florence Pack on their wedding day.
Private collection

Choy family graves, Grong Grong cemetery, NSW.
Barry McGowan

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'.[389] Florence Choy (née Pack), 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.[390] Her husband, Harry Choy, died in 1974 at the age of 82 years. He had been active 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.[391]

James Wong Chuey was probably the most influential and wealthy Chinese man in the Riverina district at the time. 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. He was also a confidant of the then Premier of New South Wales, Mr William Holman, and in October 1916 called upon his services to help rescue his adopted son Wong Sat How, who had been kidnapped by bandits. The boy was a student at Newington College, Stanmore, and was in China to complete his Chinese education. Holman was reported to have 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. But it was to no avail and 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.[392] His wife, Rose, a Chinese woman, was well known by Junee residents for her 'lovable disposition and well known benevolence, charitable

[389] *Narrandera Argus*, 16 August 1954.

[390] *Narrandera Argus*, 30 December 1954.

[391] *Narrandera Argus*, 30 June 1974.

[392] *Braidwood Review*, 8 August 1916, *Chinese Australian Herald*, 28 October 1916 (translation of original by Michael Churchman, ANU); *Adelaide Advertiser*, 15 September 1916.

and Christian principles'.[393]

Another prominent Junee identity was Tommy Ah Wah, a skin, wool and hides dealer, and then later owner of a very successful garage and service station. Russell Danswan worked for the Wahs almost his entire working life and remembers them affectionately 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, illustrating again the importance of networks and friendships amongst the Riverina Chinese. Russell recalled the warm-hearted greetings when the Mee Lings visited Junee. According to Russell the Wah children were all well educated, and the girls were very proficient in dancing and piano. Linda was the accountant and bookkeeper at the garage. 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. 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.[394]

George Mee Ling senior and his wife Jeng Ying were residents of Temora from the earliest days. He was a member of the local Masonic Lodge 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'. According to Meredie Mee Ling George was in very poor health, and he died in China. The expected date on Jeng Ying's CEDT of 1927 was obviously set with that eventuality in mind. George junior was an active member of the Temora community, and on his passing in 1975 was described as having a 'genial personality and gentle manner', and a 'ready response to those in need'.[395]

Perhaps the most dynastic family group in the Riverina was the Dang clan, in particular, Dang Ah Chee and his brother Dang Bown Sluey. Dang Ah Chee's involvement with the Tumut community dated back to the late 19th century. The experiences of both men and other clan members illustrate the power of traditional allegiances and ties in Australia and China. 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 there and brought a young wife to Tumut, and then on his return to China took a concubine. A cousin, Dang Loon, managed Dang Bown Sluey's Tiy Loong business, while Sluey was absent in China on estate matters. Ah Chee was very generous, and a major benefactor of the Tumut hospital. Josephine Oh's mother, Chin Shi Wing, said that much of Dang Ah Chee's success was attributable to his wife Margaret, who could read the market reports, and advise him when to buy and sell wheat. Dang Ah Chee took his family back to China, but

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393 *Junee Southern Cross*, 24 July 1953.

394 Information, Russell Danswan, Junee, 2009; Military Records, Leslie Edward Ah Wah, Series B8832002, Item NX157455, NAA, Canberra; Sherry Morris, *Speaking of the Past*, Vol.2, Section 12, Migration/ethnic influences, Junee Shire Arts Council, 1997.

395 *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.


N° 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 Chinese
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


BOOK N° 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 Ying 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
Port Sydney
Customs Officer

George senior and Jeng Ying Mee Ling's CEDTs, 1910.
National Archives of Australia

within a few years he died in debt at the age of 60.[396]

On Dang Bown Sluey's death, his son, Dang Quong Wing (Josephine's father) returned to Tumut from China to work in the Tiy Loong business. The business was dissolved in 1926, with Dang Quong Wing intending to return to China. However, 'a good Samaritan encouraged him by providing a loan to re-establish the business, which he did.' These family connections both in Australia and in China illustrate better than perhaps for any other family the strength of traditional allegiances, family ties and lineage. Many of these men seemed to lead double lives in trying to fulfill their family obligations in Australia and China.[397]

Dang Charles Doon was also a member of the Dang clan and migrated to Australia in the late 19th century, either accompanied by an uncle (perhaps Dang Ah Chee) or by his uncle's goods. In 1910, he returned to China, where he 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 Richard later still. The circumstances of Esther's arrival in Australia are discussed in the chapter on the White Australia Policy. Charles and Esther had a large family. Eight of their children were born in Tumut: Eric, Bob, Ted, Betty, John, Grace, Bonnie and Joyce.

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396 Josephine Oh to Kate Bagnall, 20 October 2004; letter from Josephine Oh to Pam Archer, 30 June 1988.

397 Josephine Oh to Kate Bagnall, 20 October 2004; letter from Josephine Oh to Pam Archer, 30 June 1988.

Dang Charles Doon and Esther with Bob, Ted, Eric and Betty. Charles returned to China in about 1910 or 1911 where he married Esther Gow. Because of the White Australia Policy she was unable to migrate to Australia for another 14 years.
Private collection

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, whoso motto was 'Fair and Square to all and honest dealing'. No one had an adverse word to say about him. In his younger days, he was a keen athlete and excelled at foot running. Along with William Shai Hee, 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.[398] His sons were enthusiastic footballers and members of the Junior Anglican and Young Anglican teams.

They were also passionate about horses. 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.

Charles and his sons raced their own horses at local and district meetings, and by the early 1960s had a stable of ten horses. Ted Doon became a well known jockey in Sydney and rode many winners in the big metropolitan races. 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. The horse had earlier run second in the Metropolitan Handicap and the Caulfield Cup, and the Melbourne Cup win

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

The young Doon boys were talented and passionate footballers and played with the Junior Anglican (JA) and Young Anglican (YA) teams in Tumut. Bob Ted, John and Eric are all in the photograph.

Private collection

The Doon family horse Lady won many local prizes for the best and quietest pony. Hearing of the horse's reputation, the Sydney Royal Easter Show organisers invited the family to exhibit her on show days. The boys from left to right: Bob, John Ted & Eric.

Private collection

was hailed throughout the local district.[399]

Bob Doon passed away suddenly in August 2007. He had been part 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. 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.[400]

May and Bob Doon with baby Robert, May 1956.
Private collection

May, his wife, has also made an enormous contribution to the local community, and 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 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. She is still heavily involved in voluntary pastoral care and church activity and in the Lions Club.[401]

Eric and Zelda Doon were heavily involved with the Anglican Youth (YA), and very popular. After their marriage in Sydney in 1954, they returned to Tumut to great acclaim, several hundred people gathering at the Oddfellow's Hall to celebrate their return. Mr French expressed his wishes that they would continue to be a shining example to the young people and help build a better Tumut, and Mr Gaul said that all appreciated Eric and Zelda's fine qualities and the fact that they had already given so much to the public life of Tumut.[402] In the years to follow Eric and Zelda continued their earlier involvement with the 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

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399 *Tumut and Adelong Times*, 10 November 1978.

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

401 *Tumut and Adelong Times*, 16 July 1991, 8 April 2004, 27 January 2004.

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

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, and later became the sole owner. The restaurant soon became a local icon. In 1970, he became a Parliamentary member of the Taiwanese Upper House under special provisions which allow Chinese people to be nominated for Parliament in recognition of the very large number of overseas Chinese people with Tawianese allegiance or affiliation. 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 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 Ascot Vale in the 1990s.[403]

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 Tom and Thelma.[404]

The Doon family were also close friends of Jacob and Maggie Wilson. Maggie was a daughter of Thomas Yan, a storekeeper and miner from Kiandra. A son, George, was a carrier, selector and grazier in the Kiandra Yarrangobilly area, retiring in 1945 and living in Tumut.[405] Three of George's sons, Frank, Arthur and Eric also lived in Tumut.[406] One of Tom Yan's daughters, Maggie, was one of Australia's first ski champions, and married a Lebanese-born hotelier in Kiandra, Jacob Wilson.[407] Historian Judith Hickson has written at length on the involvement of the Chinese people, and in particular the Yan family, in skiing at Kiandra. The Kiandra snowshoe Club held its first 'special' race for Chinese members in the 1860s. Local identity, Bill Hughes, 'recalled the special races for the Chinese miners on the field, with a heat of a dozen or so Chinese streaming down Township Hill'. According to Judith, the achievements of Barbara, Margaret and Mary Yan overshadowed those of many other women competitors. The *Cooma Express* on 9 August 1895 described Miss M Yan as 'a perfect artist on the shoes'.[408]

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[403] 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.

[404] Information from Grace Ching, March 2012.

[405] Yan, George (1871-1952), Obituaries Australia, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, http://oa.anu.edu.au/obituary/yan-george-1679/text1802.

[406] Information from Rhonda Sturt, Tumut, June 2013, and Gwen Skeers, Adelong, October 2013.

[407] Information from Rhonda Sturt and Pat Howard, Tumut, June 2013.

[408] Judith Hickson, 'Chinese Skiers of Kiandra: Object and narrative', *reCollections*, Vol.8, No.2, 2014, pp.3-4; Lindsay M. Smith, 'Cold Hard Cash', A Study of Chinese ethnicity in archaeology at Kiandra, New South Wales, M.A, ANU, 1998, pp.51-55.

Maggie and Jacob Wilson moved to Tumut in 1927 to run the Commercial Hotel. They ran the hotel until 1937, then managed a dry cleaning and laundry business in Herbert St until the 1960s. A granddaughter, Rhonda Sturt (née Neden), recalls the close relationships between her family and other Chinese families in Tumut. All her siblings were invited to the Doon family banquets and social functions, including the family weddings, and to functions at the Loon and Young family homes, and reciprocated this hospitality.[409]

Grace Ching (née Doon) recalls that many times during the 1930s to 1950s, the Doons visited the Wilsons at their laundry premises. Mid morning on that day, there would be a phone call from Mr Charlie Hibbens, from the local slaughtering yards, who saved all the offal for Esther. On the way home the family would call in at the Wilson's and leave some of the food with them, including meat and bones for the dog. Nanna Wilson would be immaculately dressed with a well pressed white apron, and Grace and her sisters were often recipients of a slice of freshly baked cake. During Chinese New Year Esther made an extra special tray of dumplings for the Wilson family.[410]

During preparations for the double wedding of his daughters Betty and Grace, Charles Doon asked Nanna Wilson to represent his deceased wife, Esther, at the reception. Nanna was very shy asked whether her eldest daughter, Marie, could take her place, which she did. Marie proved to be the ideal hostess, and from then on the Wilson family were close friends, especially the male members, who would meet daily at the local pub for drinks.[411] Decades after the double wedding male members of these two families continued their ritual meeting at the local hotel - and hundreds of times they were accompanied by their spouses to attend functions held at the different local hotels on a Friday night and weekends.

While they call Australia home, the Doon family has never forgotten their traditional allegiances. Charles Doon was strongly associated with the Sze Yap Association building at the Tumut 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. Those who had the ceremony had arranged it with Dang Quong Wing and Charles Doon beforehand.[412]

In 2007, Charles's 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.[413]

Another illustration of the family's links with China were the ties between Dick and Danny Doon and the ancestral village. Originally, a teacher in the village, Dick was subsequently involved in the administration of the district and was an adviser to the village mayor. After World War II, Dick wrote

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[409] Information from Rhonda Sturt, Tumut, June 2013.

[410] Information from Grace Ching, March 2015.

[411] Information from Grace Ching, March 2015.

[412] Information from Grace Ching, October 2011.

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

to his friends in the village for information on the welfare of his family, and later sponsored his former teacher under the student provisions. From 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.[414] The family has held several reunions in Australia, the first of which was in Tumut in 1993. The most recent was in Melbourne in 2013.[415]

The 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 his trips to China William married Chin See in an arranged marriage. He had to return to Australia to attend to his businesses and 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 (the wife had 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 they could travel to Australia.[416]

The Shai Hee 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. 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. At the time Joe was finishing his Leaving Certificate and became Captain of the Tumut High School and Captain of the Senior Rugby League football team. He is still recognised in Tumut for his contribution to rugby league. The Shai Hee family had strong social contacts in Tumut, including with other Chinese families.[417] They also had high level contacts elsewhere, in particular with the Chuey family.[418]

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. 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 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. 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,

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

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

[416] Joe and Reg Shai Hee, 'An Anecdote on the life of Chin See Shai-Hee' unpublished reminiscences, 2004; information from Chris Shai Hee, 2012.

[417] Joe and Reg Shai Hee, 'An Anecdote on the life of Chin See Shai-Hee', unpublished reminiscences, 2004. Information from Chris, Joe and Reg Shai Hee, 2011, 2012.

[418] Letter from Clarrie Hogue to Harold Holt, Minister for Immigration, November 1952 (courtesy of Chris Shai Hee); Ross Curnow, 'Bland, Francis Armand (1882-1967), Australian Dictionary of Biography, Vol.13, 1993; www.adb.anu.edu.au/biography/bland-francis-armand-9525.

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

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.[419] 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 other children's homes for birthdays or parties. He can never remember his father and mother ever being invited into other people's homes (other than Chinese homes).[420]

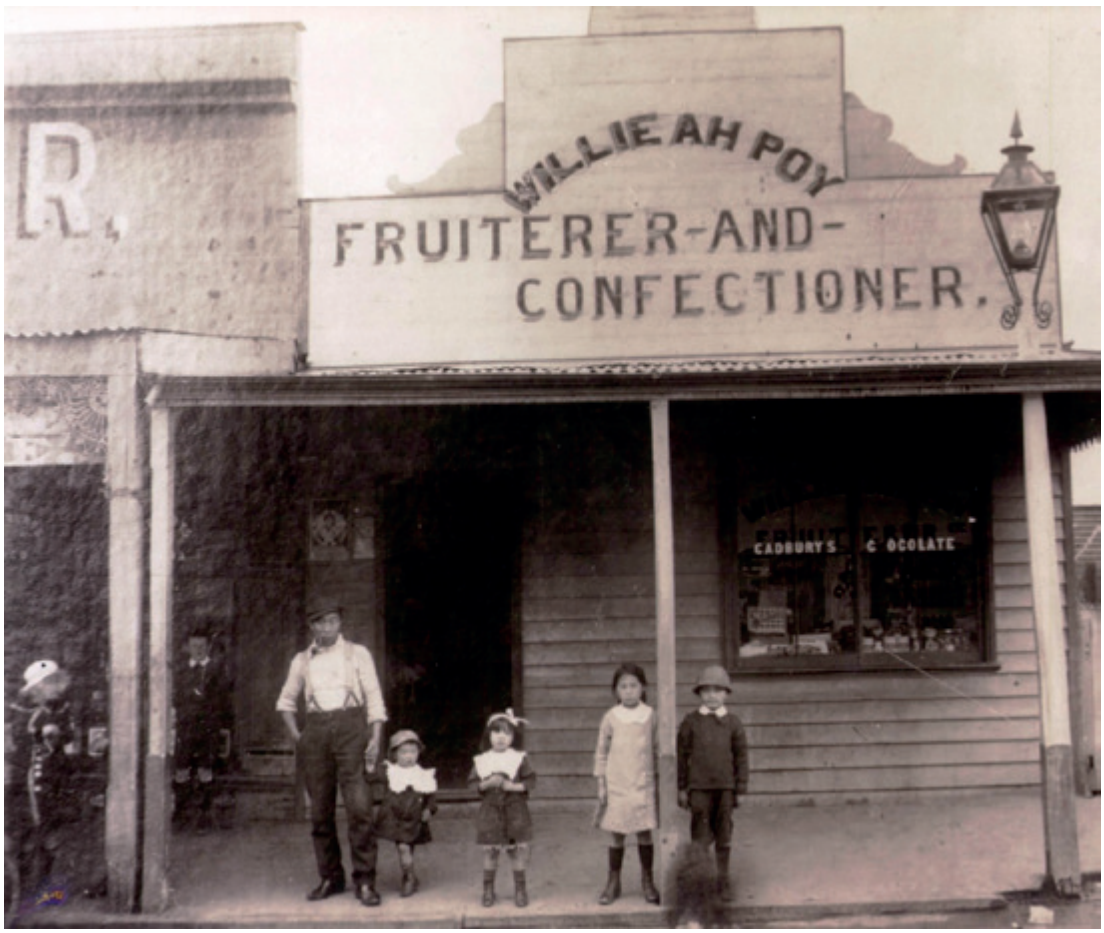
The Poy family from Albury are another very well known and highly regarded Chinese family in the Riverina. Their story illustrates the strong adaptability and resultant economic and social success of many of the Riverina Chinese amidst great difficulties, and their successful embrace of new allegiances, such as the Australian army. Louisa Coon married Willy Ah Poy, who had a fruit and vegetable store in Chiltern, Victoria. They had nine children. Willy travelled frequently to China to see his parents, and possibly also a wife and children. He did not return from his last trip to China and was presumed dead. Louisa moved to Albury with the eight surviving children, where she met and married a market gardener, Edward (Teddy) Mahlook, in 1928.[421]

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

[419] Information from Chris, Joe and Reg Shai Hee, 2012.

[420] Information from Joe Shai Hee.

[421] 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.



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

Lindsay, William & Roy Poy.
Private collection

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 gardener.[422]

During World War II, three of Louisa's sons, William, Roy and Lindsay, were in different parts of Asia fighting the Japanese. According to Lindsay they all cheated death through 'Chinese luck and sharp wits'. 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 escaped soon after. For months he used his business acumen to sell rice to the Japanese before stealing it and selling it back again. Later, he managed to get his family on a diplomatic exchange ship to Canada. Roy was not so fortunate and was captured at the fall of Singapore in February 1942. He was imprisoned in Singapore's Changi gaol, and later forced to work on the notorious Thai-Burma railway, where they often had to work, sleep and eat in the mud and rain. His brother Lindsay also joined the army, and was trained as an engineer. He went to Borneo (present day 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.[423]

After the war Roy and Lindsay became bookmakers, Lindsay later retiring from bookmaking 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. Roy also owned the Commercial Hotel (also known as Waterstreets), later retiring from bookmaking and buying a taxi. He was a well known Australian Rules footballer in his day, John Harms from the *Melbourne Age* including him in his list of the ten greatest Chinese Australian footballers of all time.[424]

Lindsay and Roy's brother, 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. William Poy sometimes came from Canada to organize the annual Poy family reunions.[425]

The experience of the Nye family from Wagga also illustrates the strength of family and kinship networks, and the embrace of new allegiances such as the Australian army. 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. 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), and when old enough, Arthur accompanied his father on his many bush trips, later becoming a boundary rider on one of the

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[422] 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.

[423] *Border Mail*, 2 August 1989; Wilson, 'The dinky-di Poy Boys'; *Albury* & District Historical Society, *Bulletin*, May 2005, No 446; Terry McGoverne, 'Veteran remembers trip to hell', *Border Mail*, 15 February 1992.

[424] Wilson, 'The dinky-di Poy Boys'; Albury & District Historical Society, *Bulletin*, May 2005, No 446; Di Thomas, 'Liquor accord on track', *Twin Cities Post*, 14 June, 2001; information from Colleen Poy, Albury, July, August 2010.

[425] Wilson, 'The dinky-di Poy Boys'; Albury & District Historical Society, *Bulletin*, May 2005, No 446; Adrienne Clarkson, *Wikipedia*; information from Lindsay Poy junior, Albury, 2010.

Arthur and Mabel Nye, Wagga Wagga.
Private collection

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, Isabelle and Norman, all of whom attended 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, then travelling around the district, and returning to Wagga intermittently to help Hannah. In the 1940s, she worked in Melbourne, then returned to Wagga, where she later lived with Arthur and Hannah.[426]

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 he was mentioned in despatches. After contracting malaria in the early part of 1942 he was evacuated back to Australia and later discharged.[427]

Perhaps the most amazing story of military commitment comes from the family of William Flood Sam, a Wagga resident for 18 years between 1863 and 1881, and subsequently a resident in the West Wyalong, Barmedman, Marsden area. Little is known of his working life other than he worked in the

[426] Information from Allison Nye, Castlemaine, and Lexa Shulz, Wagga.

[427] Recommendation for award, B883, NX43844, 12 April 1943, NAA, Canberra.

Riverina as a cook, labourer and market gardener. 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 William's obituary, commented on the family's Chinese connection.[428]

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, he maintained a constant supply of ammunition to the machine guns despite heavy machine gun and artillery fire, which enabled them to give the necessary support to the remainder of the Battalion. His conduct was marked for 'coolness, courage, and determination'. Curiously, however, no record has been found of William Loolong's two awards. Henry Herbert Sam returned in July 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 records or service records.[429]

The story of Lucy Ah Kin and Ah Kim (Ah Kem or Joe Coey), a green grocer in Wagga and later a tobacco farmer at Hillas Creek, illustrates the difficulties in tracing the 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. 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. He was also a tobacco grower at Wagga, Bathurst and Kelso, where he was also a market gardener.

Occasionally, there were strong and genuine relationships between Chinese and Europeans. In one such instance Shin Chow bequeathed all his possessions (after expenses) to Robert Percival McFarland,

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[428] Kate Bagnall, 'That Famous Fighting Family', *Your History*, March-April 2012, pp. 37-40; Series SP 42/1, C1915/4032, C1915/4058, NAA, Sydney.

[429] 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.

Charlie Wong Hing with Kirsty Hucker.
Museum of the Riverina, Wagga Wagga

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 stories concern Charlie Wong Hing, a market gardener at North Wagga. Frank Rynehart said that Charlie was happy and well liked in the neighbourhood. When Frank was very young, Charlie played with him and the other children, using fruit as a substitute ball, which he and the children would belt with a cricket bat or hockey stick.[430] Wendy Hucker and Yvonne Braid also have very fond memories of Charlie. Wendy Hucker is a step-child of the late Eric Roberts, a prominent business man and founder of 2WG, the first commercial radio station in Wagga and Yvonne Braid, a Wagga Wagga City Council member and former employee of 2WG. 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 for he had a son there, but left before the boy was born. Later he made his way to Wagga, where he took up market gardening.

One of Charlie's customers was Eric Roberts, who at that time was living atop the present 2WG building in Wagga. A former Narrandera-based school teacher, Eric went to Wagga with the aim of setting up a radio station. He acquired a licence to transmit radio and leased a transmitter, later building one himself. In the early 1930s, Eric had very little money left after expenses and Charlie often did not charge him for his vegetables. One day Eric noticed that Charlie had stopped coming. Seeing Charlie down the street one day Charlie told him that he could no longer bring vegetables because his horse had died. Eric responded by buying him one, 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

[430] McMullen, *Transcript of interview with Frank Rynehart*.

a contact in Melbourne, and his son wrote back to him through an uncle in Hong Kong. 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 at that time, which he obviously did, for he never returned. 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.

The White Australia Policy

The Immigration Restriction Act 1901 and the White Australia Policy had their basis in the earlier immigration restrictions, a continuing fear of the alien 'other' and a resurgent Japan and perceptions of unfair economic competition. But, 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.[431] 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.[432] The authorities, and in particular Labor politicians, strictly administered and scrutinised the immigration regulations for Chinese people; any major concessions would have been a serious breach of policy.[433]

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 6 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.[434] Dang Loon, a Gundagai, and later Tumut, businessman, successfully applied for a Certificate of Domicile in 1905 under unusual circumstances, 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 also known as Dang Goon Loon, was a trustee in Ah Hack's estate. The owner of the *Gundagai Times* described Dang Loon as a 'highly respectable man, always quiet and unassuming in manner, and is besides a worthy townsman in every way'.[435] In 1905, Dang Bown Sluey sought Certificates for his two sons, Quong Wing and Klew Wing, to enable them to travel to China for their education. Both boys had to obtain certificates of attendance from their teachers.[436]

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 historian Paul Jones has remarked,

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431 Yarwood, *Asian Immigration to Australia*; Curthoys, 'Conflict and consensus', p.56 .

432 Yarwood *Asian Immigration to Australia*, pp.68-82; Williams, *Chinese Settlement in NSW*, p.33.

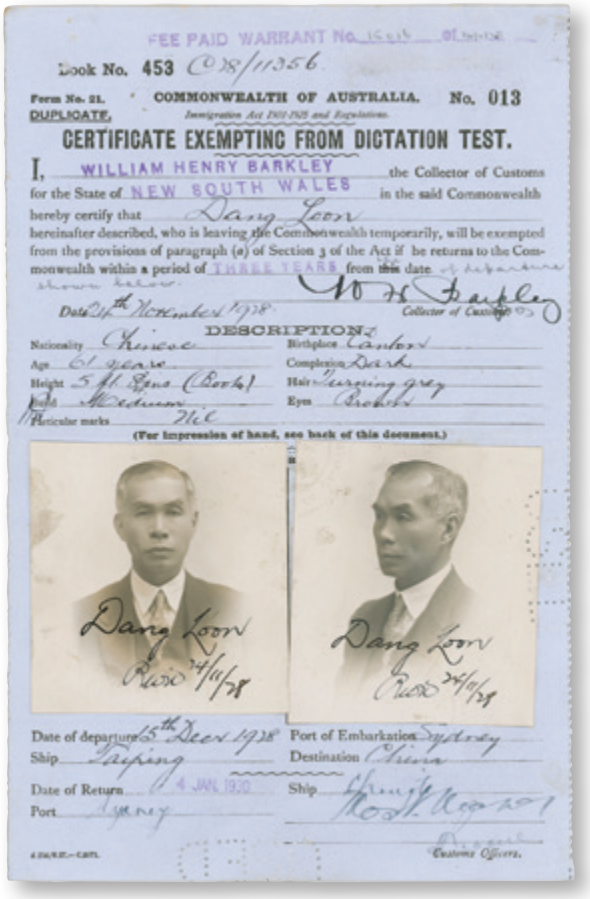
433 Yarwood, *Asian Immigration to Australia*, pp.115-118.

434 Shirley Fitzgerald, *Red Tape Gold Scissors. The Story of Sydney's Chinese*, State Library of New South Wales Press, Sydney, 1996, pp.33-37.

435 Series SP 244/2, C05/5679, NAA, Sydney.

436 Series SP42/1, C1912/3324, C1913/4423, C1913/5044, NAA, Sydney.

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, students, businessmen and others were admitted for a short period 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 not entirely free people, and 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.[437]



FEE PAID WARRANT No. 15 of

Book No. 453 C 38/11356

Form No. 21. COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA. No. 013

DUPLICATE.

Immigration Act 1901-1925 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 Dang 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 8th November 1928. Collector of Customs

DESCRIPTION.

Nationality Chinese Birthplace Canton

Age 61 years Complexion Dark

Height 5 ft 6ins (Book) Hair Turning grey

Build Medium Eyes Brown

Particular marks Nil

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

Dang Loon Photo 24/11/28

Dang Loon Photo 24/11/28

Date of departure 15th Dec 1928 Port of Embarkation Sydney

Ship Taiping Destination China

Date of Return 14 JAN 1930 Ship Changsha

Port Sydney

Customs Officers.

Dang Loon's CEDT,1928.
National Archives of Australia

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 & Co, stock agents. But Senior Constable Toohey 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

[437] Jones, *Chinese-Australian Journeys. Records on Travel. Migration and Settlement, 1860- 1975*, NAA, Canberra, 2005, pp.16-21.

Form No. 21. COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA. No. 06/287
DUPLICATE. *Immigration Restriction Acts 1901-1905 and Regulations.*

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 7½ 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 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

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'.[438]

More successful was Dang Bown Sluey of Tumut, the brother of the 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. He had lived in Sydney for five years, Gundagai for three to four years, and Tumut for about 30 years, and described his occupation as storekeeper's assistant; previously he had been a bookkeeper and carpenter. CEDT's were also sought for his wife Look Quen Sluey, two daughters, Gook Quen Sluey and Clara Sluey, and his son Quong Wing Sluey, to allow the children to be educated in China. In April 1909, he sought and 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.[439] To obtain his initial 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. Another Tumut businessman to visit China on several occasions was William Shai Hee, who submitted applications to travel in 1915, 1922 and 1932. Dang Loon from Tumut also made several visits, submitting applications in 1928 and 1930, on the latter occasion accompanied by his wife Violet.

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'.[440]

Wong Lip's CEDT application in July 1921 was almost certainly family related. 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 for 15 years at the Hop Sing gardens in Jerilderie. 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.[441] 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, Wong Lip having by then left Jerilderie and set himself up as an orchardist at Temora.

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[438] Series SP42/1, C1913/5044, NAA, Sydney.

[439] Series SP42/1, C1912/3324, C1913/4423, C1913/5044, NAA, Sydney.

[440] Series SP42/1, C15/4934, NAA, Sydney.

[441] Series SP42/1, C21/5853, NAA, Sydney.

Wong Lip's proof of identity letter.
National Archives of Australia

Toy Sun Wong Lip's passport, 1923.
National Archives of Australia

The CEDT applications by George Hock Shung, Dang Bown Sluey, Mack Goon and Wong Lip are four instances of the very obvious affection and regard with which they were held by white Australians (other than Constable Toohey) in their local communities. As shown by a number of applications, major reasons for travelling were to visit ageing parents and family, to ensure that the children received a Chinese education, and to attend to business matters.

The experience of Wong Lip's son, Toy Sun, illustrates the strict regulations surrounding the admittance of Chinese students into Australia, and the perils of non-compliance. The authorities insisted on regular school attendance and forbad the seeking of alternate employment, and required an attendance and conduct report from the school at the end of each term. It 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. 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 sickness. All other aspects of his attendance were satisfactory. The same level of non-attendance occurred at the end of first term 1926. This time the reason given was that he needed to help his father, the school saying that his absences had been 'practically unavoidable'.

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. This last incident drew a warning from

the Department, 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. His school reports for most of 1927 were excellent, but in September 1928, an absence of 26 days was reported, which 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. 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.[442]

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.[443]

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 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 returned to NSW shortly after, and one son (Charlie) returned in 1904; he had been a storekeeper near Gundagai for about 25 years, and since 1902, a commission agent in Sydney. He is almost certainly the same Ah Gow who had worked for Dang Ah Chee at Gundagai, and who 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

[442] Series A1, 1929/3660, NAA, Canberra.

[443] Williams, *Chinese Settlement in NSW*, pp.32-33.

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.[444]

The twist to this story involves Esther Doon, the wife of Dang Charles Doon. 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, and 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'. Esther was one of these women and was given an assumed identity as one of Ah Gow's daughters to allow her to entry 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.[445] The majority of post 1905 Chinese brides of Chinese-Australians were never able to settle in Australia.

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.[446] 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. 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 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, wh…o migrated to Australia under his new identity and later married Grace Doon, one of Esther's daughters.[447] By coincidence, and unbeknown to each other at the time, the new Raymond came out to Australia on the same boat as Richard Doon.

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[444] Series A1, 1917/16652, NAA, Canberra.

[445] Paul Macgregor, 'Dreams of Jade and Gold. Chinese families in Australia's history', *The Australian family. Images and Essays*, Anna Epstein (ed), Scribe Publications, Melbourne, pp.25-28.

[446] Information provided by Grace Ching, October 2011.

[447] Information provided by Grace Ching, October 2011.

Richard's relationships with the Immigration Department were also difficult, and illustrates further the point that while the Chinese were residents of Australia, they were subject to constant surveillance. According to Andrew Junor, the Department of Immigration had officially approved Richard's restaurant business in Sydney, but he incurred their displeasure when he did not inform them of his new business purchase in Moonee Ponds in 1954.[448] He was told to return to Sydney immediately or risk deportation. Although this threat was not enforced, Departmental officers also paid Richard a home visit to check on his degree of assimilation. The officer was concerned that Richard did not belong to any clubs, but noted that he lived among Australians, had a 'good appearance, a pleasing personality and an adequate knowledge of English'. His Chung On restaurant continued to be scrutinised by the Department, one letter reminding him that 'all employees of Asians, who are under restriction as to residence in Australia are required annually to give details of their trading and of the employees so engaged'. Departmental officers also made unannounced inspections of his premises. On one occasion Richard reacted very strongly, citing his high standing and reputation, the adverse effect of the visits on his patronage, the much longer period of time that he had been in Australia compared to one of the inspectors, and his influential political friends. He was particularly indignant at the lack of progress by the Department in securing a speedy admission into Australia of his son Danny's fiancée. Richard was also very active in assisting migrants and their families, due to his need for skilled chefs..[449]

The Shai Hee family also faced challenges with the immigration regulations. William Shai Hee had married Chin See in China, but then had to return to Australia, leaving Chin See in his home village, Hem-Ning, Hoe-Sun (Heshan) City where his first son, Ted, was born. William wrote to the Department in 1926 asking that Chin See and Ted be allowed to enter Australia, as he was unable to visit them because of business commitments. The other business partners were unable to assist in the management of the store, and the owners were unwilling to hire another manager. In 1927, Chin See and Ted came to Australia on temporary visas and lived at Tumut for six years, where more children were born. William wrote again in 1928 asking that Chin See be allowed to remain in Australia for a further 12 months because she was not in a fit state to travel unaccompanied to China following the birth of her second child. Again, he was unable to travel because of business commitments. In 1929, he again sought an extension because of Chin See's pregnancy, her ongoing child care commitments and his inability to leave the business because of the difficult trading conditions and the death of the previous manager, Mr Lim Singh. He wrote again in 1930, emphasising once more his company's difficult trading conditions. All his staff were Australians, and most of the firm's business was conducted with local primary producers, many of whom were indebted to the company. The bank agreed that it would not be in the company's best interests for him to leave.[450] In January 1931, William wrote again, stating that it would be necessary for him to accompany Chin See to China, but because of adverse trading conditions he would be unable to leave the business. William wrote once more in July 1931, stating that business conditions had not improved because of the effect of serious floods on the firm's customers, and the closure of the State Savings Bank. In 1932, he again sought an extension, pointing out that his wife was again pregnant, and that he could not leave the business to accompany her. The financial situation of the company was even more acute than before, as many customers had been unable to pay their accounts, and if he had to close the business a number of employees would be out

[448] Junor, Andrew (2010), 'Çhung On: Moonee Ponds and the lemon chicken long boom', Honours thesis, University of Melbourne, 2010.

[449] Junor, *Chung On*, pp.20-33; information from Lel Doon, September 2011.

[450] Joe and Reg Shai Hee , 'An Anecdote on the life of Chin See Shai-Hee', unpublished reminiscences, 2004; information from Joe Shai Hee, February 2012; Series A2998, 1952/4657, NAA, Canberra.

of work, and his customers seriously affected. A local resident, Ken Hoad, wrote in support.[451]

In 1933, the family, with the exception of Ted, returned to China for the children's education. In 1934, the Consul-General wrote seeking exemption for Ted to act as a substitute for William who was, finalising his father's affairs in China. Once again, William had to return to Australia, leaving the rest of the family behind, including the new-born Joe. After the Japanese occupation of China, the family went to Hong Kong, with Chin See and Joe entering Australia on temporary visas. Tom Collins, M.P, wrote to the Minister for the Interior in 1937, on behalf of the family, arguing that owing to the 'precarious situation' of the wives of Chinese storekeepers it was an obligation of the Australian Government to allow their entry until conditions were safer in China. Chin See and her children arrived in Australia in January 1938. In December 1938, William sought an extension for Chin See and Joe, arguing that conditions in China were in a 'deplorable state' and that it was 'no place for a woman to be'. Similar representations were made in 1939 and 1941, by which time the Shai Hee village had been 'completely wrecked' and their home destroyed. Over this period of time William's representations were strongly supported, where necessary, by local MPs, Parker Moloney and Tom Collins, and by his bank manager.[452]

William's concerns with the immigration restrictions and 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, William, Chin See, and her children stayed in one, while the two sons and a daughter from William's first marriage (his wife had died in China) stayed in the other. The families slept upstairs and some of the livestock were 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 protection against floods, and lookouts and protection against attacks from bandits, who regarded these wealthy families as 'fair game'. Most diaolous are located in the Sze Yap district of Guangdong Province, the home of so many Chinese immigrants to Australia, New Zealand and the Americas in the late 19th century. An example of the perils of the overseas Chinese in China is illustrated by the kidnapping of James Wong Chuey's adopted son in 1916. He was only released after payment of a handsome ransom. More pointedly for the Shai Hees was their own experience with kidnapping. 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).[453]

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[451] Joe and Reg Shai Hee,'An Anecdote on the life of Chin See Shai-Hee'; information from Joe Shai Hee, February 2012; Series A2998, 1952/4657, NAA, Canberra.

[452] 'Joe and Reg Shai Hee, 'An Anecdote on the life of Chin See Shai-Hee; information from Joe Shai Hee, February 2012; Series A2998, 1952/4657, NAA, Canberra.

[453] 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 and Joe Shai Hee and Jean Chin (née Shai Hee), February 2012.

Diaolous in Kaiping, Guangdong Province, China.
www.china-tour.cn/China-Pictures/Diaolou.htm

Continued concerns about the possible deportation of Chin See, Joe and Ted 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, Ted and Joe be granted permanent exemption to live in Australia, instead of being granted permission to remain 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 many 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.[454]

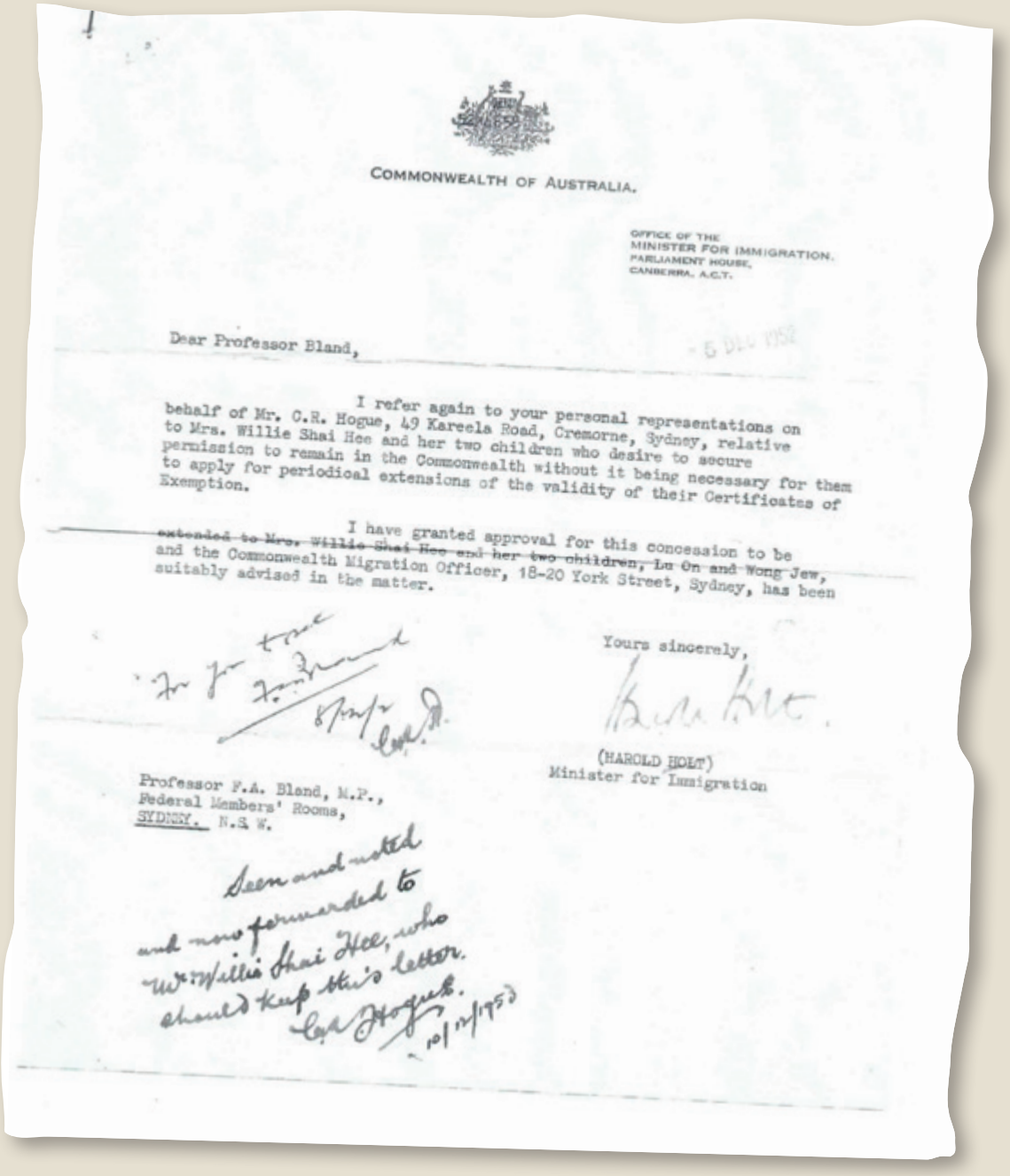
Harold Holt, the Minister for Immigration, agreed that Chin See and the two children be granted permission to remain in Australia without having to apply for periodic extensions of their CEDTs.[455] In a letter to Hogue, Bland stated that

> 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 of re-union, when all their world had been destroyed by circumstances over which they had no control.[456]

[454] Letter from Clarrie Hogue to Harold Holt, Minister for Immigration, November 1952 (courtesy of Chris Shai Hee).

[455] Letter from Harold Holt, Minister for Immigration to Professor F.A. Bland, M.P, 5 December 1952 (courtesy of Chris Shai Hee).

[456] Letter from F. A. Bland to Clarrie Hogue, 15 December 1952 (courtesy of Chris Shai Hee).



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

OFFICE OF THE
MINISTER FOR IMMIGRATION.
PARLIAMENT HOUSE,
CANBERRA, A.C.T.

Dear Professor Bland,

I refer again to your personal representations on behalf of Mr. C.R. Hogue, 49 Kareela Road, Cremorne, Sydney, relative to Mrs. Willie Shai Hee and her two children who desire to secure permission to remain in the Commonwealth without it being necessary for them to apply for periodical extensions of the validity of their Certificates of Exemption.

I have granted approval for this concession to be ~~extended to Mrs. Willie Shai Hee and her two children, Lu On and Wong Jew,~~ and the Commonwealth Migration Officer, 18-20 York Street, Sydney, has been suitably advised in the matter.

Yours sincerely,

(HAROLD HOLT)
Minister for Immigration

Professor F.A. Bland, M.P.,
Federal Members' Rooms,
SYDNEY. N.S.W.

Seen and noted
and now forwarded to
Mr Willie Shai Hee, who
should keep this letter.
C.R. Hogue.
10/12/52

The letter from Harold Holt, Immigration Minister to Proffessor Bland in 1952.
Private collection

In a final example, the tenacious Kwan Hong Kee, a Narrandera resident, returned to China after the death of his first wife, Miss Joh, and married a Miss Lee, and later, a Miss Mieu, living in China for one year, and returning to Australia in 1901 for the third time, accompanied by his wife (née Mieu) and his nephew, Walter Gett. Later he returned to China with his wife and five children, presumably all of whom were born in Australia. It is not clear how he brought his wife in. She may have been Australian born and living in China at the time, or perhaps like Esther and Florrie above, was Chinese born and came in under false papers. The nephew, Walter Gett, was almost certainly Australian born.[457]

Over the years restrictions for merchants, tourists and students and market gardeners were gradually eased. In 1904-05, provision was made for visits by 'coloured' merchants, tourists and students, and in 1912 for Chinese merchants engaged in wholesale overseas trade (excluding storekeepers and hawkers) and Chinese students. The merchants had to maintain a minimum gross turnover of £1000 a year and could stay for one year. Although no mention was made of assistants, under departmental policy at the time, merchants already in Australia could introduce assistants to help them in work for which Chinese was indispensable. A second amendment changed the conditions of travel to and from Australia by coloureds, permitting the entry of anyone who could satisfy officials that they had formerly lived in Australia.

Commencing in 1924, the age of students permitted to enter Australia was gradually reduced, particularly if the parents were merchants. In 1934, the turnover requirement for merchants was reduced to £500 and the basic period of stay was set at seven years. Merchants could also introduce assistants for the same length of stay at the rate of one for each £500 of turnover.[458]

According to historian A.C. Palfreeman, it is not clear when assistants were first admitted to work for Chinese other than merchants, but it is likely that this occurred well before 1934, when local traders were permitted to introduce assistants if they had a gross turnover of at least £5000 a year. An extra assistant could be introduced for each £10000 of turnover, to a maximum of five, on condition that an equal number of local hands were employed. In certain cases where an old established business was maintained by an elderly Chinese, he could introduce an assistant on a turnover of only £2500, and eventually allow the assistant to carry on the business. Before 1934, substitutes were permitted to enter Australia on a temporary basis to enable Chinese domiciled residents to engage managers for their businesses while they were abroad. In 1934, it was decided that permanent substitutes would be allowed entry to replace domiciled Chinese who wished to retire and leave Australia permanently if the business had a turnover of £5000. Subsequently, a separate category of persons eligible for entry - Chinese chefs – was instituted to enable Chinese restaurant owners to import the necessary staff, and in 1940, the turnover requirement for additional assistants was reduced to £5000. Chinese market gardeners were also granted permission to apply for assistants where the gardens had a turnover of £1500. 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.[459]

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[457] Kwan Hong Kee, *Autobiography of Mr Kwan Hong Kee*.

[458] A.C. Palfreeman, *The Administration of the White Australia Policy*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1967, pp.5-19.

[459] Palfreeman, *The Administration of the White Australia Policy* , pp.5-19.

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 the 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. It is a very human story, but sadly, with a few notable exceptions, 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 has 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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