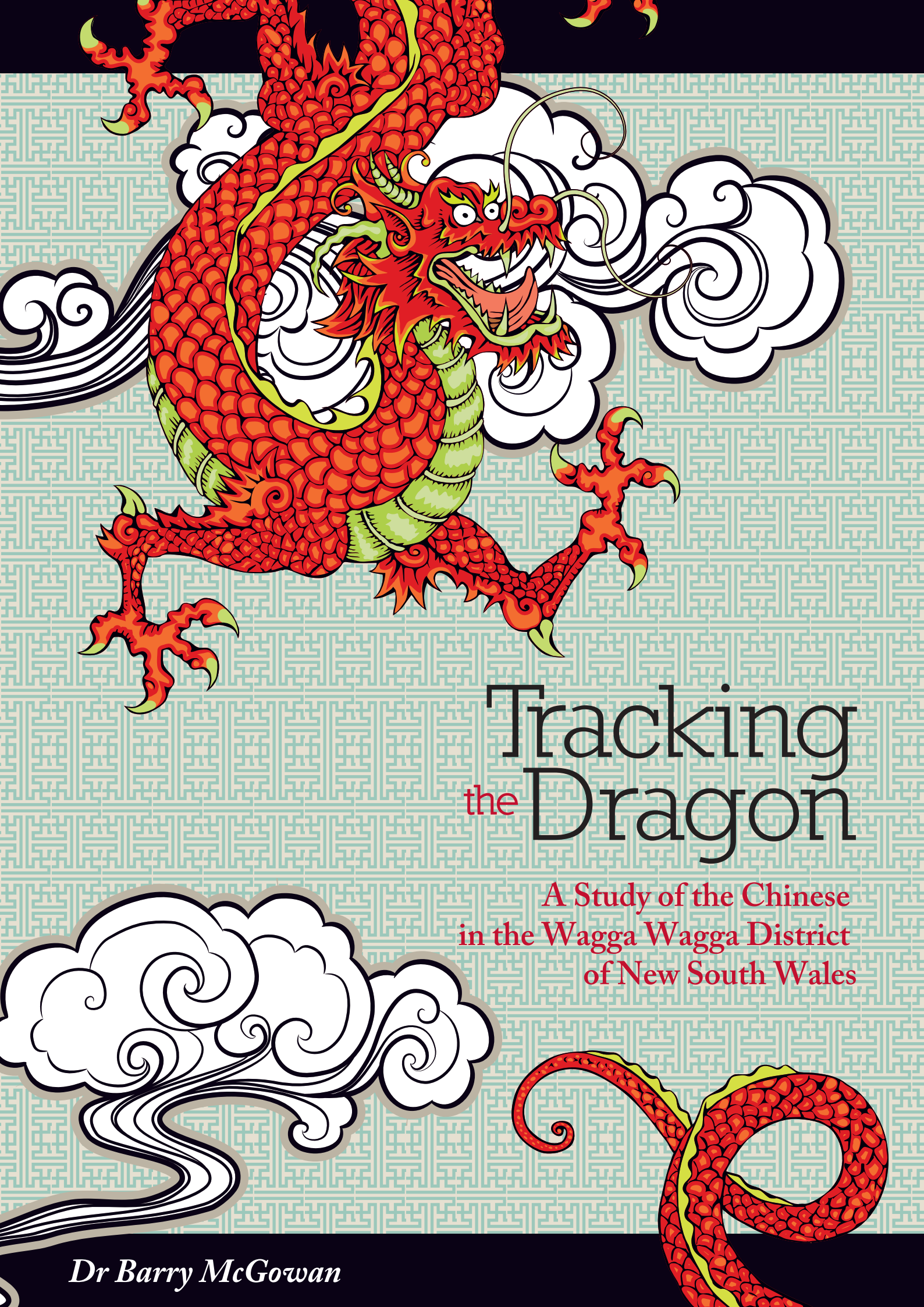
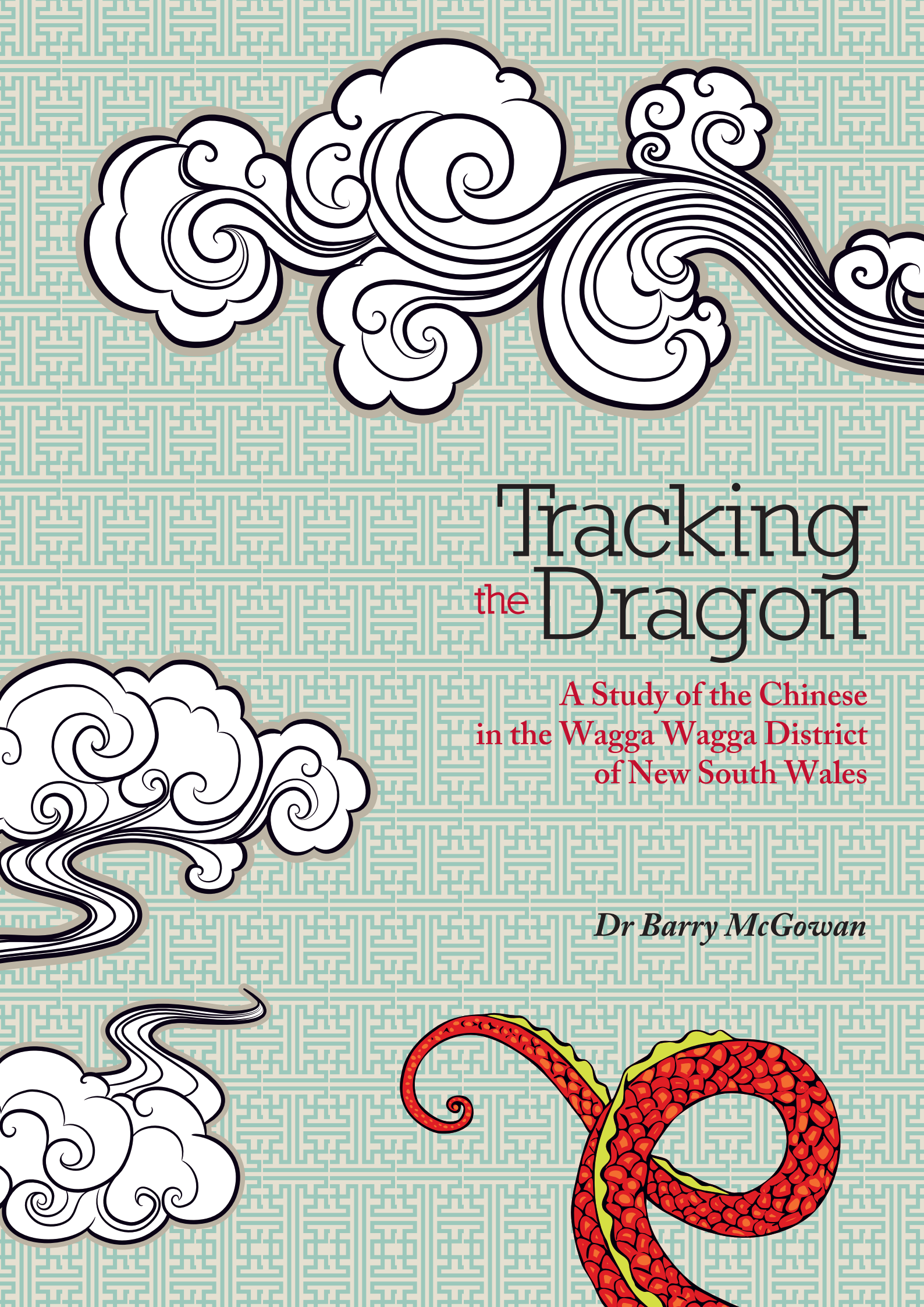


Tracking the Dragon

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

Dr Barry McGowan



Tracking the Dragon

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

Dr Barry McGowan

Wagga Wagga
Museum of the Riverina

NSW GOVERNMENT Arts NSW

Written and edited by Dr Barry McGowan

Editor: Genevieve Mott

Designer: Suz Keough

Object Photographer: Thomas Hull

Published by the Museum of the Riverina

The Museum of the Riverina is part of Wagga Wagga City Council's Cultural Services Division

Contents

Introduction

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

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.

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. They 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 to be done. Shepherding was specifically mentioned. The contracts were legally enforceable under the *Master and Servants Act*, which was heavily weighted in the employer's favour, many of whom were also magistrates.

However, 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. Their presence was unique and significant, for they were not, as in so many other parts of Australia, dependent on gold mining (apart from Black Range near Albury and Adelong in the late 1850s and early 1860s), but on agriculture and pastoralism. The significance of this population shift can be gauged by the wide range of occupations that the men had and the length of time they stayed in the region. They were not sojourners, but rather settlers and pioneers and a vital part of the community fabric, with many of their descendants still living in the region. Large self-contained Chinese camps or Chinatowns were located in the main Riverina towns, with smaller camps and enclaves in towns such as Adelong, Booligal, Gundagai, Tarcutta, Junee and Tumut, and on many of the large pastoral stations in the region. The largest camp was at Narrandera and the second largest at Wagga Wagga (hereafter,Wagga).

Meaningful population figures are difficult to obtain, for the peak numbers did not coincide with the Census dates, and it was a moving population, with many men shifting between the towns and pastoral stations. But a combination of Census results and other reports gives some pointers. In the 1871 Census the total Chinese population in the region was 777, with the largest concentrations near Tumut and Albury. 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, recorded 869 Chinese as residents or frequent visitors to the Chinese camps in the five main Riverina towns in 1883, an increase of 298, or 34 per cent, on the 1878 total for these towns. Using a simple method of extrapolation the total Chinese population in the Riverina in 1883 could have been about 2200. 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. 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.[1]

[1] Cathie May, *Topsawyers: The Chinese in Cairns*, Studies in North Queensland History, No.6, James Cook University, Townsville, p.14; Edmund Fosebery, 'Chinese (Information Respecting, Residents in the Colony)' 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, vol 2, Sydney, pp.659-666; 1871 Census, Votes and Proceedings, New South Wales Legislative Assembly, Vol.2, 1872, pp.324-429.

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

The growth in the Chinese population was explosive. Between 1871 and 1883, Narrandera's Chinese population leapt from only 11 to 303 and Wagga's from 53 to 194. By 1891 Wagga's Chinese population had fallen to 127, of whom two were females, and in 1901 to 66, two of whom were females. An important caveat with the Census figures, however, is that they refer to country of birth, and therefore exclude children born to Chinese or Chinese European. This is an important qualification, for several Chinese or part Chinese families lived at Wagga in the 1890s and early 1900s.[2]

The number of Chinese people in the Riverina, New England and Cairns districts may not seem large, but it must be remembered that this was rural and outback Australia, not Melbourne or Sydney, or for that matter Bendigo or Ballarat.[3] And the Chinese men constituted a very large proportion of the adult male population in some 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.[4] The proportion may not have been as high in Wagga, but it was significant nevertheless.

---

[2] Brennan, 'Chinese Camps', pp.659-666; 1871 Census, pp.324-429; Fosebery, 'Chinese (Information Respecting, Residents in the Colony, pp.469-473; *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.

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

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

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, the latter particularly noticeable in the area south of Wagga, between Lockhart and Holbrook. This large and varied population, each with its own cultural traditions, gave a distinct multi-cultural flavour to the Riverina.

But who were these later Chinese migrants; where did they come from and why? Unlike the indentured labourers almost all of these immigrants 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.[5]

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.[6] 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.[7] 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 guaranteeing that Chinese emigration before the 20th century was almost exclusively male. In 1861 there were two Chinese women compared to 12,968 men in the colony and in 1881, 64 to 10,141. The ratio had improved somewhat by 1901 when there were 675 Chinese women to 10,590 men, but it was still an overwhelmingly male society.[8]

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 See 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 See 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 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

---

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

[6] Williams, *Chinese settlement in NSW*, pp.12, 22, 23.

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

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

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

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.[9]

Perhaps there is no better illustration 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. Phillip 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 reform 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 the status quo and their livelihood, and the bureaucracy made few, if any, efforts to implement them. By the summer of 1898 the Guangxu Emperor had begun firing important officials and replacing them with his own men. The Empress Dowager began to fear for her own position and probably believed court rumours of a plot to overthrow the Manchus. She staged a counter coup, putting the Guangxu Emperor under house arrest, cashiering his appointed officials, revoking almost all the reforms and executing six reformers without trial. According to Zarrow many more would have been killed, but some escaped

[9] 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.

with the help of the foreign legations, and perhaps Clarrie Leslie's father was one of these men.[10]

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

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

[11] Lindsay Smith, 'Hidden Dragons. The archaeology of mid- to late-nineteenth-century Chinese communities in south-eastern New South Wales', PhD, ANU, 2006; 'Cold hard cash, a study of Chinese ethnicity and archaeology at Kiandra, New South Wales', MA, ANU, 1988, p.40; Jill Barnard, Mary Sheehan, 'The Chinese discovery of gold and settlement in Ararat', National Estate Program Grant No. 542, 1991, pp.11-12. Instances of exploitation and kidnapping to destinations in South America and Cuba are recounted in Elizabeth Sinn, *Power and Charity. A Chinese Merchant Elite in Colonial Hong Kong*, Hong Kong University Press, Hong Kong, 2003, pp.101-113.

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

Work

INDENTURED LABOURERS

The first Chinese people to arrive in any number in Australia came as indentured labourers in 1847. According to historian Maxine Darnell the number of indentured labourers would reach 3,500 over the next six years. Their arrival in Australia was the culmination of many years of agitation by the larger pastoralists in response to the difficulties of obtaining free labour on the stations, the loss of convict labour and the refusal of the Indian Government to allow Indian labour to be contracted to the colony. The 19th century saw a mass movement of thousands of Chinese under contract to countries such as Peru, Cuba and the British Caribbean. By contrast, the number going to NSW was 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 the '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 heavily weighted 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.[13]

In the Riverina, some indentured Chinese worked on pastoral properties, such as William McLeay's Kerarbury station near present day Darlington Point, and at properties owned by pastoralists such as 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, 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

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

request was refused. The men were, however, later fed by other means.[14]

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 Servant's 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.[15]

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.[16]

McLeay admitted to the shameful treatment by Stewart and agreed to provide the men with the sugar. However, the three men 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.[17]

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

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

less, and 'a large share of this benefit must be allowed to the 1000 Chinese who during that time had been imported'.[18] Another writer in the same issue stated that during the last few years, 'thanks to my Chinese', he had been a successful sheep farmer, and 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', and when they return home 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-be's" - 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 becoming an active and serious researcher in subjects such as entomology, ichthyology and other areas of zoology.[19]

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 indentured labourers. According to Chin See Shai Hee (William's wife) 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 Chu Yin Sum had returned to China and Hing Gim had opened a store in Tumut.[20]

---

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

[19] *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.

[20] Information from Chris Shai Hee and Jean Chin (née Shai Hee), February 2012; Chris Shai Hee, interview of Chin See Shai Hee, unpublished manuscript, March 1984.

GOLD MINERS

Most Chinese came to Australia in the gold rushes in the 1850s and 1860s and later worked in the Riverina in the pastoral industry. 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.[21] Chinese miners were integral to this success story, and because many of them eventually made their way to 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. [22]

Chinese miners also worked on the NSW goldfields, however 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 miner's right, men could also pasture stock and obtain water supplies on Crown Land.[23] 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 1861*, followed the Lambing Flat riots in 1860 and 1861, and interrupted the flow of Chinese miners to NSW. The legislation provided for a £10 poll tax and 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 about to enter a period of decline because of the exhaustion of the more easily won alluvial deposits. The legislation was repealed in 1867.[24]

To the horror of some European observers and the applause of others, many Chinese miners were very successful. Speaking of the Adelong diggings in June 1860 a local correspondent stated that

> These industrious Mongolians that hang upon the skirts of European miners like jackals, seem to be reaping some reward for their incessant labours at the lower end of Golden Gully if we are to judge from the constant rattle of their cradles, the increased number that appear to be working, and the claims that they have taken up.[25]

---

[21] 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.

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

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

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

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

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

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'.[26] 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'.[27]

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

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

PASTORAL WORKERS

After the gold rushes most Chinese worked in the pastoral sector. They 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 eventually led to the death of the tree, and avoided the work invoved in cutting down trees and grubbing stumps immediately afterwards. It was very effective in improving grass growth. Generally, where ringbarking was practiced, up to double the number of stock could be carried. Scrubcutting and "suckering" were sequels to ringbaking and were considered the most expensive items, for the 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.[28] 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.[29] 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.

Details on the Chinese ringbarkers and pastoral workers on the stations are rare. However, George Gow, a station manager and later a stock agent, wrote a comprehensive account of Wong Gooey, a Narrandera contractor. Although no accounts are available of the Wagga contractors, their working methods would have been very similar. At Wagga on 9 June 1887, the Chinese firm of On Yuen Lee in Baylis St Newtown advertised themselves as ironmongers, general storekeepers and contractors for "scrubbing" on stations and selections. Some of the Chinese in the Temora district came from the Wagga camp. Mr I. C. Fisher of Ariah Park recalled that, as a boy, he saw their 'neat camps of tents complete with flies, and brush wind breaks'.[30]

In his account of Wong Gooey, Gow stated that

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

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

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

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

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

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 & District Historical Society

> 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 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.[33]

Local informants have advised that while the men were on the stations, contact was maintained by the use of carrier pigeons, and pigeon lofts were erected at the Narrandera and Hay camps for this purpose.[34]

According to Gow, the Chinese men on the stations, be they cooks, gardeners or scrub cutters, would

---

[32] Barellan Progress Association and Improvement Society, *Early Days in Barellan and District*, pp.36-38.
[33] Barellan Progress Association and Improvement Society, *Early Days in Barellan and District*, pp.35-40;
[34] *Riverine Grazier*, 26 March 1945, 9 January 1970.

be moved like pawns by the ruling Chinese, such as Sam Yett, who always had another man ready to replace the one leaving. In his study of the Narrandera Chinese, historian 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. Sam Yett worked closely with contractors such as Wong Gooey and Ah Hem, while Ah Sam engaged the Chinese gardeners and possibly the cooks. George Hock Shung, Sam Yett's nephew, succeeded him on his death in 1903, though he may have commenced contracting work well before then.[35] 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. Twenty four 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 the likely gang leader. At Kerabury, two Chinese men were mentioned, Youm Foo, who was one of a party of 12, and Ah Lim who was one of a party of 14. Youm Foo and Ah Lim were the likely gang leaders. At Tubbo, 19 Chinese were recorded, including Ah Gan, who, along with seven others, was located at the fencer's camp, and Ah Slam, who, along with nine others, was located at the burr cutter's camp. Ah Gan and Ah Slam were the likely gang leaders.[36]

Buxton commented that as the years passed the contracts gradually grew smaller, and the pine forests were killed by the chopping down of the small pine scrub and the ringing of the larger timber. The 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] Commenting on the Temora district, historian R. Webster lamented the 'tragedy of their employment', which resulted in the total destruction of great areas of valuable timber for they 'razed good and bad in a face and millions of magnificent old pines, free of knot and pith, fell before their relentless axes'.[38] According to Gow, the last large contract of any kind taken by Gooey was on Barellan station at the end of 1910. A Mr F.R. Clayton had sold the property to a syndicate, who intended to subdivide it. Messrs. Grant, Forsyth and Thorpe were the committee for the syndicate, and before the place was handed over to the syndicate, Clayton was asked to arrange a contract to clear 6000 acres (2400 hectares). Gooey took the job on, using 11 men to begin 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'.

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

[35] Barellan Progress Association and Improvement Society, *Early Days in Barellan and District*, 20-23, 50-54; Buxton, *The Riverina*, pp.262-263, 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, no page numbers available.

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

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

> £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 Chinese workers were not a servile labour force, and could strongly contest the land clearing contractss. 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. He closely supervised the work of the Chinese labourers, who were engaged mainly in burning, and was very pleased with their work, but lamented that they were refusing to work at the prevailing rates and bargaining for higher ones.[40] McDonald mentions going to Wagga to 'square up' with a boss or contractor by the name of Ah Goon, so it is more than likely that the men at Wantabadgery were recruited from the Wagga camp.[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 bargain for a better price and the close relationships between the men, almost all of whom would have lived at the Narrandera camp, and belonged to the same district and fraternal associations.[42]

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

> Each man seemed to take his turn at cooking, and weird and wonderful were the dishes they concocted. Preserved ginger, all kinds of dried fish, and pork were on the menu; rice of course figured largely, but it was of a specially prepared kind. I have often heard it said that Chinamen could live on the smell of an oil rag, but it is a fallacy, they live exceedingly well – much better than Europeans under similar circumstances.
>
> They are fond of fish, either fresh or dried – I remember once Gooey had a camp on a dam on Warri, 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....[43]

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

---

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

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

[41] McDonald, *Wantabadgery Station Diary, 1879-1881*.

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

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

> Grandfather Fong imported much food from China for the local Chinese workers and Father could still remember seeing the split and flattened carcases of duck as they were unpacked, and the ricepaper packages of Chinese rice and tea.[44]

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'.[45] By the 1880s the ringbarking frontier had moved further north, following the copper, then gold mining, boom, in the Mt Hope, Nymagee, Cobar and Mt Drysdale areas. 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. In 1919 he was paid £436 10s 9d for this work and in 1920, £466 1s 8d.[46] In 1954 King Fan's obituary writer stated that he had a lucrative business as a clearing contractor and employed gangs of as many as 20 or 30 men, his contracts taking him to practically all the district and as far away as Rankin's Springs.[47]

Other than Gow's account, details of the lives of the Chinese labourers on specific stations are rare, but some information has come to hand from court reports, station ledgers, and some personal reminiscences. The Tubbo ledgers reveal that Chinese men were engaged in a variety of labouring tasks, particularly ringbarking, market gardening and cooking from at least 1866 (the earliest known record) to the 1920s. After 1920 their activities were confined to cooking and market gardening. The contract labourers were paid through the headman or contractor, and the cooks, market gardeners and other workers were paid individually at rates comparable with European wage rates. Twenty five Chinese men were hired in 1868, though their occupations are unknown. In 1876 Ah Goon was engaged as a wool picker, Men Sing as a cook and Ah Foot as a scrub cutter. 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 worked as fumigators.[48] In 1895 Mack Goon was engaged as a cook at the house. The turnover rate for the gardeners and cooks was high. 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. Almost all correspondence was between the station manager and the contractor, care of Sam Yett or his nephew, George Hock Shung, who was sometimes referred to as George Sam Yett. In 1903 several letters were addressed to Ah You, contractor, care of George Sam Yett, and 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 get the contract done in time he would need to engage 10 more men.

A local historian, Max Leitch, recalled that a Chinese gardener was employed on Berry Jerry station near Wagga until its sale in 1910. The gardener had a large orchard and supplied vegetables and fruit to all the station hands. He also had most of the contracts for ringbarking, clearing scrub and burning off, and would have up to 50 Chinese men on the job. Max recalled that:

---

[44] Bill Speirs, *The Beehive and the Broken Dam*, J.A. Bradley & Sons, Temora, 1987, pp.44-45.

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

[46] Tubbo Station, *Ledgers 1866-1930*, Charles Sturt University Regional Archives, Wagga Wagga.

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

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

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

> 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]

Mrs Ruth Genat from Temora also recalled that the Chinese men used a heavy axe, chipping away at the bark with short, quick blows.[50]

Chinese workers also constructed earthen built dams (tanks) throughout the Riverina and beyond. According to local historian, Ada Trevaskis, 20 or more Chinese were used to construct the large dams. The Chinese workers broke the soil with picks and shovels, and carried it away in wheel barrows or baskets. Those using baskets carriedtwo on each end of a yoke across shoulder. When one carrier returned with empty containers there were others filled and ready for transportation.

She commented that the dams had two steep sides, with two ends sloped for transporting the soil, although many dams in the Riverina are gently sloped.[51]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'.[52]

Sometimes the dams were built as large embankments enclosing a swamp or natural drainage area, or trapping the water from small creeks. An example of the latter exists at present day Brailong and Grubben stations in the Yerong Creek area, where large embankments dammed up the creeks, and in the case of Brailong formed small lakes. The top of the embankment at Brailong was wide enough for a road. At Grubben some of the water was channelled into a small dam for market gardening purposes, and a stone packed causeway was 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. If so, he was not working on his own, for there are at least three hut sites near the large garden, and a large scatter of artefacts such as opium vials.[53]

---

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

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

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

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

[53] 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.

Yabbying in the Chinese built dam on Strathallen, Urangeline.
Private collection

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 about that 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.[54] Chinese labourers were also employed on James Kelly's Cambusdoon Station. In the station ledger separate pages identify 'Jimmy the Chow' and 'Sam the Chow'. In February 1903 Chinese grubbers were contracted to clear 160 hectares at 2/6 (about 15c) per acre, amounting to £50. They were only paid £46/6/3 because the contract was not completed. In 1905 Jimmie the Chinaman started grubbing. There was a Chinese market garden on the creek.[55]

According to David Walster, a Junee resident, Chinese labourers also constructed sheds and barns. A pise built barn was constructed by Chinese labourers on Patrick Heffernan's Clear Hills property in the 1860s-1870s. Heffernan also used Chinese labour to clear the property. He had made his money originally in gold mining and owned a number of properties between Junee and Temora, probably using Chinese labour to clear them as well. David recalled that some Chinese lived in the village of Wantabadgery, and were possibly descendants of the men who worked for McDonald at Wantabadgery Station in the 1880s.[56]

While the Wagga camp was the main source of Chinese labour in the district, many labourers in the

---

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

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

[56] Discussions with David Walster, August 2014. Stories of Chinese built barns or shearing sheds are legendary in the Lake Mungo area west of Balranald and on at least one property in the Hillston area (personal observations, the author).

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 second 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 as 100 miles away and was often away for two and three weeks at a time.[57]

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.[58]

Another curious and unstated detail of George Wing Dann's letter is the timing of this activity. According to his account Chen Ah Kew may not have come out as a gold miner, Other family reminiscences suggest that he had been an indentured labourer and had hired some of the men whom he had overseen, while others suggest that he came to the Victorian goldfields via Robe in 1857.[59] The great wave of land clearing in the Riverina was definitely post gold rush from the 1860s on, and most Victorian Chinese would have crossed into the Riverina before the NSW immigration restrictions of 1888, which included a prohibitive poll tax of £100. Many men used illegal methods to avoid these restrictions, but it is 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

---

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

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

[59] Discussions with Ms Elizabeth Chong, 2013 and 2014; and Lucinda Adams, 2015.

Federation, in either Victoria or the Riverina is provided by several newspaper advertisements.[60] For example, in 1892, Ah Lun, a storekeeper in Wahgunyah, announced that with a staff of 50 men, he was available for grubbing, scrub cutting and ringbarking contracts and all other station work.[61] 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.[62]

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.[63]

As suggested in George Wing Dann's letter some Chinese labourers may have been recruited directly from China. This certainly occurred in the Riverina, 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 recruiting 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 recruited from there.[64] Willie Ah Kinn, 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 on contracts in the Urana area.[65] The same recruitment processes would have occurred at Wagga. In percentage terms the increase in the Chinese population in the Riverina between the late 1870s and early 1880s was large, and more than likely the bulk of the new arrivals were recruited direct from China. And this stands to reason, for land clearing was hard work, and by this time many of the men would have been well into their 40s, if not 50s.

The Chinese labourers also excelled at many other tasks, such as wool scouring. 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 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'. All of Burrabogie's wool clip for the year would be scoured by Chinese labour. The Chinese 'did not work for a low wage, but they have organisation, industry, carefulness,

---

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

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

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

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

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

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

thrift which the available white work men lack.'[66]

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 the Chinese labourers 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 turned their hand to rabbiting in some cases, and were found ready to do nearly all the rough work on the stations.[67] 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. [68]

Some Chinese men also 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) as his white shearers had attempted to strike for better wages.[69] However, often the Chinese were not welcome at such work. Thomas Booth worked as a station-hand in the late 1870s on Corrong station near Booligal, and together with other 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.[70]

By the 20th century such antagonism had faded, and Chinese-Australians worked in the pastoral industry as wool classers, shearers, general hands or boundary riders, so long as they were members of the union, the AWU. Alex Pack from Hay worked as a groom at Daisy Plains, where an older sister, Kathleen, also worked. Alex began shearing at the station, and in 1945 commenced shearing professionally on OJ Smith's and Ray Congdon's teams until 1955, when he returned to Daisy Plains. In 1970 he began shearing on a freelance basis, averaging about 160-170 sheep a day, his highest tally being 228. He was always a union man, remarking that the union made the job a lot safer and more comfortable. Alex estimated that he had shorn almost 200,000 sheep during his lifetime.[71]

Another Chinese-Australian shearer was Clarrie Leslie (formerly Clarrie Chun) from Junee. He was an expert farm hand, and 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 sheared in sheds such as Glen Iris, Merybindinyah, Yammatree, Caragabool, Brindabella, Wantabadgery, Ballengoarrah, Dollar Vale and Cooba Station, and travelled as far as western Queensland. Later, in partnership with Jack Neighbour, he went contract shearing himself. With a two stand portable shearing plant they sheared in the open in the Snowy Mountains for many years.[72]

Another Chinese man, George Amber Moy, worked at Borambola Station near Wagga in the 1930s

---

[66] *Argus*, 22, 29 October 1887.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Alex Ah Pack, Hay, 2009.
Barry McGowan

Arthur and Hannah Nye, Wagga Wagga.
Private collection

as a boundary rider, inspecting and repairing fences and undertaking repair work on the station buildings.[73]

In another Wagga example, Arthur Nye accompanied his father, Daniel Nye, on many bush trips, later becoming a boundary rider on one of the large properties near Currawarna.[74] Walter Clarke (Fong) from Broken Dam worked for a time as a drover's boy. He had resented the heavy-handed treatment of his stepfather, Millington Clarke, and at age 13, in about 1899, left home. Part of his duties was to ride ahead to find a suitable camp site and place where the sheep could be held and shepherded during the night. He spent much of his time in the Snowy Mountains in the Talbingo area.[75]

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 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. Mervyn 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.[76]

Eric Doon from Tumut became a fully qualified wool classer in 1944. In previous years all the wool purchased from the farmers by the Doon family business was sent to Sydney or Albury to be classed.[77]

George Moy on his wedding day in 1930.
Private collection

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

[73] Discussions with Keith Moy, August 2010.

[74] Information from Allison Nye, Castlemaine, and Lexa Shulz, Wagga Wagga.

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

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

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

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. Market gardening and fruit growing could be highly profitable, for it was relatively inexpensive to set up a garden, often on leased land, in partnership with other Chinese men, and stock such as pigs were often raised as well. On 30 December 1879 the *Gundagai Times* cited the instance of four Chinese men - two of whom were well known in Gundagai as gardeners - leaving the town with £1800 in earnings. While no accounts are to hand of the earnings of the Wagga gardeners it can be assumed that they too were profitable, for many of the gardens were still being worked in the 1950s. The gardening was very labour intensive work, and some of the methods and technology differed little from that used in China for centuries past.[78] Equipment included hoes, shovels, rakes, harrows, ploughs, and heavy wooden shoulder yokes for carrying the watering cans. Sometimes the water was raised from the creeks and rivers by using engines powered by wood fired boilers or petrol, but the task of watering individual plants was almost always done with watering cans.

Almost all town gardens were located near waterways, usually on the fringe of towns near the camps. The gardeners lived in small huts, usually built of timber and galvanised iron, 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 part of 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 (now also disused) with several rooms is located nearby.

An account of market gardening at Hillston by Tom Parr in 1900 provides a glimpse into the technology employed in some of the gardens. The men raised water from the river by small buckets holding a little over two litres, which were fastened to an endless chain, with the buckets completing the circle, thus circulating a continuous stream of water. The chain was driven by a blindfolded horse

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

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

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

going around continuously. Some of their vegetables such as potatoes and pumpkin, and their fruit trees were flood irrigated. But much of the water was pumped into a drain and into small holes dug in the garden holding about 1350 litres, with a plank running into the water hole on one side and out the other. Each of the Chinese gardeners

> had two huge watering cans on a bamboo stick across their shoulders, one can, one each side, and as he jogged through, he dipped both cans into the water, the cans having a spray nozzle on the spout.[79]

At Wagga, an extensive area of market gardens was located in the lagoon area known as North Wagga Island or simply as North Wagga, adjoining the Murrumbidgee River north of the present day Wiradjuri Bridge, on the property of Mrs Brown. Other gardens were located at the Chinese camp in Fitzmaurice St, along Tarcutta Road and at East Wagga near the river. Because of their location the gardens were very susceptible to flooding, and most of the accounts of them come from reports of floods in the local press. One of the most devastating floods in the region 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's* Wagga 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.

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

Charlie Wong Hing's hut, North Wagga river flats, New South Wales.
Genevieve Mott

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. The "Chinese junk", however, was destined to do more valuable service.

The 'valuable service' concerned the fate of a Mr Wilson, who with his would be rescuer, Mr Ray, clung grimly to the top of a fence post near the miller's cottage in Kincaid St, until the arrival of the Chinese boat. It was a hazardous rescue, the boatmen having to row against a very strong current. At Flowerdale a number of people were stranded, including five Chinese men who clung to a tree, some in the water and others just out of it. While the writer made no mention of the fate of the Chinese gardens it can be reasonably assumed that they were inundated and destroyed.[80]

Flooding in 1891 again wreaked havoc with the Chinese market gardeners. One report stated that 'Chinaman's Island' at North Wagga was partly flooded but very little damage done to the gardens, although Chinese gardeners near Orange Tree Point were not so fortunate and suffered considerably, nearly all the gardens being completely destroyed.[81] A few days later a local correspondent stated that

> the Chinaman's gardens near the river suffered considerably, and a number of cottages in the low lying part of North Wagga will not be habitable for some weeks owing to the stench from the flood deposits.[82]

---

[80] *Wagga Wagga Daily Advertiser*, (hereafter *Daily Advertiser*), 4 May 1870.

[81] *Daily Advertiser*, 22 January 1891

[82] *Daily Advertiser*, 24 January 1891.

In 1931 the Chinese gardens were again flooded. Constable Norrell had his work cut out rescuing Willie Chong, a Chinese gardener, whose North Wagga property was under almost one metre of water. While persuading Willie to leave, 'and it took a considerable amount of persuasion too', he was bitten on the leg, though not severely, by Willie's dog. Five Chinese men from Mow's gardens on Tarcutta Road were also rescued by the police.[83]

One of the more enduring market gardens in Wagga was begun by Tommy Ah Wah, or Ah War, on an eight hectare property running from near the Sturt Highway on the east side of town to the Murrumbidgee River. A local resident, Marjorie Morrow, recalled that he sold his produce through the local business of Wallace and Ryan. Another local resident, Arthur Nixon, remembers him as 'a nice old fella. He could speak good English. He wasn't too bad'. In the 1950s, the market garden was run by Thomas Allan, the youngest son, who built a house on the farm.[84]

Charlie Wong Hing, Sydney.
Museum of the Riverina, Wagga Wagga

Most of the Chinese gardeners lived and worked at or near the Chinese Camp in Fitzmaurice Street or at North Wagga Island near or about Parken Pregan Lagoon. Frank Rynehart lived on Marah Street with his parents, and remembered the Chinese gardeners who lived at North Wagga in the 1930s and 1940s. Charlie Wong Hing was one of these men, and according to Frank, 'the mainstay of the setup'. He didn't recall seeing any other Chinese men, only Charlie, for he was the only one with a horse and wagon. Frank said that Charlie ran the market garden with several other Chinese men on about five to ten acres of leased land. He recalled that Charlie had a good run of customers in North Wagga and in town, and probably sold produce through Edmondson's, a large department store. During World War Two Charlie ran a market garden for the RAAF at Uranquinty. Chinese market garden produce was in very high demand by the army and air force at Kapooka and Forrest Hill respectively.[85]

According to Frank, another group of gardeners lived near the old Narrandera Road, and another group lived near the river in North Wagga, possibly on North Wagga Island opposite Wagga Beach. The remnant fig and apricot trees at this latter location were almost certainly planted by Chinese gardeners. Frank also remembered the North Wagga gardeners, Willie Chong and Jimmy Hoon. Willie's garden was on the Junee Road and Jimmy's garden was near the river. In the early 1950s floods again

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

[84] Information from Marjorie Morrow, Arthur Nixon and Russell Danswan.

[85] Claire McMullen, *Transcript of interview with Frank Rynehart*, Museum of the Riverina, Wagga Wagga, 2013; Janis Wilton, ÷; Information from Russell Danswan, Junee, 2010; information from Wendy Hucker, Goulburn, 2010.

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

ravaged many Riverina towns, including Wagga. According to Frank this experience proved too much for many of the gardeners and they left not long after.[86]

Another Wagga resident to remember the Chinese market gardeners was Ron Hellar, whose parents bought cabbages and pumpkins from gardeners near the Black Swan Hotel in North Wagga.[87]. Frank Angnea was another Chinese market gardener at North Wagga. In the 1930s he had a market garden on Borambola station and trucked his produce to Wagga and other destinations. A relative by marriage, George Amber Moy, also worked on Borambola as a boundary rider, inspecting and repairing fences and undertaking repair work on the station buildings. In the 1940s, following his divorce, George and his son Keith joined Frank and his family at their North Wagga garden, 'Waratah'. During World War Two Frank had contracts to supply vegetables to the RAAF base at Uranquinty and the army at Kapooka.[88] Another Chinese market gardener at North Wagga was Ah Tan, who died in August 1919. He was 'very popular with the Chinese of Wagga and associated with Quong Num Lee at one of the North Wagga gardens'.[89]

Other Chinese market gardeners in Wagga were Lum Que, who had a garden near the waterworks on Tarcutta Road in 1919, and Arthur Nye, who had a garden and nursery at his Gosse Street home.[90] One

[86] *Narrandera Argus*, 31 March 1950; *Daily Advertiser*, 21 June 1952; McMullen, *Transcript of interview with Frank Rynehart*.

[87] Discussions with Mark Gooden and Ron Hellar, Wagga , September 2013.

[88] Information supplied by Keith Moy, 2009, 2010.

[89] *Daily Advertiser*, 11 August 1919.

[90] *Daily Advertiser*, 16 July 1919; information from Allison Nye, Castlemaine, and Lexa Shulz, Wagga.

A variety of garden implements was used, many of them heavy and durable.
Hay Gaol Museum

Wagga resident to be particularly impressed with the Chinese market gardeners was Mark Gooden. He remembered that Chinese market gardeners from Narrandera visited his parent's property between Lockhart and Galore. So impressed was he by the size of the pumpkins and other produce, and the seeming ease and profitability of the work, that when asked what he wanted to be when grew up, he replied that he wanted to be Chinaman.

Successful market gardens were established throughout the Riverina. Market gardening was a major activity in Deniliquin, for 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 (possibly Ah Quong), who had sent up dray loads of vegetables from Bendigo to Deniliquin for a good price and had by then leased three acres in Deniliquin for a market garden. A later report mentioned the extensive use of night soil, which was mixed in two pits and applied periodically, the garden being watered three times daily, with the plants grown on long ridges about 22 centimetres high. The garden was described as 'a perfect oasis in the surrounding desert', the first dray load of vegetables leaving for the Bendigo area in April 1865.

Other gardeners soon followed suit, a correspondent in that year commenting favourably on their industry, sobriety and general good conduct. At Ah Guy's garden the aphids were controlled by the application of a strong solution of soda to each young plant. He referred to the Chinese as the 'coming man' of the Riverina.[91] 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.[92] The three main garden areas in Deniliquin were the Brewery garden next to the Chinese camp, the Butter Factory garden and the River Street garden. Mow Ong had the Brewery garden for many years and was assisted by Ah Louey, who delivered his vegetables around town in two baskets suspended from

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

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

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

Chinese market gardener with a very skinny horse, Lockhart, NSW.
Ada Trevaskis, A Schneider Family History, 1979

a yoke.[93]

Chinese market gardening soon spread to other towns. At Hay in 1867 the *Pastoral Times* correspondent waxed eloquent on the industry and thrift of the Chinese gardeners, commenting that 'for industry and sobriety he is a pattern to the whites'. He referred to the Chinese as 'the universal cabbage grower in the sunny land of Australia', and referred to six Chinese gardeners living well on less than an acre of Crown land. The correspondent also referred to the Chinese practice of taking all the town refuse, 'the scrapings of our streets, the refuse of our stables, the debris of our back slums' and converting 'them into cabbage', and the meticulous way they looked after their plants, ridding them of aphids by brushing the plants individually with soapsuds. He stated 'that no whites would do this for they did not have the patience'.[94] In 1892 the Chinese established a market garden on land leased from the Council, and erected an engine and pump at a cost of £280. He remarked that 'The enterprise of our Chinese friends merits the success which their indefatigable industry will no doubt command'.[95]

Some of the Hay gardens were highly profitable. In 1911 it was reported that at the Chinese gardens at South Hay a considerable area had been planted out to oranges and mandarin trees by the owner and had 'evoked general admiration'. The reporter stated that the trees must have 'returned the enterprising planters quite a substantial profit, judging by the numbers of people who could be seen visiting the gardens on holidays and Sunday in order to obtain oranges'. [96]

In 1876 the local correspondent spoke very highly of the Chinese gardeners at Hillston, of whom there were about 20 working in a cooperative arrangement, distributing vegetables around the district in half a dozen carts. He commented that the district 'would suffer materially without the aid of our Asiatic friends'.[97] At Darlington Point the first Chinese market garden was established in 1880, when the town was still an infant settlement; a year later the garden was described as 'fearfully and wonderfully irrigated' and a 'spectacular success'. The garden was 'washed by the Murrumbidgee River, watered by two wells, and traversed throughout by canals'.[98] 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.[99]

Elsewhere in the Riverina extensive market gardens were also established at Albury, Junee, Temora and Narrandera. Most of the Albury gardens were located between the camp area and the Murray River. The largest was at Mungabareena, where it extended over several hectares, and included pumps, brick and concrete lined water channels and concrete piping. Almost all the Chinese gardens at Junee were located in the wet land area behind Broadway. A water channel providing a regular supply of water can still be seen in this area. Among the gardeners in the 1900s were Tommy Ah Wah, Gordon Wee and Georgie or Tommy Ah Yeck. Local resident Greg Duck remembers Georgie, who had one or two men working with him on the garden. Every Christmas his family used to get some ginger from him. He finished up in Bethanga, and often sold vegetables at Old Junee and around the farms. The last

---

[93] John E. P. Bushby, *Saltbush Country. History of the Deniliquin District*, the author, Deniliquin, 1980, p. 276.

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

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

[96] *Riverine Grazier*, 22 August 1911.

[97] *Riverine Grazier*, 2 February 1876, 7 April 1899.

[98] *Daily Advertiser*, 25 December 1880, 12 May 1881; *Riverine Grazier*, 4 May, 8 June 1881.

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

Chinese market gardener, Merowie Station, 1940s, Hillston.
Hillston & District Historical Society

gardener was Gordon Wee.[100]

At Temora one of the main market gardeners was Thomas Wah Sue, who sold his produce by wagon, buying skins, hides and fleeces in return. Other gardeners were He-Lim and Charlie Wong Lip.[101] The Narrandera gardens were located primarily in the vicinity of the Chinese camp on the banks of the Murrumbidgee River, virtually surrounding the camp on all sides. One of the legendary gardeners was Harry King Fan, who had a market garden near the camp for almost 40 years.[102]

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

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

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

FARMERS AND GRAZIERS

In the early 1870s the Chinese turned their attention to other forms of cultivation – in particular tobacco and maize. The earliest reports of tobacco farming in the Riverina come from the Albury area, many of the farmers almost certainly emigrating from north east Victoria, in particular the King Valley and Yackandandah areas, where there were large Chinese populations.[103] On 23 November 1889 a correspondent for the *Sydney Mail*, stated that the first attempt to grow tobacco in the district in 1875 was by Jong Ming and two other Chinese men, who rented 15 acres (six hectares) of land from John Richards of Windowie, near Tumut. They had no previous experience in tobacco growing but having heard that some of their countrymen had started the industry at Albury they commenced farming and were rewarded with a first crop of three tons. They knew little or nothing about the housing and curing of tobacco and neglected to use artificial heat and the process of 'smoking' – which was only acquired after subsequent experience. But because of the virgin soil and the warm bright weather after it was placed in the shed they sold their tobacco to a Sydney factory for a very good price of 8d a lb. Other Chinese soon followed.

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.[104] 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 and had also 'taken a hold of the hops industry'.[105] 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.[106]

In 1887 a correspondent remarked that large quantities of tobacco were on road to the market, and that the growers were doing well, production 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 devour it.[107] By 1888 the Chinese tobacco growers were firmly established in the Tarcutta area, Hillas Creek and Lacmalac. But in other respects these were not happy times, for anti-Chinese feelings were running high in many parts of the colony and an Anti-Chinese League was established in Tumut in late 1887. TheLeague's main aim was to discourage European landowners from leasing land to the Chinese farmers. 1889 was perhaps the high point for the Chinese tobacco growers, for by the 1890s a depression in the tobacco industry had forced many of them to leave.[108]

---

[103] Jocelyn Groom, *Chinese Pioneers of the King Valley*, Centre for Continuing Education, Wangaratta, 2001.

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

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

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

[107] Goulburn Herald, 18 January 1887.

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

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

Chinese men carrying harvested tobacco.
National Library of Australia

Tobacco farming occurred near Wagga along Tarcutta Creek, Hillas Creek and near Mundarlo. There were two Chinese stores at Mundarlo and both would have financed the farmers or given them credit. Many farmers were indebted to R.G, Horsely, the owner of Yabtree Station, and on whose land many of them were farming. Horseley arranged to buy the tobacco leaf direct from the growers at a fixed price; if the tobacco was grown on land held by selectors, they received one fifth of the crop. Horsely also arranged for the land to be ploughed prior to planting, provided poles for the sheds and timber for the kiln, advanced stores and money at ten percent interest and assisted the Chinese men with writing and the provision of beef, pork and other commodities. He also arranged for crop insurance. By 1893 tobacco farming had ceased at Yabtree due to oversupply and poor prices. In the past the tobacco had been used as a sheep dip for the treatment of ticks, but it was not as effective as the new Cooper's dip and discoloured the wool.[109]

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

[109] R.F. Horsley, Diaries, 1876-1891; Emily Horsley. *A Gleam of Sunshine. The story of the Horsely family of Yabtree, Gundagai, NSW*, unfinished manuscript.

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

rents were always paid on time'.[110]

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 by the construction of the house/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'[111]

Betty Menzies (née Choy) recalled the story that her grandfather William Quong, her mother's father, 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 he purchased a number of farm properties, 'Redbank', east of Grong Grong, 'Hillview', north of Grong Grong, and 'Riverside', south of Grong Grong on the Murrumbidgee River.[112] The ubiquitous James Ah (Wong) Chuey owned a 600 acre [240 hectare] property near Junee, and was a wealthy grazier and wheat farmer.[113]

According to Meredie Mee Ling the Mee Ling family owned large farming properties in the Temora district.[114]

James Wong (Ah) Chuey, early 1900s: Chuey was a Junee based wool, skins and hides dealer, commission agent, general storekeeper, contractor and wool scourer, with branch stores in Cootamundra, Tumut, Wagga Wagga, Wyalong and Barmedman. He was a prominent member of the Junee Methodist church and a principal benefactor of the See Yap Society, the Glebe Temple and the Chinese Masonic Society in Sydney.

Anna Lee, the Chinese Masonic Society, Sydney

[110] 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.

[111] Speirs, *The Beehive and the Broken Dam.*

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

[113] 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*, 1998, p.21.

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

STOREKEEPERS, TRADERS AND RESTAURANT OWNERS

HI HING STORE

AH GOW,

Late of the well-known firm of AH CHEE & COMPANY, MERCHANTS AND STORKEEPERS, GUNDAGAI,

BEGS most respectfully to inform the residents of MUNDARLO and neighbourhood that he has yielded to the many solicitations of his numerous friends, and

OPENED

A Large and Commodious GENERAL STORE AT MUNDARLO,

Which he intends to stock with a

VARIED AND CHOICE SELECTION

OF

NEW GOODS!

Suitable to all classes of his numerous customers.

For the past two years AH GOW has visited weekly the district of MUNDARLO, supplying that class of Goods which has given every satisfaction to his numerous patrons. AH GOW has

Just Returned from Sydney,

Where he has purchased

Several Thousand Pounds worth of Goods

under the most advantageous circumstances, which will enable him to quote articles at a

Lower Price than has ever been known before!

The STOCK will consist of all those SUPERIOR QUALITY of GOODS only to be found in first-class country Stores.

AH GOW'S motto will be—"Small profits and quick returns for ready money," the nimble shilling being much better than the tardy pound.

AH GOW, being so well and favourably known in the district for supplying CHEAP GOODS, trusts the residents of MUNDARLO and neighbourhood will rally around him, when he assures them, nothing shall be wanting on his part to command their support, as civility and attention to the wants of his numerous customers, combined with the MOST MODERATE PRICES, will ever be his aim.

HI HING STORE, Mundarlo.

AH GOW, Proprietor.

Advertisement from the Gundagai Times, *February 11, 1881.*

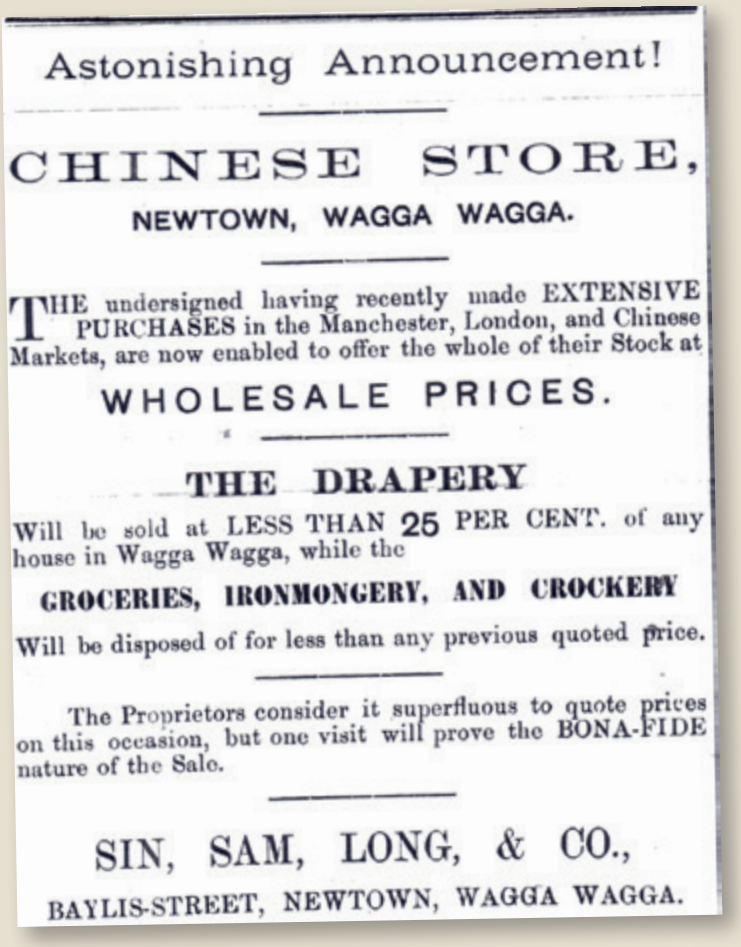
Many Chinese worked as storekeepers, shop assistants, cooks, herbalists and wool and skin buyers. Most of the stores were located in the Chinese camps, though some were located in the main part of the town. In Wagga, the main stores in the 1880s were Yee (or Ye or Yet) Chong and Sin, Sam, Long. The stores were mostly general in nature, selling not only Chinese goods, which invariably included Chinese tea, but an increasingly wide range of goods and produce of European manufacture, including ironmongery, drapery, groceries, hardware, furniture, galvanised iron, fencing wire, boots, shoes, picks, shovels, stationery, earthenware and 'fancy goods', Some also bought and sold skins and hides, and were contractors for the hiring of Chinese labour.

In Wagga, most Chinese stores were located in the main camp along Fitzmaurice St, and on Bayliss St at Newtown. One of the Chinese stores at Mundarlo was owned by Ah Gow, who had been an employee at Dang Ah Chee's Hi Chong store at Gundagai. He advertised the opening of his Hi Hing store at Mundarlo in the 11 January 1881 edition of the *Gundagai Times*. It was in existence for many years, possibly up until 1902.[115]

Another store was located at North Wagga. An account of that store came to hand following a fire in August 1895. The fire occurred at the Chinese gardens on Wagga Island on the property of T Meurant, which had been leased by a company of Chinese men, who, as well as market gardening on a large scale, also ran a general store catering mainly for their own people. On the day of the fire the head of the firm, Sam Mo Hing, left for Sydney and locked the store up. The dwelling part of the premises, a short distance from the store, was left in charge of Yung Gow, who was also a member of the firm. The fire engine arrived but it was impossible to get near the building, the Chinese men spending most of their time removing their goods and chattels. The building was totally destroyed, but fortunately both it and the contents were insured.[116]

[115] *Gundagai Times*, 11 January 1881; Series A1, 1917/16652, National Archives of Australia (NAA), Canberra.

[116] *Daily Advertiser*, 3 September 1895.



Astonishing Announcement!

CHINESE STORE,

NEWTOWN, WAGGA WAGGA.

THE undersigned having recently made EXTENSIVE PURCHASES in the Manchester, London, and Chinese Markets, are now enabled to offer the whole of their Stock at

WHOLESALE PRICES.

THE DRAPERY

Will be sold at LESS THAN 25 PER CENT. of any house in Wagga Wagga, while the

GROCERIES, IRONMONGERY, AND CROCKERY

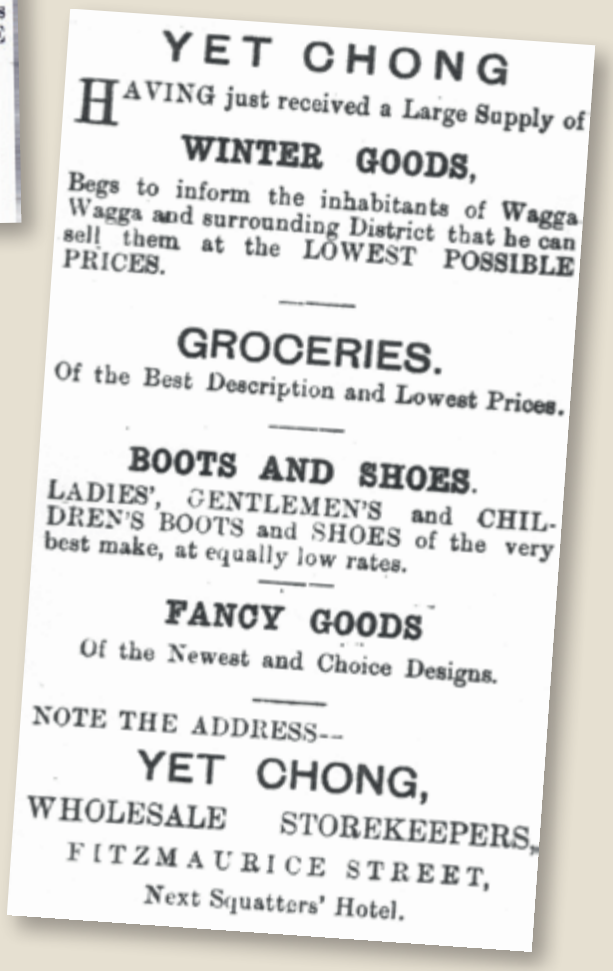
Will be disposed of for less than any previous quoted price.

The Proprietors consider it superfluous to quote prices on this occasion, but one visit will prove the BONA-FIDE nature of the Sale.

SIN, SAM, LONG, & CO.,

BAYLIS-STREET, NEWTOWN, WAGGA WAGGA.

Advertisement for Sin Sam Long & Co, Wagga Wagga in the Daily Advertiser *January 17, 1880.*



YET CHONG

HAVING just received a Large Supply of

WINTER GOODS,

Begs to inform the inhabitants of Wagga Wagga and surrounding District that he can sell them at the LOWEST POSSIBLE PRICES.

GROCERIES.

Of the Best Description and Lowest Prices.

BOOTS AND SHOES.

LADIES', GENTLEMEN'S and CHILDREN'S BOOTS and SHOES of the very best make, at equally low rates.

FANCY GOODS

Of the Newest and Choice Designs.

NOTE THE ADDRESS--

YET CHONG,

WHOLESALE STOREKEEPERS,

FITZMAURICE STREET,

Next Squatters' Hotel.

Advertisement for Yet Chong in the Daily Advertiser, *May 28, 1879.*

ON YUEN LEE & CO.,
DRAPERS, GROCERS,
Ironmongers, & General Store-keepers,
BAYLIS STREET, NEWTOWN.

THE new proprietors of the above business, in soliciting a continuance of the very liberal patronage bestowed upon their predecessors, beg to notify that they intend to keep their Stock replete with all the

Newest and Best Goods in the Market,

And that they are in a position to supply the same to the public at prices which cannot be equalled in town for Cheapness.

CONTRACTS FOR SCRUBBING STATIONS OR SELECTIONS TAKEN.

ON YUEN LEE & CO.

Advertisement for On Yuen Lee & Co, June 1887.

Fire was also a problem in the main town. In May 1880 a fire at Yet Chong's store quickly spread to the window and shelves, destroying a large amount of drapery. Mobs rushed the premises and smashed the front window. Goods 'were pitched pell–mell out into the street, and were trampled upon, and some were stolen'. Fortunately, the property was insured. In January 1882 a fire in Dixon's fruit shop on Fitzmaurice St soon spread to the main store, which was destroyed. The store was rebuilt in April 1883, and remained open until May 1893.[117] In May 1900 a fire broke out in Wing Kee's store on Gurwood Street. A large stock of fireworks had been bought in and 'they were 'bursting, fizzing and crackling at a great rate'. The ground floor of the shop was thoroughly gutted and the stock of fireworks, fruit, general produce and groceries, was greatly damaged. The tailor's shops on either side were both affected, but not seriously. The proprietor, Luie Chung, was away at the time. He estimated his loss at £500. Both his stock and the building (owned by George Bellair) were insured.[118]

From the early 1870s on the store owners ran advertisements in the local papers, and were not backward in offering 'enormous reductions in prices' or lower prices than European traders. One of the oldest and more enduring stores was Sin Sam Long, which opened in June 1874 in Baylis St, Newtown. In January 1880 it offered all stock at wholesale prices, with prices 25 per cent below those of any other store in Wagga.

The owners of the Ye Chong store in Fitzmaurice St advertised a 'Great Clearing Sale', with cheap drapery and cheap grocery [sic] in December 1879, and in June 1880 they advertised a' Genuine Sale' on their return to China.

In June 1887 the On Yuen Lee store, located in Baylis St, Newtown, advertised the 'Newest and Best Goods in the Market'.[119]

The Man Sing store at Temora was owned by the Mee Ling family, who frequently ran large advertisements. In November 1895 they proclaimed that the store was 'Cheaper Than Ever', and 'Our Prices Cannot be Beaten', and in January 1909 the store was advertised as the 'Cheapest Store for Everything'. By this time they 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.'[120]. Established in 1882, the Man Sing store was one of the first in Temora and one of the most popular. It was later

[117] *Daily Advertiser*, 18 May 1880, 5 January 1882, 7 April 1883, 9 May 1893.

[118] *Daily Advertiser*, 26 May 1900.

[119] *Daily Advertiser*, 18 June 1874, 28 May, 17 December 1879, 17 January, 1 June 1880, 9 June 1887.

[120] *Temora Independent*, l6 November 1995, 20 January 1909, 12 January 1910; information from Meredie Mee Ling, February 2012.

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

renamed as Mee Ling's.[121]

To all appearances it all seemed good healthy competition, but as with so many of their business enterprises, the success of the Chinese as storekeepers provoked resentment. In 1904 the NSW Country Storekeepers' Association launched a campaign to lure customers away from Chinese-owned stores and force their closure. They were criticised for undercutting other storekeepers, paying low wages and sending the profits out of the country. The campaign was unsuccessful and most Chinese stores continued for many years more.[122]

Unlike their European counterparts the Chinese stores were multifunctional. Historian Jane Lydon 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 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 Chinese men find jobs and lodgings. Finding jobs was an easy task where the storekeeper was also a labour contractor and a market gardener. The storekeepers also assisted in the purchase of travel documents such as shipping tickets and, post

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

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

Advertisement from the Tumut Centenery Celebrations *brochure, 1924.*

Federation, applications for Certificates of Exemption from the Dictation Test (hereafter CEDTs), and with translation, writing of letters and banking and remittance of money to China or elsewhere. Most remittances were in the form of bank drafts, which were arranged by the store, transmitted to a Hong Kong business or bank, and converted into Hong Kong dollars.[123]

An account of one of these stores, owned by Dang Quong Wing in Tumut, was recalled by his daughter Josephine Oh

> 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 fami÷lies 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.[124]

William Shai Hee's Yee Hing Company store, also 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. It had been a stopping over place for Chinese men en route to and from the Kiandra and Adelong goldfields in the 1860s and later. 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.[125]

Storekeeping was not the only form of Chinese business. Chinese doctors were sometimes referred to as herbalists, for they practiced traditional Chinese medicine. At Wagga one such herbalist was Ah

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

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

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

Loong Foon Kee. He had a store in Fitzmaurice St, and later rented out the Grand Garage premises owned by Tommy Ah Wah from Junee.[126]

Chinese doctors and herbalists sometimes visited Wagga and other Riverina towns. One such man was Peter Yee Lee, who had businesses in Sydney and Melbourne. In July 1919 he visited Albury and Wagga.[127] Some of the doctors were very ambitious. In an undated advertisement in the *Deniliquin Pastoral Times* (*hereafter Pastoral Times*), You Kee advertised his skills in curing cancer, consumption, poisonous wounds, broken bones and other diseases. He was visiting Deniliquin for two months and listed his address as the Chinese store, Sun Quong Hie.[128] Other Chinese were blacksmiths, wheelwrights and gunsmiths. Tommy Ah Tack, a resident of Temora in 1883, advertised his skills in repairing and repainting coaches and buggies, and repairing sewing machines.[129]

Some of the Chinese merchants and storekeepers were very successful. Dang Ah Chee, the prosperous tobacco merchant and landowner in the Gundagai and Tumut area, was no less impressive as a general merchant. At one time a gold miner and carrier, he had a store at the Upper Adelong goldfield, and later established two large stone or brick built stores in Tumut and Gundagai. In 1900, on the eve of his departure for China, his Gundagai and Tumut stores, associated properties and stock, including tobacco leaf, were valued at £50,000, an enormous sum of money for those times.[130] He was a close business associate of a fellow clan member, Dang Ah Hack from Gundagai, who, on his death in 1905, was described as one of the wealthiest men in the town. 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. [131]Another wealthy Chinese merchant was James Wong Chuey, a wool, skins and hides dealer, commission agent, general storekeeper, contractor and wool scourer. He also advertised separately his Chinese tea, which he imported direct from China. His main business was at Broadway in Junee in the early 1900s, in a store originally built for Qung Ching War in 1884, but he also had branch stores in Cootamundra, Wagga, Wyalong and Barmedman. Along with several other men he was a partner in William Shai Hee's Yee Hing and Co store in Tumut. He was also a farmer, and as a wool buyer had built up a large trade between Australia and the east. In 1916 his turnover was £200,000.[132]

Further into the 20th century the Chinese people diversified into many other businesses such as garages, theatres, trucking, dry cleaning and building. Tommy Ah Wah, or Ah War, originally a market gardener in Wagga, later purchased property in Fitzmaurice Street before moving to Junee, where he opened a skin, hides and wool dealership and ran a market garden on the Junee Flats, later building a garage and service station on Broadway and a boarding house.

---

[126] Series SP 16/4, file 3399, NAA, Sydney.

[127] *Daily Advertiser*, 16 July 1919.

[128] Information from Deniliquin and District Historical Society.

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

[130] 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.

[131] *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.

[132] Yong, *The New Gold Mountain*, p.161; *Braidwood Review*, 8 August 1916; *Sydney Szue Yup Kwan Ti Temple 100 year Centenary*, 1998, Sydney, p.21; discussions with David Walster, August 2014; *Junee Southern Cross*, 4 October 1884. A store for Tong Fong and Company was also built in1884; *Junee Southern Cross*, 19 July 1884.

Foon Kee's shop, Fitzmaurice Street, Wagga Wagga, NSW.
Museum of the Riverina, Wagga Wagga

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

STRENGTH AND NEATNESS COMBINED.

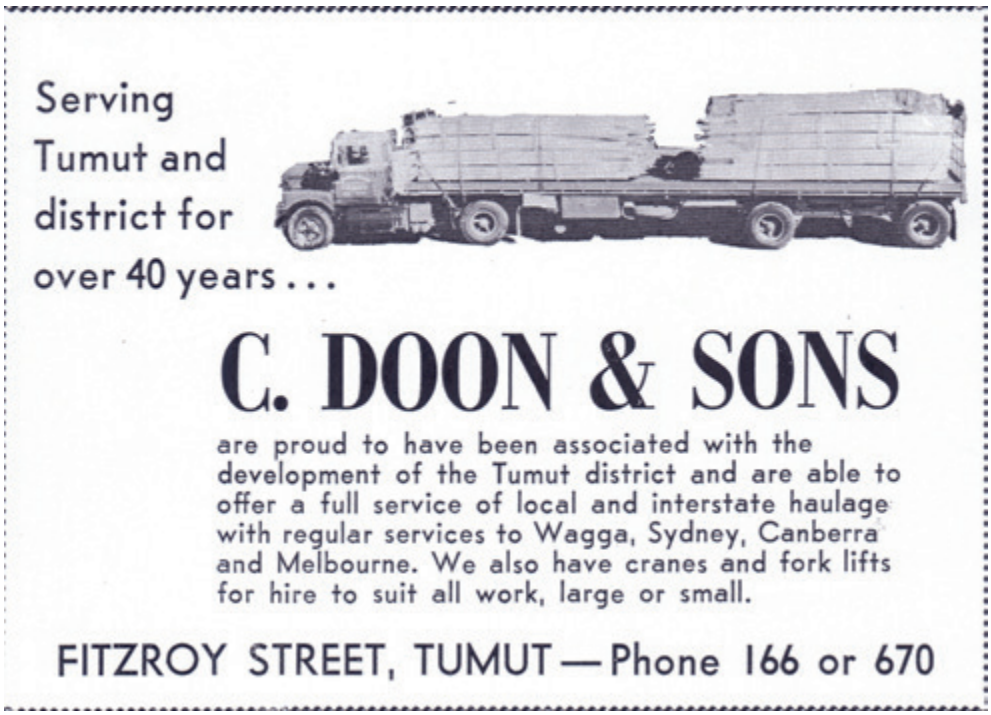
Coaches and Buggies repaired and repainted
at the shortest possible notice.

☞ SEWING MACHINES REPAIRED.

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

Yee Hing's store, Tumut, late 1970's.
Private collection

Tommy Ah Wah's garage in Junee.
Barry McGowan



Doon business advertisement, undated.

From the 1930s to the 1950s the family also owned a garage and motor vehicle showroom in Fitzmaurice St, Wagga, known as the Grand Garage. Sometime in that period it was rented to the herbalist Ah Loong Foon Kee. In 1943 it was requisitioned by the RAAF under the National Security Regulations, for use as a boot factory.[133] Another Junee garage owner was Clarrie Leslie (Clarrie Chun). Formerly a shearer, he bought the Schwartz Brothers garage in Lisgar St, moving it to Main St, where he took on the school bus runs as well. He also bought the Loftus Hotel. Later he built a service station, McDonald Motors, in North Junee.[134] In the Temora district, Leslie Fong, the son of James Fong of Broken Dam, and the only boy in the family to retain his father's surname, worked in partnership with Edmond Pratt as a builder. Together, they were responsible for many fine buildings in Ariah Park, including the Presbyterian, Baptist and Uniting (formerly Methodist) churches. In a newspaper advertisement in October 1909 they stated that concrete block houses were a specialty.[135]

Dang Charles Doon from Tumut worked as a market gardener and tobacco grower, and a cook at the Royal Hotel. Later, he set up a store and wool, skin and tobacco buying business near the Chinese camp. The skins were transported to Sydney, and other goods like hardware brought back in return. His sons Bob, Eric and John helped Charles on his buying and selling runs around the district. The family also operated Four Star Dry Cleaners, and a trucking company, C. Doon and Sons Transport, which carted pine and hardwood for the local mills and for projects such as the detour for Canberra's Commonwealth Avenue Bridge and the Snowy Mountain's scheme. But perhaps their best known

[133] Series SP 16/4, file 3399, NAA, Sydney.

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

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

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

business 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.[136] Grace (née Grace Doon) and Raymond Ching had a shoe repair business in Tumut in 1955, and later became agents for Clarion Drycleaners. Later, Ray serviced TV sets and installed TV antennas for A. J. Kain of Railway End Mixed Business, Tumut, and had customers from Tumbarumba, Adelong and Batlow.[137]

The Choy family played a very significant role in the commercial life of Grong Grong. Bert Choy was the first barber in Grong Grong and owned a pool hall, next to which was the Reliance Garage, opened by Harry and Percy Choy in the 1930s.

Harry also ran a garage with his son Bill, which later became an engineering and steel fabrication business. Bob Menzies, Betty Choy's husband, also worked there (Betty was Florence Choy's daughter). Bill also ran the local school bus service, which by 1976 was catering for 120 children. Harry ran picture shows in the local hall every Saturday night. The shop and deli next door to the Reliance garage was originally owned by Florence Choy (Harry's wife), and sold vegetables and groceries, and supplied school lunches. In 1965 Betty Menzies, Jean Choy (Florence's daughter-in-law) and two other ladies reopened the café (it had closed in 1963). Albert Choy ran a garage in Griffith, later shifting to Narrandera where he opened the Sunshine Dry Cleaners. The Choy family still own this business today. Percy eventually moved to Leeton, where he also opened a dry cleaning business.[138]

---

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

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

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

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

In the post war years a number of Chinese people opened restaurants, in part a response to a decline in the number of market gardens and the traditional Chinese store. One restaurant owner in Wagga was George Young. He was born in Zhongshan, China in 1923 and was brought to Australia by the Christian Brothers in 1942. He worked in Sydney and Goulburn before moving to Wagga and opening the Dragon Restaurant in 1952, the city's first post war Chinese restaurant. Later, he moved to Albury where he opened another restaurant. He and his wife Peggy had three children; David, Judith and Bernard. Judith works in the Department of Defence in Canberra, and Bernard is an antique and secondhand dealer in Wagga. George was naturalised at Wagga in the 1950s. He passed away in 1992.[139] Another restaurant owner was May Doon, who opened the Eastern Jade Chinese restaurant in Tumut in 1966.

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, who ran a 'well-conducted store' in the laneway dividing the camp. Described as a 'dignified man, well dressed and tall', his front room was set aside as a cafe and was a favourite haunt for the young people who would buy their crackers and consume ginger. He became plagued by small boys who asked for unusual items that required him to make a trip to the store room, giving them an opportunity to 'knock-off' crackers and lollies within reach. To counter this practice he installed a grille across the counter. He was the 'boss' of the dwindling camp until his death in 1933.[140]

---

[139] *Daily Advertiser*, 10 June 1892.

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

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/

At Upper Adelong one of the iconic Chinese storekeepers was Foo Lee. In her reminiscences Constance Sullivan remembered that 'In the rooms at the back you could sometimes catch glimpses of other Chinamen in long, straight robes and heel-less slippers, and you could not escape the smell of opium though you must pretend not to notice it.'[141] Another popular Chinese storekeeper was Lee Loong, also known as 'Deafy', who lived at Middle Adelong, where he also grew tobacco. In his reminiscences (recounted by Alan Turner) Will Carter said he was 'a very intelligent, genial, generous, obliging and extremely humorous character', and a very obliging man. When most of his countrymen returned home, or moved on to other fields, he chose to stay, living for many years alone in his store.[142]

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. Egge arrived in Australia in 1852 and initially served on boats trading between Port Adelaide and Melbourne under the command of Cadell. He 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 known as Sam Chinaman. Egge met his wife Mary at Goolwa, where he courted her by

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

[142] Barnes, There's Gold, pp.156-157; Turner, *Looking Backward. The Adelong Goldfield*, pp.40-41.

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 was a businessman, 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 opened a butcher shop and had a boarding house constructed.[143]

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 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 interest expanded at the same rate as his river trade and he ran at several times a general store at Wentworth and well as a store on the wharf, which supplied station properties with bulk goods and served as 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.[144]

[143] 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.

[144] 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 most of them were financially indebted to merchants in Guangdong Province, Hong Kong or Australia, or well-to-do relatives, and were monitored by headmen or bosses, in association with native-place associations and fraternal organisations such as the *hui*, or secret societies, until they could repay their debt. An extensive social network surrounded these men, securing their employment and taking care of their needs. The 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.[145] 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 Sze Yap. They differed from the organisations that Westerners understood as secret societies (the *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 endorsed meeting places and lodging houses, and played a crucial role in the transhipment of the dead. The offices of the district associations were located in metropolitan cities such as Melbourne and Sydney, the main points of disembarkation for Chinese immigrants to Victoria and NSW. The only Sze Yap building in the Riverina was at the Chinese camp in Tumut. Nevertheless, almost all the Riverina Chinese were from the Sze Yap district, and would have had a strong loyalty to others from the same district, especially when reinforced by clan and lineage ties. Almost all the headmen in the camps, such as Sam Yett from Narrandera, would have been members of the Sze Yap Society, and their stores would have served as a de facto association premises. James Wong Chuey from Junee was a strong patron of the Sze Yap Society and the Kuan Tia (or Kwun Ti) Temple in the Sydney suburb of Glebe, and his stores would have had a similar role. 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). The Lodge building is located in Surry Hills, Sydney.[146]

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 Christian Church, and by the rise of a merchant oligarchy, but they were never entirely dislodged.[147]

---

[145] John Fitzgerald, *Big White Lie. Chinese Australians in White Australia*, UNSWPress, Sydney, 2007, pp. 64-65. See also Smith, Hidden Dragons,pp.1-5, 14-15; Huck, *The Chinese in Australia*, pp. 3-4; Barry McGowan, 'From fraternities to families: The evolution of Chinese life in the Braidwood District of New South Wales (NSW), 1850s-1890s', *Chinese Southern Diaspora Studies*, Vol.2, 2008, pp.4–33.

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

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

Traditional Chinese influences were very resilient.

In China the *hui* were very much akin to mutual aid organisations. But they were also associated with rebellions and sometimes crime, so many of them were outlawed, and their members, particularly the leaders, subject to severe punishments, including execution. Secrecy was, therefore, 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 from 1851 to 1875 Hung membership was widespread amongst the Chinese in Australia, and that probably at least half of the Chinese population was affiliated. In Australia as in China at the time, the Hung League's mutual support activities included arranging jobs, mediating disputes, assisting with everyday difficulties, arranging funerals and making representations to government, if necessary. Cai Shaoqing has likened the League to an unofficial Chinese consulate.[148] 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.[149]

One of the strongest supporters of the republican movement in the Riverina was James Wong Chuey of Junee. 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, as President of the Young Chinese League, occupied the chair at the luncheon, which was attended by 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.[150]

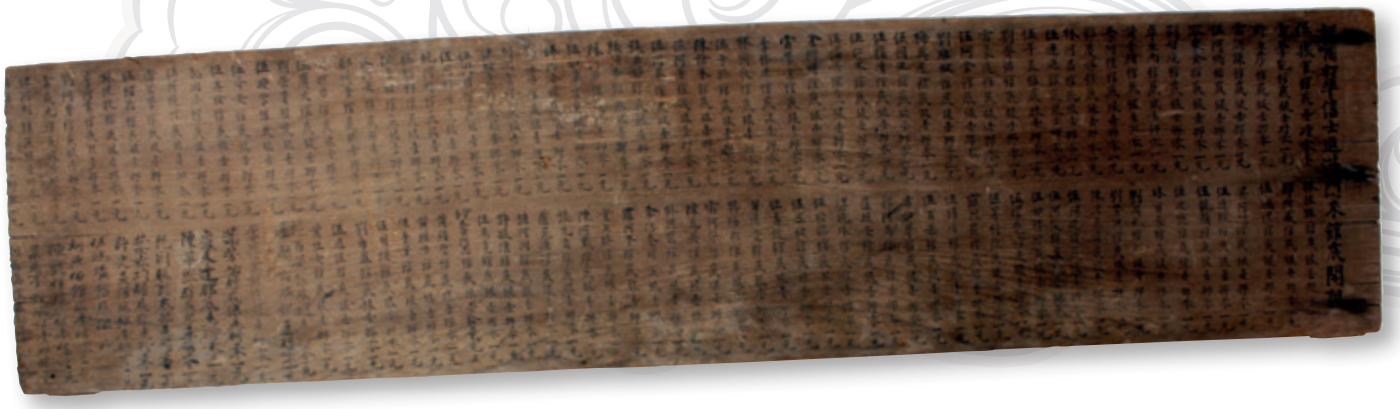
The evidence for the Hung Men in the Riverina is overwhelming, and indicative of a strong connection

---

[148] 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.

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

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



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

between the Hung Men 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, after its retrieval prior to the temple's demolition.

A signboard from the Albury Chinese Masonic Society and temple doors with panels referring to the Hung Men are located in the Albury Museum. According to historian Kok Hu Jin the Hung Men had its office within the temple, and when it evolved into the Chinese Masonic Society the temple sign was replaced with the Masonic signboard.[151] 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 and the close relationship between these two men. The store was frequented by members of the Hung Men Society, and was a meeting place for them, with Willie taking a strong paternal interest in the welfare of the men.[152] Hay also had a Masonic Lodge.

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

---

[151] 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.

[152] See discussion of the functions of the Shai Hee store, in Storekeepers, Traders and Restaurant Owners Section. Information from Joe and Reg Shai Hee, February 2012.

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

> '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.[153]

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.[154]

As alluded to by James Wong Chuey, factional discord occasionally disrupted the seeming homogeneity of the Riverina Chinese and the overarching oversight of the fraternal and district organisations. Some of this conflict was almost certainly related to the traditional antipathy between the Han Chinese and organisations such as the Hung Men to the ruling Manchu Dynasty and its supporters, and some of it was based on clan or district allegiances. The incidents reveal the intensity of these different allegiances. For instance, in 1874 a riot broke out in the Wagga Chinese quarter between members of two rival factions. Trouble began in Jimmy Gee's house over a gambling dispute. Tommy Hap was stabbed by Juliong, and Tommy Hock was severely maltreated by Ah Fat. According to the local correspondent the shops of Choo Cooey and Jimmy Gee were the centres of two rival factions and the wounded men belonged to the Choo Cooey faction. Both groups 'met on the street, where a short but decidedly sharp encounter was waged. Both parties were armed with axe-handles, sticks, and palings, the encounter commencing 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 police the fight soon ended, the doctor attending the wounded men and the assailants later fined in court. Another faction fight, again involving Jimmy Gee, occurred in April 1875. It was stopped by the police, but broke out again a couple of hours later with renewed vehemence. Several of the participants were fined.[155] 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

---

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

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

[155] *Wagga Wagga Express* (hereafter *Wagga Express*) 18 November 1874, 10 April 1875.

add some colouring to the legal proceedings we speak of'.[156]

For white Australians the temple was the most distinctly Chinese building, and Chinese New Year the most visible traditional function. Chinese New Year was held in either February or March each year to celebrate the beginning of the Lunar New Year, and the focal point of these celebrations was the temple. Depending on the size of the community the temple had a central room with additional joining rooms, and nearby in the open a pig oven for ceremonial use. The brick-built pig oven was about one metre in diameter, and a little more in height, with an opening or fire door at the bottom, and an opening at the top where the pigs were inserted.[157] The interiors of the temples were richly coloured and elaborately decorated and furnished. Ceremonial objects included statues of the deities, gongs, bells, brass plates, stone mortars for incense making, incense sticks and incense burners. Moon cakes were important in the mid-autumn festivals. The dough was placed in the rounded end of a wooden handled cookie maker, which had an engraving of an animal on the end.

Chinese New Year was celebrated very openly in all towns with a moderate to large Chinese population. The noise from the fireworks was often complained about, but these grumbles aside the festivals attracted large crowds of European onlookers. Lanterns, coloured paper, incense smoke and the aroma of cooked pork and other delicacies added an exotic touch to the otherwise staid surrounds of most towns.

The first account of Chinese New Year in Wagga, if not in the Riverina, was 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.[158]

In 1874 the Chinese New Year celebrations were heralded in by 'a fusilade of crackers', which did not continue for as long as on previous occasions, probably because of the police. The writer expressed some relief at these changed circumstances 'as fireworks tended to scare the horses and as a result cause a considerable amount of damage'. In the past 'the cracker element' had been the most notable part of the festival.[159] Similar sentiments were expressed in 1878, the writer stating that the celebrations were 'ushered in by an unlimited waste of crackers'. He commented that it was 'a thing to be wondered at that the police are "down on" a schoolboy who lets one off at dusk or evening and at the same time allow Chinamen to disturb whole neighbourhoods at unseemly hours'.[160]

In 1886 a Wagga correspondent stated that Chinese New Year would

> no doubt be celebrated with all the rejoicings and pyrotechnic displays for which those people are

---

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

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

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

[159] *Wagga Express*, 18 February 1874.

[160] *Daily Advertiser*, 2 February 1878.

> famous. It is but fair to say that our Chinese residents are, on the whole, industrious, sober, and good citizens, and but for the laborious work some of them cheerfully perform in all weathers, vegetables would be unknown to the majority of us. We wish our Mongolian friends a happy new year.[161]

They had a lot more to celebrate the following year when over 200 Chinese from all parts of NSW were in town 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.[162]

In his reminiscences, J. Edney stated that he and his father built the temple, which was a large wooden building of split slabs, covered with bark, with two doors but no windows, so that when it was closed it was completely dark. The temple included ten small bunks where the Chinese could either smoke opium or sleep as they pleased.[163]

In 1891 the celebrations were kept up all day and night. 'The Joss house was illuminated in the evening and grounds adjoining the building were studded with a number of well arranged fireworks, which were let off at intervals during the ceremony', attracting a large attendance of visitors 'who seemed interested in the doings of the celestials'.[164] In 1894 a large number of Chinese residents from the country districts visited Wagga for the New Year celebrations, and at midnight a large congregation assembled at the temple, where a religious service was held.[165]

A reporter from the *Wagga Advertiser* was invited to the Chinese camp in 1907 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 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.[166]

The conversation between the two men was interrupted when several other guests arrived. 'The most

---

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

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

[163] J. Edney, *Diary*, Museum of the Riverina, Wagga Wagga.

[164] *Daily Advertiser*, 10 February, 1891.

[165] *Daily Advertiser*, 6 February 1894.

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

Incense burner used in temple rituals.
Private collection

Incense sticks made of plant tubers
Hay Gaol Museum

hearty handshakings took place', and 'the table was filled and wine poured out "regardless of expense"'. Seasons greetings having been dispensed the party then left. Foon Kee stated that every year it was the same. His countrymen came to his place and then he would visit them. The reporter then visited Kong Fat's establishment, where the same scene greeted him. All the wines and spirits that one's heart could desire, the choicest fruits, ginger and other unknown delicacies were on offer'. He stated that Kong Fat's invitation to 'step inside and participate in the good things going on was as enticing as Foon Kee's', but after wishing happy New Year to those inside he set all temptation aside and then hurriedly departed for his office.[167]

Accounts of functions other than Chinese New Year are rare, but a few have come to hand, almost certainly involving the Hung Men Society, which even in these early years was often referred to as the Chinese Masonic Lodge. The first such report in Wagga was in September 1881, when a function took place in a new building rented for that purpose at the rear of the Squatter's Hotel. At first it appeared to be a religious ceremony, but upon the correspondent making an inquiry from one of the Chinese men robed in white, and who it was assumed was a priest, he was informed that it was not a church rite, but a ceremony similar to that of the Freemasons. The Chinese participants strictly forbad any person to approach the building during the service, and the police provided a plain-clothes constable to see that the participants were not molested.[168]

A function not associated with Chinese New Year, and perhaps also a lodge function, was held in June

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

[168] *Daily Advertiser*, 20 September, 1881.

1889 and attracted a large crowd of spectators, the ceremonies culminating in an elaborate display of fireworks, 'which was much appreciated by the youthful portion of the crowd'.[169] In 1892, a function which almost certainly involved the Hung Men, concerned 'the installation of office bearers in a society 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, some 200 to 300 persons, including the whole of the local police force, assembling in the evening near the temple. The gathering throng waited until midnight, but found that the dispute had been settled amicably. Many of the Chinese had come from neighbouring towns to take part in the ceremonies.[170]

Another major festival was the Qingming or Ch'ing Ming festival, which was held in the first week of April and in September each year to honour and remember the deceased. It involved a graveside ceremony, with a festival or commemorative function held afterwards in the camps. The earliest account of such a ceremony was on Mid'en (possibly Midgeon) Station near Narrandera in September 1875, to honour a Chinese man who had been buried there several years before. It is a rare account of this ceremony, and hints at some of the mystique and bewilderment with which traditional Chinese ceremonies were regarded by Europeans.

> 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.[171]

Keith Moy recalls a similar ceremony at the Wagga Chinese cemetery in the 1940s. He was a young boy, and accompanied his father, his uncle Frank Angnea, and several other Chinese men to the cemetery. Keith remembered that the men took a pig on a spit, oranges and roast chicken, lit incense sticks and made offerings, later bringing the food back to the gardens, where it was divided up between them.[172]

But there were financial obligations as well, as set out in a remarkable letter unearthed by Betty Menzies (née Choy), a Wagga resident. The letter was written in April 1927 by Ah Loong Foon Kee, the Wagga herbalist, to three brothers, Song Jun, Song Yi and Song Sheng, reminding them that they were in arrears over a period of five years in their donations in honour of the temple diety, Guangdi, his son Guan Ping and Jan Guandi. They were also behind in their donations to the clothes shop and the Qingming festival. The total value of the brothers' contributions was cited as 1216 dollars, presumably 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

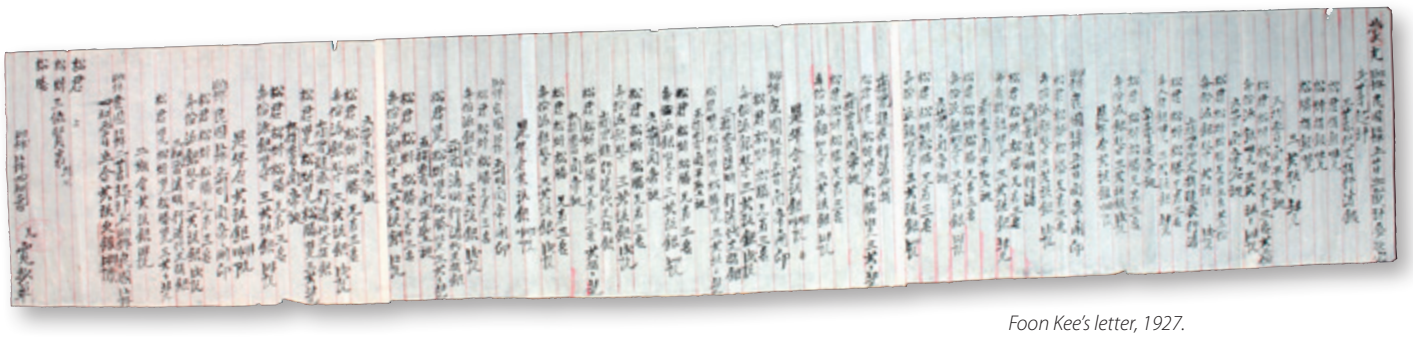
---

169 *Daily Advertiser*, 18 June 1889.

170 *Daily Advertiser*, 5 March 1892.

171 *Town and Country Journal*, 18 September 1875.

172 Discussions with Keith Moy, 2010.



Foon Kee's letter, 1927.
Private collection

lodge were so highly sought after.[173]

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

If we compare the final amount for donations of $50 per year with the actual arrears appearing on the account, a huge discrepancy emerges, of between four and six times. This means that the shop owner was charging interest of 400 to 600 percent on the arrears, which were in the nature of a private loan. On average this means that interest rates of about 100 percent per year existed within the Chinese community. The interest rates of the Australian banks at the time could not have been higher than 10 percent, but to obtain a loan required a mortgage of property or a financial guarantor. Both were beyond the capability of the three brothers. Thus to borrow within the Chinese community became the only option. Interest accumulated on interest, so within the four years the arrears was $1216. The evidence for what we believe was usury can be found at the end of the document, the account of the last year, 1927. The donations towards the Day of Guandi Opening His Seal and to the Qingming Festival were consistent with that of the earlier years, but because these two donations were made before the final account, there was no discrepancy between the donations and final arrears, meaning no loan was made. The three brothers were probably about to leave the district, but we have no way of finding out where they were going.[174]

The temple functions were less appealing to Chinese who were Christian converts, though many converts maintained dual allegiances to the temple and church. In the 1890s a number of Chinese churches (or missions as they were sometimes called) and Sunday schools, were established in the larger towns such as Narrandera, Albury, Wagga, Tumut and Hay. At Tumut Plains the Rev S.E. Owens-Mell, established a Chinese mission in 1898. Along with other members of the congregation he personally taught the Chinese. A cottage was rented out and about 70 men came under the influence of Andrew Young, a devout catechist who had for five years prayed that he might be sent to Tumut.

---

[173] Letter from Ah Loong Foon Kee, 3 April 1937; Betty Menzies, Wagga Wagga.

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

The Christian Missionary Service (CMS) sent him to China to prepare for his Holy Orders, but, tragically, he was accidentally drowned and never returned to Tumut. The CMS later removed the headquarters of the mission to Wagga and the work in Tumut languished and finally expired.[175]

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

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

In 1903 Andrew Young visited Wagga and gave an address to a large number of Chinese in St John's Hall. A large number of Europeans were also present. After interpreting a short address to his countrymen by the Rev. A. C. Mosely, he said a few words to the Europeans and then addressed his own countrymen at some length. The Rev. Mosely stated that it was intended to arrange evening classes so that the Chinese might be taught to read and speak English better, and 'learn more of the Christian faith'. It was proposed that Young would visit Wagga again the following month.[176] 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'.[177]

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 Wesleyans (Methodists), and attended the local church along with the regular congregation. Foremost amongst the Junee converts was James Wong Chuey. Visiting Chinese missionaries sometimes addressed the general congregations, including the Chinese converts, and on other occasions gave public lectures. For instance, on 19 August 1900 the Rev. Moy Ling gave two special mission services, both of which were well attended. In the evening about nine or ten Chinese were present, the proceedings being partly in Chinese. The reporter commented with some disdain on the disrespect of some of the white congregation who seemed 'to think that the service was a pantomime and indulged in unseemly laughter'. He remarked that

> The Heathen Chinee, when he goes to our places of worship, appears to know better how to conduct himself than some of those who pride themselves on being his superior.[178]

---

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

[176] *Daily Advertiser*, 24 March 1903.

[177] 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.

[178] *Junee Democrat*, 21 August 1900.

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

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

Several days later the Rev. Moy Ling gave a two hour address in the Wesleyan Church on the subject of mission work in China.[179] In October 1900 the Rev. Cheok Hong Cheong gave a public lecture on China in the Alhambra Hall.[180] Sometimes the lectures were by European missionaries. For instance, in June 1901 the Rev. E. J. Piper, a returned missionary, gave a lecture on China to a large audience in the Wesleyan Church. The lecture was in support of foreign mission work. He gave another lecture in January 1902.[181]

Chinese cemeteries were another visible sign of traditional life, and observers often commented upon the burial and exhumation ceremonies. The Chinese cemeteries, as opposed to solitary scattered tombs, are important evidence of a paternal framework, for they required communal agreement and organisation to set up. In China and among diasporic Chinese in South East Asia, funerals, and sometimes weddings, were undertaken by the *hui* and district associations. In Australia the cemeteries could only be established after negotiation with, and purchase or lease of land from European landowners or local government authorities. The largest cemeteries were located within the boundaries of the European cemeteries, and had burning towers and offertory tables. At Wagga and Albury the towers and tables still remain. The importance of traditional Chinese burial customs, including the practice of fengshui and exhumation, is very evident at some cemeteries, although less so at Wagga, where most of the original grave sites have been destroyed. In NSW, exhumations were elaborate and painstaking undertakings, and involved transport to Sydney and, after due ceremony, transhipment to China. These tasks could only be carried out through the *hui* or district associations, and involved financial contributions from local Chinese residents, particularly the wealthier ones. The first shipment of bones from NSW to China occurred in 1864. It 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. According to historian Elizabeth Sinn, the return of bones to the actual villages was probably done through the Tung Wah Hospital in Hong Kong, a role that this institution had played for Chinese people in many countries.[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 of the bones was accompanied by funeral ceremonies organised by the 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 recorded event in the Riverina took place in 1917.[183]

On 15 July 1874 the *Wagga Express* reported on the traditional burial ceremony of Ah Long, a Wagga vegetable hawker.

> Shortly after one o'clock, the hearse passed through the town followed by several buggies containing Chinese, together with a long train of them on horseback. A relative of the deceased occupied a seat on the box on the hearse and scattered papers along the route. Each of these papers was pierced in two places, but there were no Chinese charges upon it. Upon arrival at the cemetery each Chinaman who

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

[180] *Junee Democrat*, 26 October 1900.

[181] *Junee Democrat*, 28 June 1901, 31 January 1902.

[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; *Sydney Empire*, 2, 4 May 1864; Sinn, *Power and Charity*.

[183] *Gundagai Times*, 17 July 1882, 15 August 1883; *Tumut and Adelong Times*, 1 July 1904, 4, 10 May 1917.

> entered the gate was presented with a shilling, a cigar and some lollies. In the coffin with the remains were placed a complete suit of new clothes, a pair of blankets, a billy of boiled rice, some tea, sugar, matches, and a candle, together with several China coins. On the coffin was placed a boiled chicken. Around the grave were a heap of paper-ashes, and an immense number of lighted candles, which were thrown into the grave immediately the coffin was lowered.

Obviously Ah Long was of some standing in the local community, for on that same afternoon another Chinese man, described as a 'penniless Chinaman of low degree', was buried under very different circumstances. 'No one followed his remains to the grave, nor were any such preparations made for his fitting reception in the next world, not for his comfortable transit thither.'[184] A funeral of a Chinese man of some note took place in 1877, for 15 buggies followed the procession. The reporter commented that 'It is pleasing at all times to notice respect shown to death when its presence appears amongst us, and more especially when the same is paid by those we regard as heathen'.[185] Equally impressive, but a little more confusing, was the burial of Mult Sin in 1887. His body had lain in state until the day of the burial, when a large number of friends and relatives from all parts assembled in Wagga, and followed the body to the cemetery. Europeans were ordered to dig a grave, but instead of digging a new one, they re-opened an old one, out of which the bones of a dead Chinese man had been removed and sent back to China. The funeral party arrived at the grave and would not bury Mult Sin in it, indignant that their friend's body should be left in another man's grave. A new grave had to be dug, and before the old one was filled in a Chinese man returned from town with a shirt, trousers and vest which were left in the grave so the 'the poor wandering one' would be clothed in a new suit for the rest of his journey. Offerings were placed in the newly dug grave.[186]

Where the deceased Chinese were Christian converts, they were buried with both Christian and Chinese rites, though adherence to the latter fell away over time. They were interred in the denominational sections of the local cemetery, usually, though not always, with European style headstones. Some Europeans viewed this blending of Christian and Chinese burial rites with contempt, and others were at best disrespectful. At Junee in March 1903, a correspondent for the *Junee Southern Cross* reported on the funeral of Ah Yen, a member of the Presbyterian Church in Corowa, whose remains were interred in the Wesleyan section of the Junee cemetery. The event is instructive, not only for the insight it provides on European attitudes and prejudices, but the extent of the regional network which linked one Chinese community in the Riverina to another. 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.[187] The correspondent for the *Junee Democrat* stated that:

> 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.[188]

And it is best to remember the sorrowful circumstances of some deaths, for despite clan and lodge allegiances, many Chinese men felt the pangs of loneliness and despair keenly, particularly if poverty

---

[184] *Wagga Express*, 15 July 1874.

[185] *Daily Advertiser*, 3 November 1877.

[186] *Daily Advertiser*, 3 May 1887.

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

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

and ill health beckoned. In August 1880 a Wagga fruit hawker, Chong Kee, was found dead, suspended by a rope to a tie beam in an old shed on the reserve next to Mr Coman's Shamrock Hotel. Charlie Ah Fat, a cook at Phillips Commercial Hotel, stated that the deceased was a native of Sung Hing near Macao, and between 50 and 60 years old, with a son living in California. He had been very ill for some time, and with his rheumatism could hardly walk and was unable to sell his fruit. He lived alone in his store in Fitzmaurice Street. Ah Fat described him as a quiet man who did not smoke much opium. No less sorrowful were the deaths of an un-named Chinese man in July 1881 from the effects of opium smoking, and the death of Ah Fook in September 1882. Ah Fook was about 40 years of age and in good health, but he was a heavy drinker and often drunk. He was very drunk the night before he died.[189]

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. The buildings were dismantled, burnt and otherwise demolished to make way for new developments; at Wagga, a few garages, a Kentucky Fried Chicken, and other buildings. An account of the demolition of the Wagga temple in 1939 provides an insight into the religious and traditional buildings at the Wagga camp. The temple was located the rear of the lodge, which was known as the Chinese Free Mission Hall. It was elaborately fitted out, the fittings including a bell and drum given to the church 51 years previously. Charlie Wong Hing (the market gardener) said that the temple had been frequently used until about 1933, and that it was not unusual to see between 200 and 300 Chinese near the hall and temple on festive occasions. The mission hall was built with wooden slabs, and had an iron roof and three rooms, including a large hall like room. Outside, was a huge sign in Chinese indicating that it was the Chinese Mission Hall. Ah Get, a 66 year old blind Chinese man, had lived in the temple for many years. He went to church each Sunday evening and when the bells of other Wagga churches began to toll he rang the bell at the Chinese church.[190] An account by local resident Robert Cooke provides an interesting insight into the nature of the Chinese devotional attachments to the temple. The occasion was a fire at the temple in the 1920s. His great grandfather at the time was leasing the upstairs section of the neighbouring premises (on the northern side). Robert's grandmother told him that instead of attempting to put the fire out, they knelt before the building, and continually bowed to the ground. According to his grandmother, the Chinese apparently believed that the fire was a sign from beyond.[191]

The Grand Garage, first owned by Tommy Ah Wah from Junee, and later by Alf Ludwig, is now the site of a motorcycle tyre shop. It was next door to the temple. Alf Ludwig recalled that the temple was beautifully constructed from rich Oregon timbers, and said it was a shame that the Council did not accept his offer to have it re-located to another area of the city in memory of the Chinese who worked and lived in the Wagga district. When he bought the building he found tunnels and caverns underneath the floor, where, he alleged, the Chinese smoked and gambled, and if forewarned in time, could evade the police raids by escaping into the building next door.[192]

The fate of the Chinese sections of the local cemeteries was equally precarious. At Albury the burning tower and offertory table and many of the headstones and graves are still intact. However, this has not always been the case elsewhere. In the early 1980s Wendy Hucker, a Wagga resident, wrote to the Council, pointing out the state of disrepair of the Chinese cemetery and the need for restoration. The

---

189 *Daily Advertiser*, 12 August 1880, 14 July 1881, 9 September 1882.

190 *Daily Advertiser*, 23 September 1939.

191 Story told to the author by Robert Cooke in June 2011.

192 *Daily Advertiser*, 5 September 1984.

The Chinese section of the Wagga Wagga Monumental cemetery, renovated in the 1990s.
Barry McGowan

Charlie Wong Hing's restored grave, 2015, Wagga Wagga Monumental Cemetery.
Museum of the Riverina, Wagga Wagga

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

Leader correspondent visited the cemetery, and confirmed Wendy's observations. There were about 37 graves in the Chinese section, and only a few of them had their headstones intact. At least 18 graves had no markings except for the concrete blocks that once held the headstones, several of which were scattered through the area and many of which were shattered into jigsaw puzzle pieces. The burning tower and offertory table had also been vandalised.

Council had cleared the area of litter and weeds and the headstones had been gathered together and grouped around the graves until possible identification could be made. It was agreed to redevelop the cemetery and Wendy was invited to organise a committee to inform the Council on historical matters.[193] As a result the cemetery was further tidied up, the burning tower and offertory tables restored, and the border lined with the headstones behind a fence. Further damage occurred in 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.[194] With the permission of the Wagga City Council, stonemasons J. Shephard and Son restored the Chinese headstones as a community service project. The work was completed in 1998.[195] More recently, Wagga Council has renovated the lettering on the headstone belonging to Charlie Wong Hing, to help maintain a significant site belonging to one of Wagga's last remaining Chinese market gardeners.[196]

A similar process of degradation and restoration has taken place elsewhere. At Narrandera the Chinese cemetery was located within the main cemetery grounds and would have had a burning tower and offertory table. However, they have long since been removed, and many of the remaining graves vandalised or otherwise fallen into a state of disrepair. In recognition of the importance of the Chinese

[193] *Leader*, 2 November 1983.

[194] *Daily Advertiser*, 4 October 1994.

[195] *Daily Advertiser*, 27 August 1998.

[196] Information, Genevieve Mott, Museum of the Riverina, October 2014.

to the life of Narrandera and district, a joint effort by the Tidy Towns Committee and the Lions Club placed the remaining intact headstones in a special garden area.[197] At the Hay Chinese cemetery there is no offertory table or burning tower, and only a few headstones and graves remain. There is clear evidence of vandalisation. At Deniliquin the burning tower has been restored and fenced in, but no graves or headstones are left. The burning tower, offertory table and many of the graves and headstones are still intact at the Albury Pioneer cemetery, and at Tumut the burning tower and a few headstones remain at the time of writing this account, 2014.

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

Camp Life; Food and Leisure

In his 1884 report Sub-Inspector Brennan provided an important snapshot of the Chinese camps. 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 a place of entertainment and recreation for others in the form of drinking, gambling and prostitutes.[198] The largest camp was at Narrandera, and the second largest at Wagga.

At Wagga the Chinese camp was located on the banks of the Murrumbidgee River on either side of Fitzmaurice St. According to Brennan, by late 1883 the Wagga camp had 223 residents, of whom there were 194 Chinese (including a Chinese married woman), six European married women, 16 children and seven prostitutes. Of the men, 12 worked in stores, 13 in opium shops, 30 were gardeners, six were fruit dealers, 124 were ticket sellers and labourers, and six were proprietors of lottery rooms. A number of market gardens were located in and around this precinct. Although not mentioned by Brennan, there was also a significant Chinese presence north of the Murrumbidgee River in the area known as North Wagga Island, where there was a store and market gardens.

The Narrandera camp was located on the banks of the Murrumbidgee River. In 1883 it had 340 residents, of whom 303 were Chinese, nine were European married women, ten were children and 17 were prostitutes. Of the Chinese men, 14 worked in stores, 20 in opium shops, ten in cook shops, 20 in gaming houses, 12 were gardeners, and 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 shop, two lottery houses and several fan tan rooms. It later had a Christian church.

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 also 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 90 were Chinese, five were European married women, 11 were children and four were prostitutes. The camp contained three stores, 12 fan-tan tables, a temple, cook shop, and later a lodge.

The physical condition of the camps and their poor sanitation was often commented upon and served to reinforce the view that the camps were undesirable places. At Wagga in 1881 a local correspondent bemoaned that:

> It is not necessary to go to Sydney to evidence the filth and dirt in which the Chinese residents live. Similar residences, as described by the Sydney press, can be seen at any time in the lower end of

[198] 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.

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

> Fitzmaurice St, and in themselves they are sufficient to cause fever, or, perhaps worse – a plague. Numbers of Chinamen are huddled together in rooms not sufficiently ventilated or large enough for dog kennels, while the stench arising therefrom is disgusting in the extreme. Heaps of putrid matter may be seen at several of the back entrances, and no effort is made to get rid of it. But what is the Inspector of Nuisances doing?[199]

Brennan was less than impressed with the general setting of the Chinese camps in the Riverina, 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.

He said that the surroundings of the Albury, Hay, Deniliquin and Wagga camps did not present 'any noticeable features which would indicate that the Chinese themselves, the owners of the property, or the municipal authorities had taken any steps to improve in a sanitary point of view the condition of those places'.[200]

Brennan was scathing on the Wagga camp, stating that

> The sanitary condition of the Wagga camp is extremely bad, as in addition to the absence of drainage, the water–closets are allowed to become neglected, and as a consequence in hot weather the effluvium which those places give forth is sickening - the houses for the most part are good and the sleeping accommodation fairly decent and sufficient – some of the rooms attached to the cook shop are divided into tiers of shelves, with a passage of about 3 feet between, and when an influx of Chinese takes place from the country all the shelves are used as beds, and consequently the air space necessary

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

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

> for five men would be occupied by at least twenty; the same may be said in general terms of all the camps visited: no drainage of consequence, rooms too small, and maze-like in arrangement, ventilation defective and neglect of water-closets.[201]

Perhaps 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 thoughts of race or ethnicity were cast firmly aside, with people of all classes, creeds 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 insurance companies were reluctant to accept the risks of Chinese camps.[202] 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 partly destroyed. Again, none of the buildings or their contents were insured. The inquest found that the fire had been lit deliberately.[203]

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 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 hand side of the entrance. Little property was saved and nothing was insured. Sam Yett was an 'exceptionally heavy loser'.[204]

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.[205] Fires also occurred at the Wagga camp, though none were as destructive as those at Hay, Narrandera and Deniliquin.

The camps were predominantly male domains, with most social activity taking place in the temples, lodges, gambling houses and opium rooms, although home visits and entertainments occurred when women were involved.[206] On special occasions such as Chinese New Year and other festivals the camps were very colourful and busy places, attracting large crowds of Chinese from around the district and many European observers. Feasting and music, both European and Chinese, and sometimes dancing, were an integral part of this scene. A more passive, but far less commented-upon activity was reading, for many of the Chinese men were literate in their own language and brought Chinese books with them. Of more interest to the general public and the newspapers, however, were alien pursuits such

---

201 Brennan, 'Chinese Camps', p.2.

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

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

204 *Narrandera Ensign*, 8 October 1897.

205 *Pastoral Times*. 27 January 1900

206 Wilton, *Golden Threads*, pp.55-56.

as gambling and opium smoking, and the exploits of the 'fallen' and often boisterous women who frequented the camps.

To many observers, particularly those from the metropolitan cities, the camps were seen as dens of iniquity. A correspondent for the *Advertiser*, probably visiting the Narrandera camp for the first time, was scathing in his remarks on that camp.[207] Some years later, when anti-Chinese feelings were running at near fever pitch, the camps and the Chinese in general came in for much greater criticism. In March 1888, Mr James Potts, a delegate of the Queensland Anti-Chinese League, commented that the small towns of Victoria and NSW were much more seriously affected by Chinese labour than either metropolis.

> The extent to which the Chinaman has wormed himself into the social fabric is indeed but very partially realised by most people. At Albury I found five Chinamen in gaol for attempting to smuggle themselves across the border. Even at Albury they have their Chinatown. At Wagga Wagga there is a very large Chinese encampment at the end of the principal thoroughfare. The police told me that if it were not for the Chinese they would have a mere nothing to do. I went to the Mechanics' Institute. The reading room was empty. I went down to the encampment and it was crowded with youths and young men. The Chinese from that camp appear to be employed chiefly on the neighbouring stations - ringbarking, fencing and in some cases shearing. But the largest Chinese camp I ever saw is in Narrandera. It contains many hundred men and I counted as many as 36 bad women... The white people complain that their own fruit rots on the trees for the want of a market. The truth is that the womenfolk encourage these Chinamen. They would rather deal with them than with anybody else. They can beat a Chinaman down in his prices, they can make fun of his talk. He will go to any amount of trouble for them, and where a white man's independence would revolt the Chinamen only goes away smiling and making presents to the children.[208]

The comments by a Narrandera correspondent known as 'Whaler' were even more damning and prejudicial. He described the Narrandera camp as 'a perfect inferno, indescribable by any writer who possesses not the power of Dante himself'. Passing through the camp late at night he found Mrs Elizabeth Ah Fee engaged in a dispute with a Mrs Smith; the language from which must have 'ruffled the placid waters of the Murrumbidgee, as well as the fishes beneath'. Smith's Chinese husband came to her assistance, Smith in the meantime threatening to tear Ah Fee's 'drunken liver' out. The combatants were later joined by a large woman known as 'Big Maggie', Ah Fee retiring inside and 'keeping up a barrage of foul language' until the others retreated.[209] Whaler's observations raise an important question often at the heart of much of the anti-Chinese feeling of the day. Lizzie Ah Fee, or 'Tiger Lil', as she had been formerly called at the Beechworth Chinese camp, was often before the Narrandera court, and her exploits filled many issues of the local press, helping to bring the camps into disrepute. She was one of the better known camp women of disrepute, and had many sisters in crime.[210]

At the heart of much of the anti-Chinese feeling at that time was the overwhelmingly male population of the camps which meant that social life was pursued largely outside a family environment. To engage in sexual relations meant crossing the racial and cultural divide, with partners and prostitutes sought from the local non-Chinese population.[211] 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

---

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

[208] *Daily Advertiser*, 1 March 1888.

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

[210] *Narrandera Ensign*, 29 September 1891, 10 March, 15 September 1893.

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

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 Brennan 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.[212]

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.[213]

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 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. 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.[214]

His views were echoed some years later by Sir Frederick Darley, the Chief Justice, in a letter 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.

---

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

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

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

> 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.[215]

As implied by Brennan, the camps were refuges for many women. Some were escaping bad marriages and others poverty, or both, for the plight of women who were regarded as having no lawful means of support was fearful. They were outcasts from society, totally marginalised and under constant surveillance by the police, and in peril of imprisonment under the Vagrancy laws. It is no wonder then that they saw the camps as refuges and the Chinese men as protectors, and even less surprising that some of them embraced such activities as prostitution, sly grog selling and the mesmeric delights of opium smoking. Rarely were these circumstances taken into account, the press being more preoccupied then, as now, in titillating its readership with lurid accounts of sexual adventures and infamy. One such Wagga woman was Mary Ann Ah Chow (Smith) who, in 1882, was charged with disorderly conduct, and fined 10s or one week in gaol. She chose the latter.[216]

In 1885 Fanny Johnson was also charged with no lawful means of support. The Police Sergeant said he had received complaints from different persons at the lower end of the town about her conduct, and had often seen her with different men about the Chinese camp, and had cautioned her six weeks ago. He described her as a 'common woman'.[217] Later that month two female residents in the Chinese camp were before court on a charge of having no visible legal means of support. One produced a marriage certificate and a Chinese resident who admitted that she was his wife. The other had no such evidence, and a warrant for her arrest was issued and the woman brought back from Goulburn, where she was serving 14 days gaol. The correspondent remarked that the warrant meant that 'the nuisance is actually brought back to its place of export, at an expense to the country'.[218]

Brawls between warring women were standard fare for the Wagga newspapers and their readers. So too were the comings and goings at the houses of ill-fame, some of which were in the camps and others in the town proper. Chinese men sometimes supported and abetted these houses, but for the most part appeared to keep aloof from them. For instance, in 1873, Mary Ford was charged with keeping a disorderly house in Peter Street. The owner of house, Tommy Youngeo, had complained to the police of Ford's activities, the police finding a man and woman in bed and the house in a filthy condition. In March 1879 a Chinese man, Mon Hoy, proceeded with an information against a fellow countryman, Ah Nong, for keeping a disorderly house. It was submitted that the defendant harboured women of a 'disreputable character' and that the place was frequented by Chinese and Europeans, and was the scene of drinking and fighting. To prove to 'what depths of degradation these women of ill fame had fallen, it was stated that they had at various times been seen outside Nong's premises and moving about the camp drunk, and sometimes, in a semi state of nudity, and at other times dressed in men's trousers and with Chinese jumpers on.[219]

The first report of a Chinese man involved in brothel keeping in Wagga emerged in 1888, when James Ah Foo and Sarah Payne were charged with keeping a disorderly house in Wagga, the property of Ah

---

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

[216] *Daily Advertiser*, 9 March 1882.

[217] *Daily Advertiser*, 17 December 1885.

[218] *Daily Advertiser*, 29 December 1885.

[219] *Wagga Express*, 26 March 1873; *Daily Advertiser*, 5 March 1879.

Foo. Despite a letter from Brennan speaking highly of his character, the judge ruled that Ah Foo knew that Payne was running a brothel in his house and could have prevented it. Payne received six months and Ah Foo one month. In 1889 George Kah Fong was charged with keeping a disorderly house. The police described it as a low place. Entering by a back room they saw a woman nearly naked and no furniture in the room. In an adjoining room a prostitute was found in bed, a man quite naked under the bed and another man partially dressed beside him. Kah Fong was standing at the front door. On a second visit they found Fannie (Fanny Johnson?) Johnston, dressed, with a Chinaman lying on the opium smoking bed. On a third occasion two prostitutes were found drinking beer with a white man of bad character, this conduct going on until after midnight. The Judge was indignant, stating that 'it was a monstrous thing that he and his countrymen came here and corrupted the morals of the young', claiming that wherever these disorderly houses were set up they were 'so set up by Chinamen, and he was determined to put them down'. Kah Pong was fined £100.[220] And the bawdy houses did not disappear with the advent of the new millennium. In 1906 Maurice McKeown, the manager of the Agricultural College at Wagga, wrote to the Director concerning a student named Farrell who had visited a house in the Chinese quarter for an immoral purpose (either opium or prostitution). He admitted there was no specific penalty to deal with such cases and he did not have the authority to expel him.[221]

Two principal comments can be made about the European women in the camps. Firstly, there were not that many of them, 74 all up, 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. But their high profile, through the medium of 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. And along with that opprobrium went the reputation of the Chinese men, who were seen as harbourers and abetters. Such perceptions were critical in the development of public opinion on the question of Chinese immigration and the formation of discriminatory attitudes, and ultimately legislation.

Secondly, as historian Dinah Hales has so convincingly argued in her study of Chinese–European families in central western NSW in the period 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'.[222] The same conclusion could easily be reached for most of the women living in the Riverina camps.

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

[220] *Daily Advertiser*, 26 February 1889.

[221] June Sutherland, *From Farm Boys to PhDs. Agricultural Education at Wagga Wagga, 1896-1996*, Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga, 1996, p.39.

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

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

the camp residents were literate in their own language and brought books from China or purchased them for the city merchants and importers, though this more placid activity was rarely mentioned by the camp critics.

In China during the Qing (Manchu) period, gambling was commonplace among all social classes, and was freely engaged in the Riverina camps all year round. Brennan considered gambling to be a major concern, although at Deniliquin and Hay it had been discontinued 'for the present at least', and recommended that Chinese gaming in all its forms should be 'swept away', not only because of its effects upon the Chinese, but European men and boys.[223] The principal game indulged in 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, with 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. Though the stakes were usually small, players could lose several pounds a night. Chinese coins, used as tokens, were one of the main gambling items. Large numbers of these coins have been found at the Wagga camp site.[224]

A fulsome account of the processes involved in 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

[223] Brennan, 'Chinese Camps', p.5.

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

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 took place at 4 in the afternoon and 11 at night, and were conducted in a partly partitioned room known as the bank, where the public could see the bankers and their clerks. First, the eighty papers were posted on the board, then taken down one at a time, rolled into pellets and put in 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. One of the four numbers corresponding to the basin numbers was drawn by a clerk 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 added to, 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'. He estimated that the money that found its way into the bank's hands weekly could not be less than £200, perhaps more.

At Wagga concerns about gambling began to emerge in the early 1880s, a visitor to the city remarking in 1882 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. Surely the law does not sanction such iniquity as is there seen, and yet upon the honest publican who is obliged by the mere force of circumstances, begotten of an ill-considered Licensing Act, to serve a customer after the hour of 11?'[225]

In 1883 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. He stated that:

> Around the manager and the teller flock a heterogeneous crowd, consisting of Chinamen, half-castes, women of low repute, children belonging to respectable residents of the town, including both sexes, and of course a good sprinkling of the larrikin element. The winning numbers are announced, and the noise which follows ressembles that of a rookery, but not half as pleasant. 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. A young man employed in the town was so successful as to invest a few shillings and won £15. Others have made various sums, averaging from 10s to £10. 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.[226]

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

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

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

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 more wealthy Chinese merchants seeing it as a threat to their own interests. When gambling disputes arose and Chinese men were facing imprisonment, the merchants were obliged to pay their fines.[227] 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.[228]

Frank Rynehart, in his reminiscences, referred to the prevalence of gambling in the Chinese community in the 1920s and beyond. He said 'it was a deadly sort of game', the game presumably being Fan Tan, and that you could 'lose a lot of money there real quick'. He hinted that many visitors came to the camp for the purposes of gambling and stayed overnight, for accommodation and food were available. He also commented that Europeans would go there as well, but perhaps they were in the

[227] Lydon, *Many Inventions*, pp.117-118.
[228] Lydon, *Many Inventions*, pp.121-122.

camp for other purposes, eg prostitutes.[229]

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. Opium was a part of the way of life for many Chinese in 19th century and early 20th century China, dating back to at least the 1700s. It gained its greatest impetus from the activities of the British East India Company, which, from the late 18th century, began importing increasingly large quantities into China, and from the Opium Wars, which ensured that Chinese ports remained open to opium and other trade. Opium smoking followed Chinese emigrants overseas, and was commonplace in the Chinese quarters and camps around the towns in the Riverina and elsewhere in regional NSW. Tincture of opium vials have been found at the Wagga camp site and a number of other Chinese camp sites. 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 that no evidence of its use could be found among the better class of merchants, hawkers and cabinet makers.[230]

In his 1884 report, Brennan stated that

> 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... a Chinese house that does not contain all the requisites for opium-smoking. All the Chinese smoke it, and many of them are poor, owing to the purchase of this expensive drug to satiate their longings... excessive use of it engenders.[231]

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 4000 signatures to the Executive Council of NSW. The then Premier, Sir Alexander Stuart, though personally in favour of the petition, pointed out that opium would be smuggled into NSW if importation was prohibited. He also argued that prohibition would reduce tax revenues. In his submission to the Brennan report Quong Tart stated that

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

He went on to assert that the majority of the residents in the camps, including those who were opium smokers, agreed with the desirability of restricting the availability of opium.[232] Brennan's report was a little more ambivalent on opium smoking, recognising that opium smoking had been imposed upon the Chinese and was now a part of their way of life.[233]

In the 1890s Chinese newspapers in NSW also began to urge their countrymen to cease opium smoking, and in March 1898 an editorial in the *Tung Wah News* proposed the formation of a NSW Chinese Anti-Opium Society, but it does not appear that it ever eventuated. Vested interests in the

---

[229] McMullen, *Transcript of interview with Frank Rynehart.*

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

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

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

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

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, in particular through the Chinese Empire Reform Association, and later through the Chinese Anti-Opium League of Victoria. The League's actions aroused enthusiasm among Chinese merchants in Sydney, and led to the formation of the Chinese Anti-Opium League of New South Wales in June 1905. Federal legislation in December 1905 prohibited the import of opium except for medicinal use, but as some had feared, it did not stop the flow of opium, sending the trade underground into the hands of illegal smuggling and trading networks. Prohibition led to a rise in the price of opium, which made smuggling more profitable.[234]

The Presbyterian evangelist, the Rev. John Young Wai, spent much time visiting Chinese people rin country towns. In 1905, together with some of his congregation, he vigorously joined in the campaign against the importation of opium into Australia. He supported the resolution of the Foreign Missions Committee, which condemned the smoking of opium as being fraught with grave moral and social evils'. While returning from attending anti-opium meetings in Melbourne he took the opportunity of visiting a number of Chinese people scattered in the Presbytery of Wagga Wagga.[235]

Some local observers were sympathetic to the plight of the Chinese opium users. In response to 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'. However, he argued that it should be banned for Europeans, and that cohabitation of Chinese with European women at the camp should be a penal offence, remarking that it was unrealistic 'to believe that European women would force themselves into the Chinese camps without some tempting reward being held out to them by the Chinamen'. [236]

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, the perpetrators often ending up in hospital or lunatic asylums. 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'. Of 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 from 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. [237]

---

[234] Yong, *New Gold Mountain*, pp.179-188; Wilton, *Golden Threads*, pp.65-71.

[235] Mar, *So great a cloud of witnesses: A history of the Chinese Presbyterian Church, Sydney 1893-1993*.

[236] *Daily Advertiser*, 8 January 1884.

[237] *Daily Advertiser*, 17 April 1884.

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. The first known Chinese man to be charged with drunkenness in Wagga came before the bench in 1882. When arrested, the man had become rowdy and challenged passersby to a fight for money. He was severely admonished by the court and discharged with a caution.[238]

Eating together was an important means of cementing bonds and hierarchies with 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 more casual. According to Elizabeth Chong, an award winning writer and exponent of Chinese cooking, dining and ritual were inseparable in China, and 'from the humblest peasant meal to the most elaborate banquet, every mouthful manages to combine nutrition, symbolism and history'. She also commented on the importance of Taoist and Confucian influences in cooking, stating that Confucius could take a large part of the credit for the Chinese obsession with freshness and a 'host of other fundamentals of the cuisine'.[239]

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.

Along with the dietary staples a wide variety of other ingredients peculiar to Chinese cuisine was consumed, two of the most common being soy sauce and ginger, jars of which were often given as presents to Europeans for Chinese New Year. Other ingredients used in food preparation included garlic, spring onions, chestnuts, melon seeds, black beans, bean curd, shark fin, canned fish, preserved duck, preserved plums, moon cakes and cooking lard. Along with the food came the distinctive Chinese cooking utensils, eating crockery and storage jars. Brownware jars of various shapes and sizes were made from stoneware with brown glaze of different shades and quality. Soy jars had a spout and were usually sealed with a cork. Similar shaped jars also held other liquids such as black vinegar and black molasses. Some jars were 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 and glazed in greenish blue or mauve colours. The ceramic eating bowls, plates and spoons came in a variety of common designs and styles, celadon, (or winter green), four seasons, bamboo and double happiness. Celadon glazed bowls had a distinct blue green glaze, often with a mark on 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.[240]

---

238 *Daily Advertiser*, 16 February 1882.

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

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

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

Private collections

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 so local products were used as replacements. Evidence of such sharing and mixing is available from much of the 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 even in the most remote and harsh environments, and their innovative incorporation of local produce and products.[241]

[241] 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; Lydon, *Many Inventions*, pp.92-100.

Prejudice and Discrimination

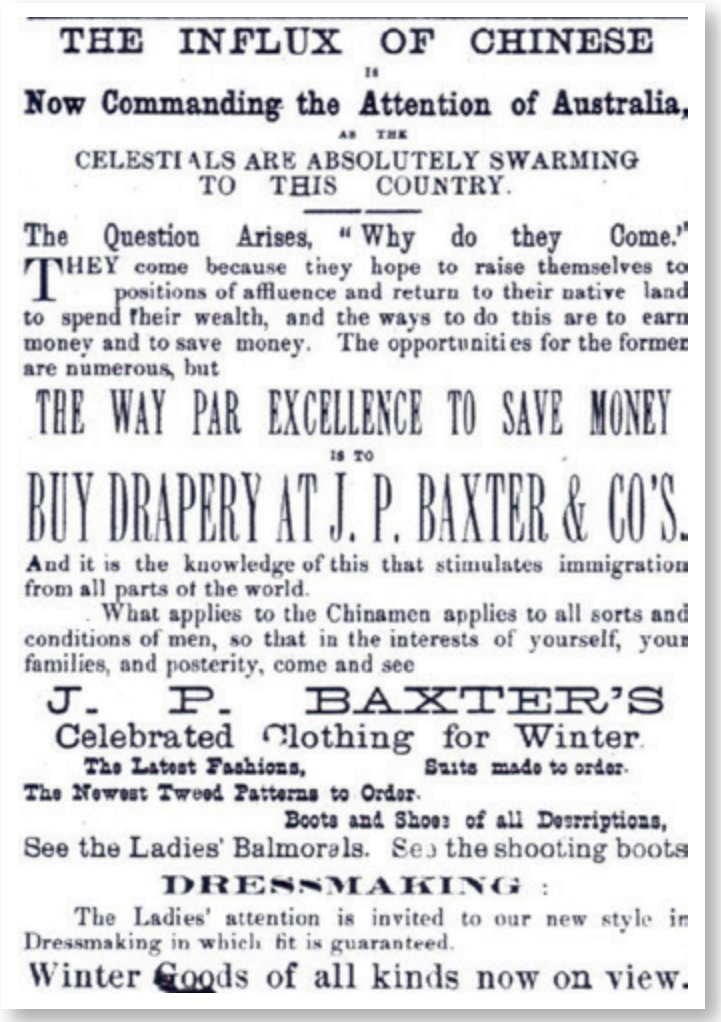
By the mid to late 1870s anti-Chinese sentiments in NSW were becoming increasingly prevalent. One concern was increased Chinese migration to colonies such as NSW, Queensland and the Northern Territory. Other concerns were the successful entry of the Chinese into the furniture trade, their increasingly distinct community life in Sydney, much of which was concentrated in overcrowded dwellings in the poorer inner areas of the city, and fears of Chinese immorality. The latter issue was heightened by two enquiries in NSW into crowded dwellings and common lodging houses. The trigger point, however, was a decision in 1878 by the Australian Steam Navigation Company (ASN) to replace Australian crews 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.[242]

The Riverina was not immune to the events in Sydney. At Wagga in December 1878 about 300 people attended a protest meeting in support of the strikers and opposition to Chinese immigration. But it was a pale imitation of its counterparts in Sydney, a Sydney correspondent stating that 'the meeting... appeared more disposed for fun than the consideration of the serious objects before it'.[243] 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, saying that while he did not agree to the wholesale introduction of Chinese into the colony, he was 'not with the men who had struck and were now on strike in Sydney'. 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. He said that he had had no intention of speaking at the meeting, but 'because the promoters were not ready with the movers and seconders of their resolutions, and were too bashful themselves to come forward, he had much pleasure in moving the first resolution', stating that they were there on the night to support a class of their own countrymen against foreign labour. Speakers in favour of the resolutions included Messrs Cope, Finn, Reed, Planner, McCarthy and Harris. At the conclusion of the meeting a subscription list was opened in support of the strikers, and a committee formed to canvass for subscriptions. Committee members included Messrs Cope, Maher, Hopkins, Dunphy, Reynolds, Spring, Mullens, Reed, Jas. Walsh and Cusack. A total of £25 was donated on the night. Historian Ann Curthoys has remarked that

---

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

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



THE INFLUX OF CHINESE

IS

Now Commanding the Attention of Australia,

AS THE

CELESTIALS ARE ABSOLUTELY SWARMING TO THIS COUNTRY.

The Question Arises, "Why do they Come."

THEY come because they hope to raise themselves to positions of affluence and return to their native land to spend their wealth, and the ways to do this are to earn money and to save money. The opportunities for the former are numerous, but

THE WAY PAR EXCELLENCE TO SAVE MONEY

IS TO

BUY DRAPERY AT J. P. BAXTER & CO'S.

And it is the knowledge of this that stimulates immigration from all parts of the world.

What applies to the Chinamen applies to all sorts and conditions of men, so that in the interests of yourself, your families, and posterity, come and see

J. P. BAXTER'S

Celebrated Clothing for Winter.

The Latest Fashions, Suits made to order.

The Newest Tweed Patterns to Order.

Boots and Shoes of all Descriptions,

See the Ladies' Balmorals. See the shooting boots

DRESSMAKING :

The Ladies' attention is invited to our new style in Dressmaking in which fit is guaranteed.

Winter Goods of all kinds now on view.

A draper, J.P. Baxter, "cashing in" on anti-Chinese sentiment with his store advertisement in the Riverine Grazier, *May 1888.*

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.

The more serious 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.[244]

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

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

> of opium smoking – to which we may add – gambling. From the Victorian gold-fields migrate to the 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'.[245]

A memorable, but admittedly rare, example of a newspaper criticising the harsh treatment of the courts occurred in 1876 through the advocacy of the *Daily Advertiser* on behalf of Ah Sam, a member of a well known Chinese firm trading in Wagga and Young. Ah Sam was charged and gaoled for stealing a cheque from Jerry Ah Quong, when clearly his countryman Ah Fat was at fault, finding the cheque which Ah Quong had lost and passing it to Ah Sam in settlement of an account, Ah Sam not knowing that it had been stolen. The editor railed against Judge Forbes, stating that the case was

> freely spoken of as one of the most serious cases of miscarriage of justice it is possible to conceive, whilst the public feeling is so strong in the matter, that it had already been determined to petition the legislature on behalf of the unfortunate AH SAM, and our convictions are so thoroughly with this feeling, that we shall give the movement all the support in our power.[246]

In another example, in January 1879, the editor of the *Daily Advertiser* commented favourably upon Louis Ah Mouy and Cheok Hong Cheong's pro-Chinese pamphlet, 'Chinese in Australia', stating that 'a copy of it should be sent to every member of the Government and Legislative Assembly of New South Wales'. He commented that its publication at the present time could not fail to have a beneficial effect, and that the publisher should have it spread abroad as widely as possible, as 'a careful perusal of its pages would correct many of the vulgar prejudices prevailing'.[247]

In March the editor went a step further. Referring to a speech on the Anti-Chinese Bill by Dr Bowker, who argued that Chinese should be restricted from entering NSW because they are too good, he remarked that:

---

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

[246] *Daily Advertiser*, 19, 22 January 1876.

[247] *Daily Advertiser*, 25 January 1879.

> We cannot go on forever keeping people at bay simply on the grounds that they are too good and great. We ought at any rate to make an effort to raise the standard of public virtue high enough to be able to let a Chinaman in without suffering much from contact and competition with his goodness.

He asked, tongue in cheek, whether the Agents General should be instructed not to send out people who would be 'dangerously good for the colony'.[248]

These more relaxed attitudes were a matter of bewilderment to some outside observers, a Victorian visitor to 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. They don't appear to be a very religious crew. Joss houses are conspicuous by their absence.[249]

The following year, in the aftermath of recent race agitations in the metropolitan cities and a recent violent attack on three Chinese men in Melbourne, the editor of the *Daily Advertiser* remarked that:

> 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?
>
> 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 from so d.[250]

The following week, in commenting on the harsh anti-Chinese legislation in California, he stated 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.

He remarked that when framing the treaties which had allowed free emigration to any part of the Empire it 'never occurred to the most immaginative [sic] that they, not unlike the Huns and Vandals, would pour

---

[248] *Daily Advertiser*, 12 March 1879.

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

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

hordes of barbarians upon us, as upon the fair face of Europe centuries ago.'[251]

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

> John Chinaman in the bush is very much the same as John Chinaman in the city. The chief difference is that he is not quite so much evidence, and therefore he is not quite so disagreeable to his Christian neighbours. He does not enter into such keen competition with Europeans, and therefore does not raise such a howl of indignation as is only too frequently heard in the city. Of course there are not so many artisans to compete with, nor is there a demand for his handicraft. If it were otherwise, John would be found as busy making tables, chairs, and cabinet work, as he is now in the city. He is occasionally found in the shearing shed, but it is usually as "picker-up" or "tar". He does not shine on the "board", though with his imitative faculty so wonderfully developed, in all probability he will in course of time be found there also. It has been the fashion with a good many people, especially with a certain class of politicians, to characterise the Chinese as everything that is horrible and bestial. But a little examination of the truth, and some acquaintance with John in the bush, at all events, soon teaches that, like a certain nameless personage, he is not quite so black as he is painted. On the contrary, he is very useful, very industrious, very frugal and sets an example of sobriety and regular living which a good many of those who revile and curse him would do well for themselves and society to copy. John being human, is of course not perfect, judging, perhaps, from a very high moral standard. Yet in many things, he is as "white as the 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 John can indulge in the seductive pleasure of fan-tan without fear of interruption, and tempt fickle fortune so long as his cash holds out.[252]

Despite the obvious prejudices in this article, it was, for its time, rather more nuanced than many

---

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

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

others, and provided a country metropolis contrast that few other journalists attempted. Indeed, the winds of change were already blowing, and such sentiments, particularly in the metropolis, would soon be rare. A sharp increase in the number of Chinese immigrants into NSW in April 1881 prompted the Mayor of Sydney to convene a well-attended public meeting, which called for the imposition of immigration restrictions, and in May the TLC organised a rally in the Domain, which was attended by 10,000 people.[253] The Riverina press could no longer ignore these sentiments. In June 1881, the editor of the *Daily Advertiser* criticised the statement of the then Governor, Hercules Robinson, who, in Albury a few years previously, had lauded "John" as being of "incomparable value" as a colonist. In response to an address presented to him by the Chinese residents of that town, the Governor had remarked that he 'was glad to see so many of the race located there and would gladly welcome as many more as chose to come', or words to that effect.

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

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

He also stated that the European labourers got drunk when they were paid and spent the lot, but the "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.[254]

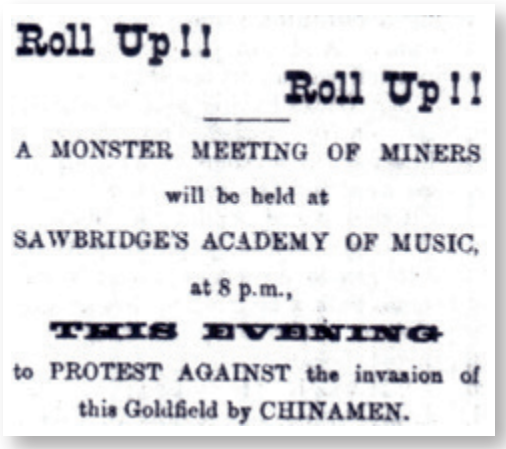
Immigration restrictions were introduced by the NSW and Victorian Governments in July and August 1881 respectively. In NSW, the legislation included a tonnage restriction on ships in the ratio of one Chinese person for every 100 tons of cargo and a poll tax of £20 on Chinese entering or re-entering the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

> The Chinese in the Albury district are in a state of great excitement, owing to the first steps being taken to enforce the newly passed Chinese Restriction Act, which imposes a poll tax upon Chinese entering the colony. The Act was assented to only a day or two since. Last week six Chinamen, who had crossed from Victoria, were arrested for evading payment of the tax, and they were brought up at the Albury Police Court this morning. The sub-collector of Customs, who appeared for the Crown, said that if the defendants would leave the colony by going back to Victoria, he would not press the charge, as this was

[253] Markus, Fear and Hatred, p.95.

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

> 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.


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

These 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'.[255] It was inevitable that the Riverina newspapers would be swept up in this general wave of hysteria and xenophobia, some of them trenching close to *Bulletin's* tirades and misrepresentations. Most, however, were 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...[256]

These changing sentiments often led to 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.

Prior to the meeting, the editor of the *Temora Star* expressed some sympathy for the white miners stating that

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

He did, however, have some words of warning.

> the irritation felt at the invasion of the goldfield by Chinese is easily understood, but on the other hand, we feel it our duty to remind those who are taking the lead in this matter that they will have to act with

---

[255] 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.

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

> the greatest circumspection if they wish to score a success. We know that a general impression prevails that Chinese are precluded from coming to any new goldfields for three years after its discovery; but like many other popular fallacies, this rests upon a very slender foundation, It may as well be understood that, as far as the law on the matter is concerned, a Chinaman has as much right to appeal to its protection on the first day of a rush as twenty years after; but, owing to the frequent occurrence of riots on new rushes, intimation was conveyed to the principal Chinese in the colony by the authorities that it would be advisable if their countrymen were to keep off new goldfields, and a custom has thus been established which many look upon as the established law of the land.
>
> White men have found the goldfield; white men have wasted years of their time and labour in tracing it; and white men no doubt have the most equitable right to the benefit which the accumulated experience of the past three years has taught. But, let it be remembered that, in contending for their right they must proceed with the greatest moderation, lest by one rash step they ruin their cause. For our part we can only see one way to obtain the result in view, and that is by petitioning the Government to use their 'restraining influence' on the Chinese merchants of Sydney who may yet have it in their power to divert that stream of Mongolian invasion which has set in in this direction for some time past, into another direction.[257]

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

> If, in the ordering of his house, he chooses to employ Chinamen; or if he, in selecting a trade for his son, prefers to apprentice him to a Chinaman, are matters entirely and purely for his own consideration, and not by any means inconsistent with taking the chair at a meeting called for the purpose of protesting against the inundation of the field by Chinese diggers. If the spirit involved in the question put by Mr Rivers is to be ruling to its full extent, then white men should not buy from Chinese storekeepers, employ Chinese tradesmen, or eat vegetables grown by Chinese. Probably Mr Rivers, like many more men of shrewd perspicacity, would not have the slightest compunction in patronising a Chinese storekeeper, if by so doing he could effect a saving; or having his picks sharpened by a Chinese blacksmith provided the work was done equally well and cheaper than by a European. In point of fact Mr Rivers has no objection to avail himself of the services or industry of Chinese whenever he pleases, but is intolerant enough to bar the same right to others. Unprejudiced people might ask if that is fair?[258]

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. It had 170 members, and a committee of 25 to draw up rules and manage business, and later paid officers to canvass for members. 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. However, the League's effectiveness was blunted by the unwillingness of many landowners to embrace its central proposition, for many landowners, including the in-laws of the main proponent Mr Shelley, regarded the Chinese farmers as their bread and butter.[259] Following the imposition of prohibitive immigration restrictions in May 1888, the justification for the League's existence began to waver, a widely reported meeting of the League in August drawing well-merited scorn from the editor of the Riverine Grazier. One resolution sought to procure another resident doctor in Tumut because the current doctor,

---

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

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

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

Dr Mason, originally a League supporter, had subsequently let land to the Chinese. But the most noteworthy feature of the proceedings was a statement by Mr C. Dean, a committee member, who gave notice of his resignation because he had agreed to allow three Chinese men to erect huts on his land for £1 a week, which he 'thought would be better to him than remaining a member of the League'.[260]

The views of a local resident following a visit to the Mt Adrah and Hillas Creek area in August 1888 are a good indicator of the strength of racial ill-feeling in the Tumut area in the late 1880s. He referred to the Chinese at Hillas Creek as 'Bread Robbers', and went on to say that in front of Crain's Mount Adrah station

> is a red hill 12 miles from town; this spot was once famous for its grapes, but alas! the "Celestials" have the land and grow tobacco. Two hundred yards from the hotel [Crain's Mount Adrah Hotel] the Yaven creek joins the Nacka, and is known below the junction as Hillas. At the present time it is the home of 200 Chinamen, or can I truthfully say 200 "bread robbers". The intruders monopolise all the best lands on the creek, growing tobacco, which industry is ruining the European farmer and poor man. The proprietors of these lands rent them to the yellow pest on the 200 "per schent" system. The time is approaching when we must boycott the owners of land let to Chinkies. In Tumut the Chinese number close to 2000 [a gross exaggeration]. 'And what will they do when two or three bad seasons come and their tobacco crops fail? They will do this - pilfer, murder, work for low wages, spread leprosy, immorality, and fill all our hospitals. In Adelong a Chinese store does a rattling trade, it being supported principally by the working class, the very last who should assist them. On the other hand the European store keepers employ all white labour at a high figure, comparatively speaking, to the Chinese business men, hence the money is always in circulation.[261]

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 now pleaded the case for British justice and criticised the extreme measures contemplated in the legislation.[262]

---

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

[261] *Gundagai Times*, 25 August 1888.

[262] 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; *Albury Border Post*, 3 February 1888; *Gundagai Times*, 22 May 1888; *Albury Banner and Wodonga Express* (hereafter *Albury Banner*), 1, 8 June 1888.

One instance of these conflicting views was provided by the editor of the *Riverine Grazier*, who, on 18 April 1888, 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 'their low civilization and comparative pagan habits render them undesirable fellow-colonists under any circumstances', and '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'.

However, in the *Riverine Grazier* of 22 May, his tone and focus had changed almost 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. In May 1888, the editor of the *Daily Advertiser* stated that 'in common with a great many others, we cannot help thinking that he has acted with undue haste and bad judgment in some respects. We have contended that the colonies should have striven to act in concert in this matter... urgent though the matter was, no genuine effort was made in this direction'. He went on to say that the 'public intelligence and public spirit will revolt against anything which savours of rank injustice and a breach of faith, even though the victims be only a few Chinamen', the Premier appearing 'to have been carried away by the excitement of the hour', and 'lost sight of the consideration due to the Chinese who have come here recently, some of them, doubtless, with genuine exemption papers... and others prepared to pay the poll'... 'all of them coming in the faith that these colonies would respect their own laws'. It was to be regretted that the Premier delivered such a 'wild and hysterical speech'. . . There was no occasion for any such display of theatricalism, for the violence of his language, or his defiance of constituted authority.'[263]

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 and fair dealing between man and man to hunt them without giving them a chance of defending themselves.[264]

Perhaps the most interesting comments were by the editor of the *Narrandera Ensign*, who concluded his condemnation of the Premier by stating that although the Chinese were 'a menace to our

---

[263] *Daily Advertiser*, 19 May 1888.

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

civilisation', the fault rested '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 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.[265]

The most objectionable provisions of the bill were removed by the Legislative Council, but the remaining restrictions were harsh; the tonnage ratio was 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, and an increase in the Chinese gaol population was all but assured.[266] The immediate effect of the legislation prior to its proclamation was to encourage Chinese men to cross the border legally or otherwise and incur the lesser penalties under the 1881 legislation. [267]

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, the crossing usually being done near Stanthorpe, where there was already a large population of Chinese tin miners. 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.[268] 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.[269]

The practical application of the immigration restrictions often bordered on the absurd, and aroused much anger, particularly 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 only after numerous representations, including the personal 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.[270] 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 morals and religion' in Victoria, he also being a naturalised citizen

---

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

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

[267] *Albury Banner*, 13 April, 19 June, 13 July 1888.

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

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

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

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 Net Rivers Year 1894
Trade or occupation previous to conviction Miner
Religion Pagan
Education, degree of R. Write & cipher
Height, without shoes, 5 feet 5½ inches
Weight in lb. { On committal 134 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

of that colony. The editor of the *Sydney Morning Herald* went on the attack, his remonstrations being taken up by some newspapers in the Riverina. 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.[271]

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.[272]

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, but also the generally favourable attitudes towards their plight by the local press. On the occasion of 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.[273]

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

---

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

[272] *Albury Banner*, 10 March 1893, 29 February 1893; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 February 1893.

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

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'.[274]

The correspondent had yet 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'.[275] 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![276]

In 1898, on the occasion of a batch of Chinese men being arrested at Deniliquin for evading the poll tax, the correspondent stated that in Albury there had been numerous incidents on 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'.[277] The immigration issue was, of course, only resolved with Federation in 1901.

Another Chinese man to be severely affected by the colonial immigration restrictions was John Egge, the riverboat captain. 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 restriction 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 agreed to recognise him as an Australian merchant.[278]

While the 1888 restrictions impacted immediately on Chinese people already in Australia, like its successor legislation in 1901, it also impacted severely on Australian Chinese 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).[279]

---

[274] *Albury Banner*, 1 December 1893.

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

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

[277] *Albury Banner*, 11 November 1898.

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

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

Law and Order

The law courts generally strived to be even-handed in their treatment of the Chinese people. Unlike California in the early 1850s, Chinese evidence was admissible in the courts and the use of interpreters was common, and 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 presence of large numbers of Chinese in the local courts, particularly in the early years of Chinese settlement, was a challenge for magistrates and judges, who for the most part tried to be equitable and fair. In a case at Gundagai in 1869 the magistrate, in his summing up, 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.[280]

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.[281]

And in a case in Narrandera in 1884 the acting judge stated that

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

The defendants were found guilty, one getting five years gaol, and the other two, four years and three years. [282]

Working in the Chinese men's favour was the perception by some judges and magistrates that the Chinese were lesser mortals physically, and inoffensive or defenceless, a back-handed compliment at best. For instance, in early 1873 John Toole was fined £2 for assaulting Ah Wing at Currawarna and inflicting actual bodily harm. Ah Wing was a market gardener at Wagga and was hawking vegetables. He had camped with his horse and cart about 29 kilometres from Wagga, and was on the ground when Toole came up and asked him for money. When the money was not forthcoming Toole struck

---

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

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

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

Wing in face, kicked and robbed him. The Magistrate commented that striking a Chinese man was 'like striking a woman'.[283]

> The court reports in the Riverina newspapers provide many examples of the types of offences committed against the Chinese and the attitudes of the courts. In October 1872 Charles Skinner was sentenced to 12 month's gaol for stealing a pair of trousers belonging to Ah Sue, a market gardener near the Wagga Lagoon, after having dined at Ah Sue's home. Rather more light-hearted was an incident reported in 1873 under the evocative title of 'rape of a magpie', the case being a reflection on Wagga's street culture and the length of time that the courts felt compelled to spend on Chinese litigation, no matter how trivial. Choo Cooey, a fruit and vegetable store owner, was also the owner of a magpie which he valued at £2, notwithstanding it had a broken leg and was 'given to wandering'. The correspondent commented that Cooey and 'his better half' appeared to be very fond of the fowl, and were properly incensed at having it stolen from them under their very eyes, by a gay cavalier who is known by the soubriquet of "Billy the Doctor", but whose patronymic is "Williams".

According to the reporter the Chinese man and his wife witnessed the rape, and immediately set off in pursuit, but Cooey did not meet up with Williams until later in the day outside the Commercial hotel. He reported Williams to a nearby policeman, whom Williams charged with his horse 'to the no small amusement of bystanders'. Williams then set off down Gurwood St where he was later apprehended and had to spend a night in the lockup. The case came up before the Police Magistrate who ruled that one could not have property in "wild animals" such as uncaged magpies, and hence no charge of larceny could lie. The reporter commented that although the magpie had not been caged, "'the doctor" was; and so perhaps of the two the laugh was on the side of the Celestial naturalist and his favourite fowl'.[284]

Rather more serious was a case later that year when Samuel Davis was charged with breaking into a store and stealing money from Choo Cooey, the case being later dismissed and a charge of malicious damage laid.[285] And in 1876, Ah Chong sought to recover money for a Mr Graham for damages to a paddock and garden owned by Chong on Brown's Island at North Wagga. Graham claimed that the garden had not been properly fenced, but Chong stated that the fence was a good one, and that Graham's son had cut it down with an axe to let cattle in, claiming the fence was on Government land. After an inspection the Bench decided that fence was designed to keep out quiet stock ordinarily controllable and found for Chong.[286]

The court was of a similar benevolent mind in 1878 in considering the plight of Ah Chow, who was charged with passing off a false £5 note on Ah Wy at Cowabee. The note was one of those issued some time before by S.J. Gorman as an advertisement for the Criterion hotel. Ah Wy found out later that it was a bad note when he offered it to the captain of a steamer from whom he was buying goods. Ah Chow pleaded that he did not understand English writing and did not know it was a bad note. The judge stated that

> 'there was no doubt that Mr Gorman was greatly to blame in the matter of this trial. For the sake of advertising his house he had issued documents which might take unwary people in... It was most reprehensible that for the sake of filthy lucre a trader should advertise his goods in such a manner as would leave the door open to fraud and mislead the ignorant public'.

---

283 *Wagga Express*, 5 February 1873.

284 *Daily Advertiser*, 9 October, 28 December 1872.

285 *Wagga Express*, 4 October 1873.

286 *Daily Advertiser*, 19 January 1876.

Ah Chow was found not guilty.[287]

The antics of the larrikin element, who sometimes assaulted the Chinese by throwing stones or stealing or damaging their vegetable produce, posed a special challenge to the courts, who were scathing in their remarks and harsh in their sentences. In March 1876, a young boy was before the court on a charge of assaulting Ah Cow, hitting him on the head with a stone and causing serious injury, the *Wagga Express* 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.[288] New Year's Eve was a favourite time for the larrikins, and the Chinese were often the targets. In 1879 the editor of the *Daily Advertiser* remarked that

> It is to be regretted that the usual season of "a happy New Year" is looked upon by a few larrikins as a time when damage to the townspeople's property should be almost indulged in as if it were the occasion of special license. It is really time that the absurd practices continued by a very small minority of a law-abiding and peaceful people should be put a stop to... Mr Maher of the Exchange hotel had one of the large plate-glass windows in the front of the Hotel smashed in by a stone; while not a little fury appears to have been expended on John Chinaman's shutters and windows... Are the police unable to prevent these outbursts of animal spirits, or is it that their numbers are insufficient to cope with the difficulty?[289]

While not a New Year incident, in June of that year a notice appeared in the advertisements column from the storekeepers Sin, Sam Long, who offered £20 for information that would lead to the conviction of the person who smashed their plate glass window in Newtown.[290] New Year's Eve in 1880 was no more peaceable than the previous year, the *Daily Advertiser* correspondent remarking that assaults upon the Chinese by larrikins were very common, notwithstanding the severe sentences and fines. In the latest incident a European youth was fined £2 6s 4d for throwing a stone and striking Jemmy Gee, a Chinese storekeeper in Fitzmaurice St. 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'.[291] The following month several cases of assault were reported, in one of which a Chinese man claimed to have been garrotted and robbed of 18s. 'Larrikinism grows apace', bemoaned an indignant *Daily Advertiser* correspondent,

> and if it be not put down by the police, then the townspeople will either have, by unanimous voice, to compel the Government to send reinforcements, or take the law into their own hands. A charge of shot and salt lodged in the legs of one of two of these larrikins would do a deal more good than the imposition of fines, which are invariably paid.[292]

In another incident Frederick Ohlsen was charged in 1882 with assaulting Ah You, who was on a cart on the Junee Road. One youth tried to stop the cart and Ohlsen struck Ah You and the horse with a whip, for which he received two month's gaol.[293] In 1885, John Barrett was charged with destroying Ah Ching's fruit. He had kicked Ah Ching's fruit basket and run away, scattering the fruit upon the pavement. The magistrate stated that a 'wanton outrage had been committed upon a poor Chinaman' and fined Barrett £5 plus 10s damages. By making an example of him, stated the magistrate, it will

---

287 *Daily Advertiser*, 2 October 1878.

288 *Daily Advertiser*, 29 March 1876.

289 *Daily Advertiser*, 4 January 1879.

290 *Daily Advertiser*, 11 June 1879.

291 *Daily Advertiser*, 13 January 1881.

292 *Daily Advertiser*, 1 February 1881.

293 *Daily Advertiser*, 6 April 1882.

'show others that they could not commit such an offence with impunity'.[294]

In July 1919, John Harris was fined £3 and costs, all up £6 3s 6d, for assaulting a market gardener, Lim Que (Lum Que?), who had been driving his cart along Tarcutta Road when he was passed by two men in a sulky, one of whom hit his horse, causing it to bolt. After stopping the horse, the men drew up and Lim Que remonstrated with them, following which he was assaulted. During the fight Lim Que took possession of the sulky, and a number of his countrymen, armed with hoes, rakes, sticks and stones converged on the scene, causing the two men to flee. The Police Magistrate described it as a 'cowardly, un-British and brutal assault'. Harris had attacked Lim Que in a savage way, and had hit him while he was on the ground, 'belaboring a man who was incapable of defending himself'. The only reason Harris was not more severely dealt with was the absence of previous convictions and his army service in World War One.[295]

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. The prosecutions for sly grog dealing and gambling are a good instance of this discrimination. The first action taken by the police in Wagga against gambling was in 1883, but it was singularly unsuccessful, the defence lawyer pointing out that in a similar case recently before the District Court the judges had decided that Pow Chong was not gambling.[296] It took until 1888 for the police to secure their first gambling conviction. A number of Chinese were before the court, the police having found two large tables in a back room on which were placed mats and square pieces of lead, a number of Chinese coins and cards, two pointed sticks, two fan-tan cups, a number of Chinese dominoes, together with paper and Chinese rushes and ink. The defendant, Sim on Lee, was the banker. On the square leaden plate lay £3 1s 3d in various positions. The police also seized the two tables and four large lamps. Because the defendant was also the keeper of the house he was fined £25. Ah Chong, Ah Lin and Ah Kow were fined £15 each. [297]

The local correspondent, 'Justice', again came to the defence of the Chinese, commenting 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.[298]

In 1890, Pack Chung, a Fan Tan banker, and 35 other Chinese men were arrested in a gaming house owned by Ah Fat at the rear of Yee Cheong's store in Fitzmaurice St. The police deposed that the room contained a table specially made for gambling and covered with a kind of matting, and that there was £3 or £4 on the table. Pack Chung was sentenced to three month's gaol at Wagga and the others were

---

294 *Daily Advertiser*, 12 February 1885.

295 *Daily Advertiser*, 16, 30 July 1919.

296 *Daily Advertiser*, 14 July, 1883.

297 *Daily Advertiser*, 14 February 1888.

298 *Daily Advertiser*, 16 February 1888.

fined £2 each.[299] In May 1900 three Chinese men were arrested for conducting a lottery after a raid by five plain clothes police, who had been watching the house for several successive nights. The house was partly covered in blinds and calico and the room partitioned into two apartments. At the time of the raid three Chinese men had lottery tickets and were marking them, and eight other Chinese men and two Europeans were present. The prosecution failed, however, to prove that gambling had taken place. Between 20 and 30 Chinese attended the case and when the verdict was announced 'expansive smiles wreathed the faces of the gratified Mongolians'. The editor of the *Daily Advertiser* commented that there would have been no complaint if the gambling had been confined to the Chinese, but it had spread to other parts of the town where the tickets were openly sold in the streets, and the gambling shops frequented by men, women, youths and children of both sexes. [300] In April 1904, three Chinese men were charged with selling a lottery ticket to Constable Netherby, who had obtained the ticket from Charlie Ah Nam's house and shop in Bayliss St. They each received 48 hours hard labour with a warning that they would be sentenced to three months gaol for any future offence.[301]

In the case of sly grog selling, it is doubtful if the police would have anywhere near as much success in making arrests, leave alone securing successful convictions without willing informants, both European and Chinese, who were rewarded for their 'Judas' acts with half the fine monies. In almost all instances, it was the informant who approached the police and provided the information. Once the information had been laid the police were obliged to seek a warrant for the arrest of the alleged wrongdoers. In the case of suspected sly grog sellers the usual ploy was for the informant to proceed to the house in question, almost always located in the camp, with a marked coin and empty bottle provided by the police, then on purchasing the alcohol, departing and handing the evidence to the local constable, who had meanwhile observed the proceedings from some vantage point.[302]

An instance of the above occurred in 1888 when Sarah Ah Kem, alias Payne, was charged with selling liquor without a licence. Police sent Ah Pou into Kem's house in Fitzmaurice Street, meanwhile going to the window where they could see into a room where four women sat at tea. Kem asked Ah Pou if he was going to shout, to which he replied yes. She sent one of the women to get a bottle of brandy and poured out drinks, which Ah Pou paid for. Police entered by the back door and asked Ah Pou in the presence of Kem whether he had shouted, to which he said yes. Kem was told that there had been several complaints against her and was fined £30, with 5s 6d costs, half of the fine going to the informer.[303]

One of the more infamous cases in the Riverina occurred at Hay in August 1891, when Constable Thorncroft, disguised in other men's clothes and false bushy whiskers, arrested Annie McCarthy (Annie Chung Soo), a resident of the Hay Chinese Camp, for selling sly grog. An informer, Ryan, who had figured in similar cases the previous week at Carrathool, accompanied him. Having paid for a drink, Ryan suddenly feigned sickness and left the room temporarily to pour the liquor into a bottle, which he handed to Thorncroft. Following this incident the two men went to a house owned by Ah Seong with the constable, still disguised, planted behind a door, while Ryan was served. The tactics were a little different, Ryan shouting out 'here's luck', on which cue Thorncroft dashed into the room and seized the offending glass, plus one held by another customer, Elizabeth Neet. A fine of £30 was imposed in each

---

[299] *Daily Advertiser*, 1 February 1890.

[300] *Daily Advertiser*, 30 May 1900.

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

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

[303] *Daily Advertiser*, 11 August 1888.

case, with Ryan getting half the share. The reporter commented that as Ryan's share of the Carrathool fines was £40, informing was a lucrative, 'if not particularly honourable employment'.[304]

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.[305] At Adelong in 1885 a sly grog selling case was heard against the Chinese wife of the storekeeper Ah Yan. She attended court in full Chinese costume, and claimed through an interpreter that she had received no money from the informer, Ah Kan, and that the grog was part of a quantity purchased by some other Chinese in connection with a ceremonial service. The case against her was dismissed, but her husband was fined £30 plus costs.[306] At Wagga in 1885 Sam Lee and another Chinese man informed on Jeremiah O'Keefe near Tarcutta for sly grog selling. The magistrate was not impressed, stating that it was 'useless to call any more witnesses', for sly grog selling was 'the curse of the colony'. He stated that 'A European informer is very low indeed when he makes a trade of it, and these Chinese are lower still'. The case was dismissed.[307] In February 1891 Charley Ah Man, who had a cook shop in the Wagga camp, was charged with selling sly grog. His informant was Leong Wong, who had several Chinese witnesses. Ah Man's lawyer stated that there was no proof that brandy had been sold. The informants were in dispute with Ah Man for some reason and their evidence could not be relied on. The magistrate dismissed the case, saying that as the informants had all sworn using the blowing out a match method 'their souls were in great danger'.[308]

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'.[309] In April 1892, a well known Chinese man, Wong Pack, was charged with sly grog selling. The informer was Han Won, who 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 alcohol was kept under the bench, which was proof that it was intended for sale.[310] The unlucky Wong Pack was in court again

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

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

[306] *Gundagai Times*, 1, 4 September 1885.

[307] *Daily Advertiser*, 22 January 1885.

[308] *Daily Advertiser*, 12 February 1891.

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

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

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.[311]

But the Chinese were not innocent in the area of crime, although they were sometimes wrongly accused. In a case in November 1881 involving Ah Sam, an employee of Sin Sam Lee's store, the Judge, after hearing all the evidence, directed the jury to acquit and cast doubt on the girl's statement. Ah Sam had been accused of assaulting a 13 year old girl Mary Ellen Patterson.[312] A similar case occurred in 1887, when Tom Ching was charged with unlawfully carnally knowing a girl between 10 and 14 years. There were, however, serious discrepancies in the girl's statement, and several witnesses made strong statements testifying to Ching's good character. He was found not guilty.[313] Not so innocent was Ah Hong, a cook at the Commercial hotel, who was charged with assault on the 11 year old daughter of the hotelkeeper. He was sentenced to years gaol plus three private whippings of 20 lashes each.[314]

Chinese men sometimes accused their own countrymen of assault and theft and took them to court, often for seemingly trivial offenses, but also for more serious ones, and at other times there were brawls. These incidents served to add an impulsive and hot-tempered dimension to life in the Wagga Chinese community. The earliest known case was in 1859 when Tan Seang was gaoled for 14 days for assaulting John Sain, another Chinese man. Sain had been walking into Wagga from Gumley when he was assaulted by Seang, who was with two other Chinese men.[315] Some months later a Chinese man named Jugiong was bound over to keep the peace, after threatening J.B. Calwell, the owner of the Squatter's Hotel, with a knife. Jugiong had been a cook, but latterly had been 'extremely insolent, lazy and disobedient', and took umbrage when the new cook arrived.[316]

In December 1870 a Chinese man called Juliong (Jugiong?) was charged by Tee Song for unlawfully using language inciting to a breach of the peace. He had confronted Song in a Wagga street and abused him, saying if he got a chance he would cut him in two. Juliong was fined £1 with costs, but as he was 'behaving indecorously' in court the sentence was changed to one month's imprisonment.[317] In January 1873 John Ah You was charged with assaulting Billy Sam, a cook at the Commercial Hotel. Sam was in an opium shop having a lie down and a smoke when an argument ensued, Ah You striking him three times with a stick. He was fined £3.[318] The following month, it was Billy Sam's turn to be in the dock. He was charged with stealing £1 3s and other material from John Ah Young. However, the case was dismissed. That same month Ah Coey (Cooey?) laid a charge against Goh Suey, who had been in their house and had offended his wife. When Coey ordered him out and ejected him, Suey assailed him with a torrent of abuse in Chinese.[319] More serious was a case in March when John Sam and Gan Loo were charged with setting fire to haystack belonging to Ah Ching, who had a farm at the lagoon. Gan Loo was discharged, but John Sam was sentenced to two years gaol.[320]

---

311 *Riverine Grazier*, 20 September 1892.

312 *Daily Advertiser*, 19 November 1881.

313 *Daily Advertiser*, 14 July 1887.

314 *Daily Advertiser*, 20 September 1885.

315 *Wagga Express*, 12 March 1859.

316 *Wagga Express*, 9 July 1859.

317 *Daily Advertiser*, 21 December 1870.

318 *Wagga Express*, 11 January 1873.

319 *Wagga Express*, 12 February 1873.

320 *Wagga Express*, 15 March, 9 April 1873.

And in 1876 Tommy Gorsoo was charged with unlawfully wounding Jimmy Gapoo at Ah You's boarding house in Kincaid St, Wagga. According to the evidence Gorsoo claimed Gapoo was making too much noise so he struck him with a tomahawk, seriously injuring his arm. Gorsoo was sentenced to 12 months in gaol for this little misdemeanour.[321] Sometimes it was the European wife prosecuting the Chinese husband for assault. In 1876 Robert Ah Fong was imprisoned for three months for striking Ellen Ah Fong (Ellen Walsh). Ellen had been married to Robert for eight to nine years, but had left him about 12 months ago. According to the police, Ellen had a bad reputation and they believed she kept an improper house at North Wagga. Robert had told her to come with him or he would kill her, then when she refused, followed her into a house and struck her on the shoulder with a chopper. And in 1879, Eliza Ah Cann charged Tommy Ah Cann with assault. The defendant pleaded guilty and was fined £1, with costs of £1 5s 10d.[322]

The variety of such incidents diminished little with time. In 1887 George Suliong and Minnie Holmes were charged with robbing Ah Sin, a market gardener living in Wagga, of £2. The accused lived at Newtown near the river. Passing by Ah Sin's house they were called over by Ah Sin, who said he was making plenty of money and he was going to shout. On opening his purse to give her 2s, Minnie grabbed £2. Suliong knocked Ah Sin down, but then ran away when Ah Sin picked up a stick, and returned later with an axe. The assailants each received two month's gaol.[323]

In 1890, Quock Fan was charged with inflicting grievous bodily harm on Ah Toon, a labourer living at The Rock at Mr Kerin's station who was settling a money account with Fan for money he had borrowed. After the money was paid Quock Fan called Ah Toon bad names, then struck him about the body and chased him with a stick. Another Chinese man took the stick from Quock Fan, who then proceeded to bite Ah Toon's ear off.[324] Two other Chinese men, Ah Wah and John Looey, a gardener living at Yerong Creek, brought Ah Toon into Wagga to see a doctor and corroborated the fight and ear biting. The injuries were serious, for it looked as if part of his ear had been chewed off. In court a medical witness stated that Quock Fan had been 'subjected to severe injury in a sensitive part of the body', his Counsel arguing that Quock Fan had bitten Ah Toon so he would let go his hold. Quock Fan was found not guilty.[325]

In another incident in 1891 Ah Fong was accused of stealing £8 from Mrs Caroline Ah Shing, a resident of Fitzmaurice St. Ah Shing was in a cook shop having soup with another woman, Johanna Sa Sing, when Fong allegedly came in and stole the key to her house. He was found not guilty.[326] In September 1898 a dispute arose between two Chinese men, Sin Quoy and George Ah Sin. Quoy was demanding money allegedly owed to him by Ah Sin. He then belaboured Ah Sin about the head with an iron bar, causing the latter to go to the Wagga hospital 'for repairs', and leaving his protagonist to seek refuge in the Tarcutta Chinese camp. No account is available of the subsequent court proceedings.[327] In January 1908 Wing Choy and William Young were charged with riotous behaviour in Fitzmaurice St, the latter pleading guilty and fined 10s with 3s 6d costs. Wing Choy had taken his horse and cart from Young,

---

321 *Daily Advertiser*, 19 January 1876.

322 *Wagga Express*, 17 May 1879.

323 *Daily Advertiser*, 1 January 1887.

324 *Daily Advertiser*, 19 July 1890.

325 *Daily Advertiser*, 19 July, 30 September1890.

326 *Daily Advertiser*, 31 January 1891.

327 *Daily Advertiser*, 27 September 1898.

who had become angry and attacked him.[328]

Overall the level of physical provocation and abuse of the Chinese people in the Riverina, bad as it was, never rose to anything like that seen occasionally on some Australian goldfields. These melees, in turn, paled into insignificance compared 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. It had been rumoured that the Chinese were considering working for James Tyson on Tupra station for 15s a week rather than the usual 20s. The Chinese were asleep in their tents at the time of the attack, and spent the night hiding in the scrub until leaving for Hay the next morning. Several days later the police arrived to investigate the assault, but 'everybody who had been involved was suddenly struck dumb'.[329]

The most infamous incident was the 'Battle of Hillston Bridge' in 1895, in which one Chinese man was killed and two severely injured. This incident 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 men soon came to his aid. In the meantime one of the Europeans went to the nearby Albion Hotel and recruited a mob of Europeans armed with makeshift weapons, and 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.[330] At Grahamstown near Adelong in 1880, Michael McNamara fatally assaulted Sin Lee Yong, whom he accused of stealing part of his fence. The local reporter commented that the judge, in his directions to the jury was 'somewhat favourable to the prisoner, being evidently of opinion that he was guilty of manslaughter if guilty at all'. The jury found McNamara guilty of manslaughter and he was sentenced to 12 months gaol, the sentence giving 'great satisfaction here and at Grahamstown, as it is thought the Chinaman gave McNamara great provocation'.[331]

Many instances of physical and oral abuse and theft were never reported to the police, and did not make it into the courts, especially when the offenders and victims were children and teenagers. Fruit and vegetable stealing was almost a rite of passage amongst the Riverina youth and the offenders often escaped unseen and unscathed. Frank Rynehart recalled that because Jimmy Hoon's garden was close to the river the town children would swim across, steal melons and damage the plants.[332] 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 boy 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

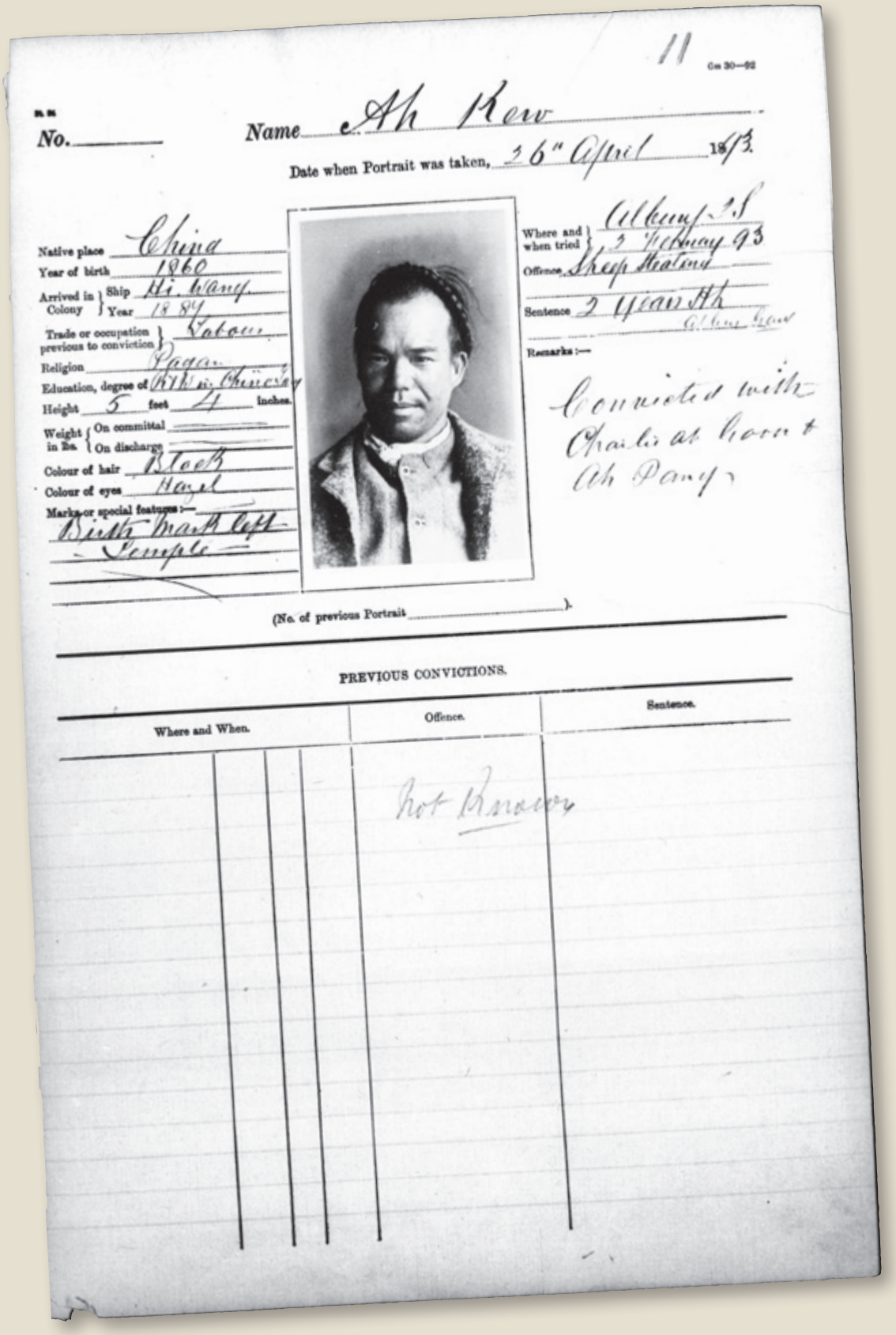
328 *Daily Advertiser*, 21 January 1908.

329 Hay Historical Society Web-Site Newsletter, February 2006, No IV.

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

331 *Gundagai Times*, 7, 23 September, 5 October 1880.

332 Claire McMullen, *Transcript of interview with Frank Rynehart*, Museum of the Riverina, Wagga Wagga, 2013.



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 Can't read or write
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 N.S.W. / 2 February 93
Offence Sheep Stealing
Sentence 2 years H.L. Albury Gaol
Remarks:— Convicted with Charlie at Howe & Ah Pang

(No. of previous Portrait _____).

PREVIOUS CONVICTIONS.

Where and When.	Offence.	Sentence.
	Not Known	

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

'little fried rice' or 'little Chinkie'. He didn't like it and realised that unless he did something life would become intolerable. One day he called his six tormentors together and challenged them to a fight after work, with the foreman as the referee. At the appointed time the six boys were lined up and Ted called them out one at a time, knocking each one down. Afterwards he had friends everywhere. For the other boys it as just as well, for the owner, Dan Lewis, appointed Ted as a type of enforcer, and if one of the boys misbehaved he had to answer to Ted.

Descendants of other Riverina-based Chinese-Australian families have similar stories. Lindsay Poy senior from Albury recalled that 'it was bloody awful at school, we used to get called chinky and darkie... we had a few fights'.[333] But happily that tended to be the worst of it, and he met with very little discrimination afterwards. For some the experience was much worse. Members of a Wagga-based family recalled that while the boys may have received some taunting at school because of their race, they could hold their own. Not so the girls, particularly if they had darker skin. These girls were teased, taunted and bullied - called chinks and half-castes, and one girl from another Chinese-Australian family in the same town committed suicide as result. The family did not socialise very much with other families in town. Some Chinese males would visit on Saturday evening where there was a swap of fish for pork and a shared dinner followed by Euchre (cards), and the children did not go to other children's places for birthdays or holidays. The family was so ashamed of their 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.[334]

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

[334] Information from Allison Nye, Castlemaine, Victoria, 2009.

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'.[335] Fraternisation between Europeans and Chinese in the camps, particularly in some of the less salubrious activities such as prostitution, gambling and sly grog selling, was just one aspect of their lives. More edifying was the mixing of the two races in the happier circumstances of 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'.[336] 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'.[337]

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'.[338] 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) entertained over 60 friends, mainly Europeans, to a banquet at the Chuey home. The celebrations differed from those held elsewhere in the region and were characterised by a heavy emphasis on the benefits of the Christian religion. It was reported that the

> table was laden with all the good things imaginable in the way of eatables, and soft drinks in abundance were provided; the surroundings, too, were most picturesque, Chinese lanterns being dotted here and there in the midst of a galaxy of decorations.[339]

Of particular significance was the readiness of the Chinese community to donate money to the local hospitals and help in other fund raising efforts. At Gundagai in 1879, the Chinese were congratulated on having set a 'praiseworthy example to the Europeans' by the generosity of their contributions to the hospital.[340] The same generosity was evident at Wagga. In January 1883, San Ling called in at *Daily Advertiser* as the representative of a number of Chinese residents to explain that the amount acknowledged in the paper by the Treasurer of the hospital from Kin, Lee, Chong & Co was the result of a collection among a large number of Chinese residents. He stated that 'several of them would be

---

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

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

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

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

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

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

discouraged if the acknowledgement was not made public'.[341] The ***Riverine Grazier*** carried regular lists of contributors to the Hay hospital, Europeans and C÷hinese alike. In February 1879, the list contained the names of 52 Chinese residents of and visitors to Hay, and the names of 30 Chinese at the small town of Booligal, plus the contributions of those residing on iconic stations such as Burrabogie.[342] The Deniliquin Chinese were equally generous, with 52 contributors from the town in 1875 and 66 in 1899.

The Chinese also took part in local concerts, fetes and processions, particularly where fund raising was involved, and were ready contributors to other worthy causes. 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.[343]

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, and included lopping the heads of some of their obnoxious rulers in their own country, following a lynch law trial.[344]

A similar level of participation occurred in other towns. Of particular note was a holiday and public 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...[345].

At Hay and Hillston, the Chinese were very active in local concerts, fetes and processions; particularly where fund raising for the hospital was involved, and often donated fireworks to the hospital fetes.[346] 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. The most generous was King Goon and Co, who donated £1 10s.[347] In August 1892a Chinese orchestra and singers performed to a mixed audience at the Athenaeum Hall in Hay. And in 1894 a number of Chinese men took part in the Hillston hospital fete procession. Participants included a Chinese band with instruments and a Chinese cook shop four-in-hand. Eight Chinese men participated in two Chinese races at the games that followed. In 1897 the three main storekeepers at the Hay camp

---

341 *Daily Advertiser*, 1 February 1883.

342 *Riverine Grazier*, 8 February 1879.

343 *Narrandera Ensign*, 22 January 1891.

344 *Narrandera Ensign*, 29 January 1891.

345 *Albury Banner*, 4 November 1876.

346 *Riverine Grazier*, 7 April 1891, 12 August 1892, 3 April, 19 October 1894, 23 April 1897, 2, 16 May 1899.

347 *Riverine Grazier*, 7 April 1891.

donated 5,000 packets of crackers each, and in 1899 the Chinese storekeepers donated 10,000 crackers towards the torchlight procession.[348] 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, the judges regarding the Yabtree tobacco as the best in the district.[349] In October 1894,Ye Yen and Wong Park both won prizes at the Hay show in the garden produce and fruit sections.[350]

A contributory factor to this relatively benign state of race relations was the economic co-dependence between the Chinese and the Europeans, for many Chinese provided invaluable services as pastoral workers, storekeepers and labour hirers, and market gardeners. Although most Europeans and Chinese led largely separate lives, there were many instances of an outpouring of affection at the departure of a long term Chinese resident for China, particularly a well-to-do merchant or market gardener, or at their funeral. For instance, at Junee in 1903 Tommy Ah Nan, a well-known vegetable gardener, entertained about 60 of his friends in the Methodist Church, including many Europeans, prior to his departure for China to see his parents. The chairman, Rev. A. Brown commented that they had begun to make arrangements for a send off, but Tommy had insisted in doing it himself. Rev. Brown stated that Tommy had lived in Junee for 10 years and in that time had been led a most exemplary life and had been a diligent worker. He remarked that:

> There had been a lot of talk about white Australia, but there are plenty of people of a coloured skin who possessed a white heart and Tommy Ah Nan was one of them...
>
> He was sure that Tommy was carrying with him the best wishes of those present as well as a great many people who were absent. He hoped he would soon return, and when he did... receive a hearty welcome by the residents of Junee.

Another guest, Mr R. Sutherland, stated that he had known Tommy for five or six years, and 'that his characteristics were such as to attract respect from anyone'.

> He was a good citizen and a loyal subject, and in fact was a most exemplary man in every sense of the word, That [sic] was more than they could say for a number of the young natives of this country. He was sure that Tommy would enjoy a happy time in China, and when he returned to Junee he hoped he would get as hearty welcome as any man that ever landed in Australia.

Tommy Sing Gee also said his farewells, and in doing so thanked both Rev. Pennington and Rev. Brown for introducing his people to the Christian religion in Junee. James Chuey also had a few words to say, describing Tommy as 'straightforward and a good Christian', and stating that if China was 'under British rule and Christianised rapid progress would be made'. He presented Tommy with a gold medal inscribed 'To Tommy Ah Nan by his Junee friends, 10th August 1903'.[351]

One highly regarded Chinese man in Wagga was Jimmy Gee, who died in 1883 at 67 years of age. He first appeared in Wagga as a market gardener, with a small greengrocer's shop, and by this and other means managed to 'get along prosperously'. In his obituary it was stated that he was

> generally liked in the town from his honest simplicity, so much so that when our senior member was on the hustings at the last general election, and referred to the Chinese question, he said that he would banish every Chinaman from the country excepting this identical person.[352]

---

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

[349] R.F. Horsley, Diaries, 1876-1891; Emily Horsley. *A Gleam of Sunshine.*

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

[351] *Junee Democrat*, 12 August 1903.

[352] *Daily Advertiser*, 17 July 1883.

Sam Yett's store, Narrandera.
Private collection

One of the largest and most elaborate funerals in the Riverina concerned the well known Adelong storekeeper, Ah Nam. His funeral provides an excellent illustration of the esteem with which individual Chinese could be held. His funeral cortege was one of the largest witnessed in Adelong for some time and all the leading business people attended, with no less than 600 at the grave site. The Rev. Soares read the Church of England service, and in a short addressalluded to the 'honest manliness of his character', for he was always ready to assist charities and each religious denomination received a share of his liberality'. According to the *Gundagai Times* he was 'a man of strict integrity, polite and courteous to all, and a genuine good townsman'.[353]

Another prominent Chinese citizen, very well known throughout the Riverina, was the Narrandera businessman, Sam Yett. Described as the 'King of Chinatown' he was held in very high esteem by Chinese and Europeans residents of the town. *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.[354]

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; he was a good business man, and scrupulously honest in all his transactions; and he was a ready and willing contributor to all charitable movements, as well as a liberal supporter of the institution in which he died.[355]

---

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

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

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

The river boat captain John Egge was another very highly regarded Chinese man. According to historian 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 their regard within the European community.[356]

Egge also 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 earned him gratitude that 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 retained the utmost respect and goodwill on all sides and the working men, in particular, thought much of their old friend'.[357]

An important ingredient in this scenario was the slowly changing nature of Chinese alliances and associations; a reflection of the dwindling Chinese population in the Riverina, the inevitable decline in the role of the fraternal organizations, and the increasing importance of Christian church membership and family. Many Chinese men, particularly the storekeepers, were Christian converts and members of one of the Christian churches, and were married, mostly to European women, although some married Chinese women. An early instance of the latter took place in 1880, the arrival of the Chinese wife of the Adelong storekeeper, Kum Hang Long, in Gundagai en route to Adelong, causing quite a sensation. At Gundagai the couple stayed at Fry's hotel where they dined with some of their countrymen. The *Gundagai Times* reporter remarked that

> She was attired after the Chinese fashion, her dress being of richly embroidered satin. She wore no hat or bonnet, but had a quantity of choice flowers in her hair.[358]

At Adelong, she was the subject of continued interest, but the rudeness of children anxious to get a glimpse of her must have been very annoying, and the adults were not much better.[359]

After 12 months her Chinese maid was sold to a Chinese storekeeper in Wagga for £90. Originally

---

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

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

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

[359] *Gundagai Times*, 20 April 1880.

Opening of the Tumut hospital. Dang Ah Chee, centre back row.
National Archives of Australia

the price had been £80, but Chinese women were in high demand, 'hence the advance in price'. The purchaser conveyed her away in a buggy accompanied by a half dozen Chinese men.[360]

Mixed marriages were seen as one way of bridging the racial divide; church was another, and later still, membership of European sporting, social and cultural institutions and the armed forces. These Chinese men did not abandon their fellow, often less fortunate, countrymen, or their traditional beliefs and allegiances, although for many these ties and associations became progressively weaker. As historians Kate Bagnall and Paul Macgregor have commented, many Chinese men in Australia upheld the family lineage by supporting wives in China and overseas, the Chinese wives either having had children before the husband left for Australia, or conceiving again on the husband's periodic return. Taking a younger wife or adopting sons was part of this strategy.[361] For these men clan and family ties in China were still very important. One of the telling characteristics of the Chinese people during these transitional years was the strength of their family ties, and their links with other Chinese families in the Riverina and elsewhere in Australia.

Emboldened by an intricate system of inter-marriage, clan and family allegiances, networks and adoptions, many Chinese men created miniature dynasties within their local district. Dang Ah Chee was one of these men. He was very generous, and a major benefactor of the Tumut hospital, which cost about £1300 to build, Ah Chee donating £100. He also donated a baptismal font for the

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

[361] 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. pp.25-28.

Dang Bown Sluey's younger wife, Look Duey Sluey's CEDT photograph, 1906.
National Archives of Australia

Presbyterian Church in 1883.

Together with his brother Dang Bown Sluey and other clan members they formed a business dynasty which endured for many years. 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 one of his returns to China acquired a concubine.[362]

=In his will Ah Chee made provision for a payment of £50 to the Tumut hospital and a generous provision of £7000 plus the Club House Hotel in Gundagai and other property to Dang Ah Hack of Gundagai. He bequeathed his Hong Kong businesses to his son Dang Yeng Tang, and most of his remaining Tumut estate to Dang Bown Sluey. His wife received a modest lump sum and monthly stipend and their house in Hong Kong. She later took the family to England.[363] Dang Ah Hack was closely associated with Dang Ah Chee in business matters, and also had a family - a first wife, son and daughter - in China. He had five sons and three daughters in Australia.[364] Dang Loon, who managed Dang Bown Sluey's Ty Loong business while Sluey was absent in China on estate matters, also had a first wife and a child in China.[365]

After Dang Ah Chee dissolved his company in Tumut, Ty Loong & Co was formed across the street on newly built premises, with Dang Bown Sluey as manager. Dang Bown Sluey was recalled to Hong Kong by the family elders to settle Ah Chee's affairs and in his absence the business was left in the hands of a cousin, Dang Loon (who also had a first wife in China). Later, Dang Bown Sluey's eldest boy (and Josephine's father), Dang Quong Wing, returned to Tumut from China to work in his father's business his father having since passed away. The Tiy Loong business was dissolved in 1926, her father intending

[362] Letter from Josephine Oh to Kate Bagnall, 20 October 2004; letter from Josephine Oh to Pam Archer, 30 June 1988.

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

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

[365] Series SP 244/2, C05/5679, National Archives of Australia (NAA), Sydney.

Dang Charles Doon and Esther with Bob, Ted, Eric and Betty. Doon 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

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

to return to China. However, 'a good Samaritan, probably once helped by Ah Chee, encouraged him by providing a loan to re-establish the business, which he did'. The Russell Street business was named Quong Wing. Dang Loon's daughter, Thelma, married Tom Young, who ran the Sun Kum Lee & Co store in Merrivale St, Tumut.[366]

Dang Charles Doon was another Dang clan member, and probably a nephew of Dang Ah Chee. He came to Australia in the 1890s and in about 1910 or 1911 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 Dick later still. The circumstances of Esther's arrival in Australia are shrouded in mystery, and part of the shadowy intrigue surrounding the administration of the White Australia Policy. Several of her children, John and Ted Doon and Grace Ching, were adamant that she entered under the assumed name of Gow, as a member of a Chinese-Australian family of the same name, a matter which is discussed in detail in the next section. Charles and Esther had a large family. Eight of their children were born in Tumut: Eric, Bob, Ted, Betty, John, Grace, Bonnie and Joyce, the size of the family making it most unlikely that, if detected, Esther would be deported. Sadly, Esther died at the early age of 50, leaving Betty, the eldest girl to become the 'mother' to the family.

Charles passed away on 12 November 1955. A local correspondent described him as an astute businessman, whose motto was 'Fair and Square to all and honest dealing'. No one had an adverse word to say against him. In his younger days he was a keen athlete and excelled at foot running. He was one of the first Chinese people to be baptised in the Tumut Church of England and was a member of the first Chinese Sunday school at Tumut Plains. He was also a founder of the JA Boys Organisation in Tumut.[367]

The young Doon boys were talented and passionate footballers and played with the Junior Anglican (JA) and Young Anglican (YA) teams. They were also passionate about horses. Ted recalled that the family entered the family horse 'Lady' in the Tumut and Gundagai shows where she won the prize for the best and quietest pony every time. Hearing of the horse's exploits the Sydney Royal Easter Show organisers invited the family for an exhibition every show day, all four boys sitting or standing on the horse's back.[368] Grace Ching recalls that her parents and the children were always welcome in other people's homes, and the children invited to birthday parties and the like.[369]

Charles and his sons raced their own horses at local and district meetings, and by the early 1960s the Doon brothers had a stable of ten horses and Ted was the rider on many occasions. He rode the syndicate's first winner, Piasano, at the First Improver's Handicap at Wagga on 2 March 1962, following this up by a win the following week on Digger's Rest in the St Patrick's Day handicap.[370] 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 was hailed throughout the local district, many Tumut punters travelling to Melbourne to support the brothers.[371]

---

366 Letter from Josephine Oh to Pam Archer, 30 June 1988.

367 *Tumut and Adelong Times*, 18 November 1955, 20 April 1993.

368 Discussions with the late Ted Doon, 2010.

369 Conversation with Grace Ching, May 2012.

370 *Daily Advertiser*, 3, 10 March 1962.

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

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

Ted Doon recalled that he wanted for be a jockey from the earliest days. While still at school he did track work at Tumut, and when he was 14 he worked as an apprentice to Danny Lewis at Randwick, and later became one of Sydney's leading jockeys. Between 1944 and 1950, he rode winners in the AJC Metropolitan, Summer Cup (twice), Christmas Cup, Carrington Stakes (twice), Tattersall's Cup and Canterbury Stakes. Ted lived in Canberra for many years, until his death in October 2011.[372]

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.[373] 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.[374]

[372] Sun Herald, 26 July 1981; *Daily Telegraph*, 4 May 1988, personal reminiscences, 2010.

[373] *Tumut and Adelong Times*, 8 April 2004, 28 August 2007.

[374] *Tumut and Adelong Times*, 28 August 2007.

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

May 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 as Tumut Citizen of the Year in 1991. Decades of devotion to pastoral care and her work with a host of local organisations were rewarded by the presentation of the Order of Australia Medal (O.A.M.) by the Governor General Michael Jeffrey in 2004. At the time of writing she was still heavily involved in voluntary pastoral care, church activity and the Lions Club.[375]

Eric & Zelda Doon were also very popular, and after their marriage 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.[376] In the years to follow Eric and Zelda continued their earlier involvement with the Anglican Youth (YA) of Tumut, Eric as Treasurer and Zelda as President.

Richard Doon's Australian story is multi-facetted and intimately linked with the administration of the White Australia Policy. He emigrated in 1938 under exemptions which allowed Chinese merchants (in this case his father) to sponsor staff or family members to work in their Australian businesses, but could not bring out his wife, Chen, or his daughter, until 1952. He worked at first in his father's business in Tumut, before becoming a restaurant owner in Sydney. In 1954, he bought a half share in the Chung On Café in Moonee Ponds, Melbourne, later becoming the sole owner, and the restaurant soon becoming a local icon. In 1970 he became a Parliamentary member of the Taiwanese Upper House under special provisions which allowed Chinese people with Taiwanese allegiances to be nominated for Parliament. 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 St. Richard had contacts and influence at the very highest levels in white Australia, and often used them to respond to problems caused by the Immigration Department. He was heavily involved in local community affairs and was Chairman of the Chinese Citizen's Association, and helped build many community projects for migrants, including the Chinese Cultural Centre at Ascot Vale. His son Danny also became widely involved in civic affairs, serving as president of Melbourne Chinatown, president of the Chinese Restaurateurs Association of Victoria, and vice-president of the Moonee Ponds Chamber of Commerce. He also organised the establishment of the Victorian Elderly Chinese Hostel in Ascot Vale in the 1990s.[377]

---

[375] *Tumut and Adelong Times* 16 July 1991, 8 April 2004, 27 January2004, 28 August 2007.

[376] *Tumut and Adelong Times*, 18 January 1954.

[377] Andrew Junor, 'Chung On: Moonee Ponds and the lemon chicken long boom', Honours thesis,

The Doon family maintained close contacts with other Chinese families in Tumut and elsewhere, including Dang Loon's family, after they moved to Sydney. Auntie Violet (Dang Loon's wife), as she was known to the Doon family, remained in close contact after Esther Doon passed away in 1943. She helped Charles buy dresses for the Doon girls throughout their teen years, and together with her husband, invited the girls to stay at their corner grocery shop in Surry Hills for Christmas holidays on several occasions. Their son, Don, came to Tumut for his annual holidays and stayed with Tom and Thelma Young and became good friends with the Doon family. One of his sisters, Joyce, was a keen horsewoman and Charles made sure she had access to the horses in the stable when she visited Thelma and Tom. Gordon Wee, who later brought his wife from China, lived in the Chinese camp before buying a restaurant in Wynyard Street. Gordon's family were close friends of the Doon and Shai Hee families and kept in contact after they moved to Junee, and later, Melbourne.[378]

While they call Australia home the Doon family has never forgotten their traditional allegiances. Charles Doon was strongly connected with the Sze Yap Association building at the Chinese Camp, and prepared and performed burial ceremonies, which involved incense, paper money and the roasting of a pig. The ceremonies usually happened on the actual burial day, because the men had saved money for the ceremony throughout their working life. Towards the end of the 1930s, only two or three elderly men lived at the Chinese camp and as they did not have much money saved, there was no ceremony, just the incense and burning of the paper money. Those who had the ceremony had arranged with Quong Wing and Charles Doon beforehand.[379] In 2007, Charles' grandson Ramon Doon accepted a position as principal of the international school in Guangzhou, later moving to another school in Shenzen. Ramon and his wife Tracey lived in China for two years. As an Australian-born Chinese Ramon found the experience both enlightening and confronting. In 2008, twenty five 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.[380]

Another illustration of the family's links with China were the ties between Richard and Danny Doon and the ancestral village. Originally a teacher in the village, Richard was also involved in the administration of the district and was an adviser to the village mayor. After World War Two, he wrote to his friends in the village for information on the welfare of his family and later sponsored his former teacher under the student provisions. In Australia he contributed money to the home village in China to help with the maintenance of the village and the graves of their ancestors and to help pay for the annual Ch'ing Ming ceremonies. In the village there were some 50 or 60 families with the same name. Danny has also contributed money to the village.[381] The family has held several reunions in Australia, the first of which was in Tumut in 1993. Sixty descendants attended the function, coming from all over Australia, and including grandchildren and great grandchildren. The most recent was in Melbourne in 2013.[382]

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,

---

University of Melbourne, 2010, pp.20-33; discussions with Danny Doon, September 2011.

[378] Information from Grace Ching, March 2012.

[379] Information from Grace Ching, October 2011.

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

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

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

William Shai Hee prior to 1920.
Private collection

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 William's friends until they could travel to Australia.[383]

The children attended school in Tumut with Reg, Allan and Joe joining the Boy Scouts. Allan proved to be a very good artist and mechanic and Allan and Reg were both very good musicians. Chin See was a talented herbalist. Additional family members were Bill, Margaret, Eileen, Mary, Bob and Pam. In 1948 most of the family went to live in Sydney to further the careers and education of the children. Ted stayed in Tumut where he became the local photographer. Allan had been working as a mechanic and Joe was finishing his Leaving Certificate and became Captain of the Tumut High School and Captain of the Senior Rugby League football team. The Shai Hee family had strong social contacts with other Chinese families in Tumut and elsewhere in the Riverina and Sydney (for example, the Chuey family).[384]

Despite these positives, the Shai Hee family had mixed experiences socially. Joe Shai Hee recalled that his parents and siblings were never invited into the homes of White Australians, even for children's birthday parties.[385] According to Reg Shai Hee the boys were always in fights at school, sport eventually proving to be the great equaliser. Racism did not only affect the children of Chinese families, but also the children of Aboriginal families, the European children trying unsuccessfully to enlist Joe's help to attack the Aboriginal children as they crossed a bridge on their way to school. Ted suffered more than

[383] Joe and Reg Shai Hee, 'An Anecdote on the life of Chin See Shai-Hee', unpublished reminiscences, Sydney, 2004; Letter from Clarrie Hogue to Harold Holt, Minister for Immigration, November 1952. (courtesy of Chris Shai Hee); Ross Curnow, 'Bland, Francis Armand (1882-1967), Australian Dictionary of Biography, Vol.13, 1993; www.adb.anu.edu.au/biography/bland-francis-armand-9525.

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

[385] Information from Joe Shai Hee, May 2012.

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

The Shai Hee family, 1933. Left to right, Wille and Allan, Eva and nanny, Chin See and Reg, Jean and Ted.
Private collection

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

the other Shai Hee boys. He was very bright and very good at his school work, but was expelled from school once it was discovered that he was born overseas, and therefore an alien. He was the eldest of the children, but more vulnerable, and felt the effects of his expulsion severely. He completed the rest of his schooling at the convent and became a member of the Roman Catholic Church; all the other Shai Hee children were Anglicans. Joe also had his problems. Although he was born overseas, he was not expelled (probably because he came to Australia much later). But he suffered in other ways. He was the popular choice as captain of the senior football team, but the coach deliberately ignored the wishes of the rest of the team and chose a European boy. Fortunately for Joe the support from the other boys was sufficient enough for the decision to be overturned. At a technical college in Sydney, sometime in the late 1950s, he scored the highest points in his year and was the top apprentice in NSW. However, because the Premier of NSW was to make the presentation at the Sydney Town Hall, a European boy was chosen to receive the prize instead.[386]

There are many other examples of strong family networks in the Riverina, some with ties to the Wagga district. One of the strongest networks was in Narrandera, beginning with the prosperous merchant Sam Yett, and his nephews George and William Hock Shung. George married Jessie Lamonte, the daughter of Adelaide Lamonte and Willie Ah Kinn of Urana.

George and Jessie had four children; Mervyn, Hilton, Keith and Heather. On his death George 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, and in past years had been a contributor to the Hospital and

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

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

other movements'.[387] Jessie died three years later.[388] The Shung family had very strong connections with other Narrandera based Chinese people. One of these was Wong Gooey, the famed land contractor, who married and had a son, who 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 St for a time.

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. Described by the Narrandera Argus as a 'Sensational Plane Crash', Hilton and six other crew members of a Beaufighter were killed when the plane hit high tension electricity wires in September 1945. All the crew were locals and the funeral service was one of the largest held in Narrandera. Hundreds of people lined the streets and attended the graveside service.[389]

His 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.[390]

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

[387] *Narrandera Argus*, 23 May 1944.
[388] *Narrandera Argus*, 4 February 1947.
[389] *Narrandera Argus*, 7 September 1945.
[390] *Narrandera Argus*, 1 September 1950.

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

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

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

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

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 wool classer. 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. 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.[391]

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 strongly that there are many more descendants of Chinese Australian families living in the Riverina and nearby districts. Annie married Thomas Hoban. They had four children, Iris, Dorothea, Evelyn and Alton. Iris married John Reuben Hunt, a flour miller, and had two children, Patricia and John (Jack), John marrying Lorna Salter, who has now become the family chronicler. John and Lorna live in Narrandera and are life members of the Leeton Harness Racing Club, Lorna earning the NSW Volunteer of the Year Award in 2007 for her work with the club. Jack was the airport manager at Narrandera. Dorothea married James Pearson, a descendant of whom is James Pearson, who also lives in Narrandera. 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, Royce and Evelyn, still live in the Batlow district,. Norman Lett and Mervyn Shung were close friends.[392]

Two other family connections straddling the length and breadth of the Riverina district and with present-day Wagga connections involve the Pack family from Hay and the Choy family from Grong Grong. Alex Pack was one of 18 children born to Margaret Pack and Ah Pack, who was a market gardener on Til Til station between Balranald and Ivanhoe, often selling vegetables in Hay when returning to see his family. Margaret remained in Hay where she raised the children. Alex spent most of his working life as a shearer, and at the time of writing this account he still lived in Hay.[393] Harold, one

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

[392] Discussions with Lorna Hunt, Geoffrey Shung and Royce Lett, 2009.

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

Florence Choy (née Pack).
Private collection

of Alex's brothers, worked as an apprentice in a local bakery and a dam sinker, enlisting in the army in the early weeks of the war. He was taken prisoner in Libya, and interned in Italy where he escaped from the camp and spent several months wondering in Northern Italy before making his way to Switzerland, from where he was repatriated to Australia. 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'.[394]

One of Alex's sisters, Florence, married Harry Choy from Grong Grong. They had two children, Bill and Betty.

Betty lived in Grong Grong and worked both there and in Narrandera as a telephone operator. Later she married Bob Menzies, who ran a garage and later a steel fabrication business in Grong Grong with his brothers in law. Betty helped run the nearby Bluebell Café. Later, Bob and Betty retired to live at Ashmont, Wagga where they still live today. On her father's side of the family Betty's grandparents were William and Susan Quong. They had three children, Percy, Albert and William (Harry), who became Betty's father. On William's death, Susan married Charlie Choy, and they had two children, Bert and Livinia.[395]

The Choy family were very highly regarded residents of Narrandera and Grong Grong. Albert Choy died in 1949 at 60 years of age when his coat was caught in a piece of machinery in his Narrandera laundry. 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'.[396] His wife, Rita, had passed away the previous year. In her obituary she was described as a 'highly respected resident of the Narrandera district'. She was 'possessed of an amiable and likeable disposition, and had many friends in the district'. Rita was a member of the CWA at Grong Grong and Griffith, and during the war years was an enthusiastic worker for the Chinese Relief Fund. Susan Choy (formerly Quong) was born in Hong Kong and came to Australia at 15 years of age. She passed away in August 1954 at the age of 86 years. On her passing it was said that she 'gave her help to all charitable and patriotic movements in her district, as well as other efforts that helped advance the locality in which she lived.[397] Florence Choy, the wife of Harry Choy, died in 1954 at 52 years. She had been very active in local organisations, such as the CWA, the Far West Children's Health Scheme and her church.[398] Her husband, Harry Choy, died in 1974 at the age of 82 years. He had formerly been active

394 *Riverine Grazier*, 1 July 1969.

395 Discussions with Alex Pack and Betty Menzies, 2009 and 2010.

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

397 *Narrandera Argus*, 16 August 1954.

398 *Narrandera Argus*, 30 December 1954.

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.[399]

The Albury-based Poy family are another very well known Chinese family in the Riverina with Wagga connections. Their story began on the Victorian goldfields in 1880, when Lim Coon married a European woman, Mary Jones. They had four children, one of which was Louisa Coon, who married Willy Ah Poy, a fruit and vegetable storekeeper in Chiltern, Victoria.

They had nine children. Willy travelled frequently to China to see his parents, and possibly he had a wife and children there was well. He did not return from his last trip and he was presumed dead. Louisa moved to Albury with the eight surviving children, where she met and married Edward (Teddy) Mahlook, a local market gardener.[400]

During World War II, three of Louisa's sons, William, Roy and Lindsay, were in different parts of Asia fighting the Japanese. William joined the British army in Hong Kong where he was a motor bike dispatch rider and won the Military Medal. He was captured when the city was taken on Christmas Day 1941, but managed to blend in with the locals and escape soon after. For months he sold rice to the Japanese before stealing it and selling it back again, later managing 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. Some years later he recalled that the bad memories lingered for many years, haunting him in his waking hours and at times of rest. He confessed that if he had to do it again he would rather kill himself. Lindsay put up his age so that he could join the army. His turn for overseas duty came in May 1945 when as a trained engineer he went to North 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.[401]

Years later, on their return, Roy became a bookmaker. Lindsay worked at the woollen mills in Albury before he too became a bookmaker, later retiring and buying a taxi, before retiring again. His son Roy followed in his father's occupation, which at times caused confusion to some punters, not knowing which Roy to go to with their tickets. He also owned the Commercial Hotel, Albury later retiring from bookmaking and buying a taxi. Roy was a well known Australian Rules footballer and John Harms from the *Melbourne Age* included him in his list of the ten greatest Chinese Australian footballers of all time. Roy also had interests in several horses, and was always keen for one of them to win a city race. Sadly and somewhat ironically, one of the horses 'La Chance Finale' (last chance) did, but by then Roy had passed away. Between 600 and 700 people attended his funeral at St Patrick's Church, Albury in October 2008, many people having to stand outside.[402]

After the war, William became a very successful businessman and at one stage was commuting weekly

---

399 *Narrandera Argus*, 30 June 1974.

400 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.

401 *Border Mail*, 12 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.

402 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.

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

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

Willie and Louisa Poy with two of their nine children, William and Doris.
Private collection

Ted Mahlook & Louisa (who was Poy), Albury.
Private collection

Lindsay, William & Roy Poy.
Private collection

between Canada, New York and Hong Kong, where he managed an international brokerage firm. His son Neville became a famous plastic surgeon in Canada

Another Poy brother, Lesley, moved to Sydney where he created a family circle of jockeys, racehorse owners, trainers and professional punters. He was connected to the horse 'Better Loosen Up', which won the Japan Cup in 1996, at the same time that the annual Poy family reunion was being held at Noriuel Park.[403]

A Poy sister, Doris, married George Amber Moy (who was part Chinese, see photograph in *Market Gardening* section of this essay), who worked at Borambola Station near Wagga as a boundary rider, inspecting and repairing fences and undertaking repair work on the station buildings. After his parent's separation, their son, Keith, lived with relatives, Frank and Katherine Angnea, who had a market garden at North Wagga (see photograph in *Market Gardening* section of this essay). A few months later he was joined by his father. Frank was part Chinese and Katherine a sister of Ted Mahlook, the stepfather of the Poy children.[404]

But 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. Little is known of his life in Wagga other than he worked in the Riverina as a cook, labourer or market gardener, or all three, finally settling in the West Wyalong, Barmedman, Marsden area. 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

[403] Wilson, 'The dinky-di Poy Boys'; *Albury & District Historical Society Bulletin*, May 2005, No 446;'Adrienne Clarkson', *Wikipedia*; information, Lindsay Poy junior, Albury, 2010.

[404] Discussions with Keith Moy, August 2010.

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'[405] His wife Jane was noted as being 'a highly esteemed resident of the district'. Not one report on the family in the local press, other than in William's obituary, commented on the family's Chinese connection.

Kate Bagnall has remarked that even though the older Sam boys and grandsons were 'Europeans' enough to fight for Australia, their younger brother was 'Chinese' enough to need special papers to prove his right of return, despite being born in Australia. 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 during the advance at Gruignes on 23 August 1918 he was in charge of the pack animals carrying ammunition forward to the machine gun positions, and maintained a constant supply of ammunition despite heavy machine gun and artillery fire, enabling them to give the necessary support to the remainder of the Battalion. His conduct was marked for 'coolness, courage, and determination'. Curiously, no record could be 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, war grave records or service records.[406]

James Wong Chuey was probably the most influential and wealthy Chinese man in the Riverina district. 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 See Yap Society, the Glebe Temple and the Chinese Masonic Lodge in Surry Hills. Several instances of his relationships with the Chinese community and the church have already been recounted. A further example of his church connections occurred in November 1901 when he was actively involved in the celebrations for the anniversary of the Wesleyan Church.[407] In January 1902, following another lecture on China by the Rev. Piper, he held a banquet at his Regent St home.[408] Suffice to say that James Chuey was clearly a father or mentor to the local Chinese community, and one of Junee's most prominent and respected citizens.

A further example of James Chuey's very high standing was in August 1912 when he wrote in his capacity, firstly as a Junee businessman, and secondly as an officer of the Chinese Masonic Society of NSW, to Dr George (Chinese) Morrison, an Australian, to congratulate him on his appointment as Political Adviser to the Chinese Government.[409] In 1925, he was invited by the Chinese Masonic Society

---

[405] Kate Bagnall, 'That Famous Fighting Family', *Your History*, March-April 2012, pp. 37-40; Series SP 42/1, C1915/4032, C1915/4058, NAA, Sydney.

[406] 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.

[407] *Junee Democrat*, 1 November 1901.

[408] *Junee Democrat*, 31 January 1902.

[409] 'Morrison Papers', Vol.66 of MS 312, Mitchell Library, Sydney, pp.391-397.

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

in Melbourne to help celebrate the opening of a new Masonic Lodge in Shanghai.[410] He was also a confident 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 (the son of the Jembaicumbene storekeeper and herbalist Ah How), who had been kidnapped from the Hsin-ning train in China by bandits. The boy was a student at Newington College, Stanmore, and was in China to complete his Chinese education. Holman 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.[411] The Chuey house, Rose Villa, a substantial brick building, can still be seen in Dalley St, Junee. The Chueys left Junee for Sydney in or about 1917.

Chuey's wife, Rose, a Chinese woman, was very active socially, and well regarded by Junee residents for her 'lovable disposition and well known benevolence, charitable and Christian principles'. Rose was an adopted daughter of James Chung On, a prominent citizen of Launceston, and a patriarch of the Tasmanian Chinese community. Jan Yee, a daughter of Thelma Young (formerly Loon), has commented that Rose had been an abandoned child in China. When James Chung On's wife came to Australia she took Rose with her to help her as a maid. James Chung On had worked as a market gardener and tin miner, and had been heavily involved in community activities in Launceston. One of his daughters, Violet, married Dang Loon from Tumut.[412]

---

[410] *Melbourne Argus*, 14 September 1925.

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

[412] *Junee Southern Cross*, 24 July 1953; *Hobart Mercury*, 25 February 1952; *Launceston Examiner*, 25 February 1952; discussions with Jan Yee, June 2012.

Another prominent Junee identity with strong Wagga business connections was Tommy Ah Wah and his wife Mary. They had six children, several of whom worked in the Junee garage, in particular Lesley Edward, Linda Emily and Albert James (Jack).

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

Ruby, the eldest child, married Henry Lee, a Cowra-based herbalist. Russell Danswan worked for the Wahs almost his entire working life and remembers them as very kind and considerate employers. The family belonged to the Methodist church and had strong social links with the Mee Ling family in Temora, Russell recalling the warm-hearted greetings when the Mee Ling family visited Junee. The Wah family often visited the Mee Lings in Temora. According to Russell the Wah children were all well educated and some of them attended Brothers in Wagga. The girls were very proficient in dancing and piano and Tommy was a very good fiddle player. Lorna Hepper and Rhoda Haddon recalled that another daughter, Edna, taught tap dancing to the girls for the Methodist church concerts. Lesley enlisted in the Australian army in the Second World War and in 1945 was in Sabah, formerly British North Borneo, where he contracted malaria and was repatriated to Australia.[413] 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. The Wahs owned a substantial stone built home in Junee, which was also used for a time as a boarding house. Clarrie Leslie, another Junee garage owner with a Chinese background, was very highly regarded in the local community. He served on the municipal council for three terms between 1947 and 1956 and again between 1962 and 1965, and was Mayor of Junee between 1949 and 1956.[414]

David Walster, a Junee resident, recalled that his grandfather, Arthur Joseph Walster, mixed socially with James and Rose Chuey up until their departure from Junee in about 1917. Although David's father, Arthur James Walster, did not mix socially with the Ah Wah family (the Ah Wah family arrived in Junee in 1918), he was fiercely anti-racist, and on one occasion strongly chastised David, who was only a boy of 10, for calling Les Ah Wah 'Ching Chong Chinaman' when Les came to their house. His father insisted that in future David refer to Les as Mr Ah Wah.[415]

The Mee Ling family of Temora was also held in high regard. George Mee Ling senior, the owner of Man

[413] Information from Russell Danswan, Junee, and from Meredie Mee Ling (June 2012).

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

[415] Personal reminiscences, David Walster, Junee, August 2014.

N° 44.

N. 21. COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA. No. 1

DUPLICATE. *Immigration Restriction Acts 1901-1905 and Regulations.*

CERTIFICATE EXEMPTING FROM DICTATION TEST.

I, Acting William Lawson 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 Acting 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 :—

By Authority: Robt. S. Brain, Government Printer, Melbourne.

CHIPPING ... 23 APR 1910 CUSTOM HOUSE

... BRANCH 23 APR. 1910 ... HOUSE SYDNEY.

Date of departure 27th March 1910 Destination China

Ship Aldenham

Date of return — Ship

Port

Customs Officer

See 22/716

George Mee Ling, one of the first generation Australian Mee Ling brothers, CEDT document, 1910.
National Archives of Australia

Sing and Co, and his wife Jeng, were residents of Temora from the earliest days. He was a member of the local Masonic Lodge for 14 years and very active in charitable work. On his departure for China in 1910, the members of the Masonic Lodge presented George with an illustrated Testimonial 'as a small token of their deep appreciation of your efforts in always promoting the best interests and harmony of the Lodge'. In the testimonial it was stated that the Brethren will ever remember the loyal and faithful services that you have so efficiently and successfully given to Lodge Temora as Treasurer during the past twelve years'. The family returned to China in 1910 with their children, George, Andrew, Albert and Annie. George died in China and was buried there. George junior stayed for about 16 years, during which time he received an 'excellent education, being able to read and speak Chinese fluently'.[416]

Andrew, Albert and George Mee Ling.
Temora Rural Museum

George junior returned to Australia at the age of 19, and was an active member of the Temora community, enjoying tennis, bush picnics and barbeques with family members and a keen collector of coins and antiques. On his passing in 1975, he was described as having a genial personality and gentle manner, and a 'ready response to those in need'. His brother Andrew passed away the following year. Andrew had married Katherine Ah Sue. Her father, Thomas, left China at the age of 17 years and spent 67 years in Australia, of which 30 were in Temora, where he established a green grocery business and owned a market garden. Before his death in 1942 he transferred his business to his only surviving daughter Katherine, with whom he had lived since the death of his wife Mary, two years previously. With the exception of George senior, all members of the Mee Ling and Ah Sue families were buried with Church of England rites.[417]

Friendship and influence can come in other guises as well. It was no coincidence that Quong Tart worked with Sub-Inspector Brennan on his 1884 report on the Chinese camps in the Riverina. Quong Tart was possibly the most influential Chinese Australian in NSW at the time, a philanthropist and a good friend to many. His choice was logical. However, there may be more to it than that, as an article in the *Daily Advertiser* of 17 February 1891 indicates. The correspondent stated that 'Quong Tart, the leading Chinese resident in Australia', paid a visit to Wagga to attend marriage festivities of a relative

[416] *Temora Independent*, 3 February 1942, 5 June 1975, 3 January 1940, 8 April, 1976; Temora Centenary Committee, *Temora Yesterday and Today*, p.250; information from Meredie Mee Ling, June and July 2012; Lodge Temora Testimonial, 27 April 1909.

[417] *Temora Independent*, 3 February 1942, 5 June 1975, 3 January 1940, 8 April, 1976; Temora Centenary Committee, *Temora Yesterday and Today*, p.250; information from Meredie Mee Ling, June and July 2012.

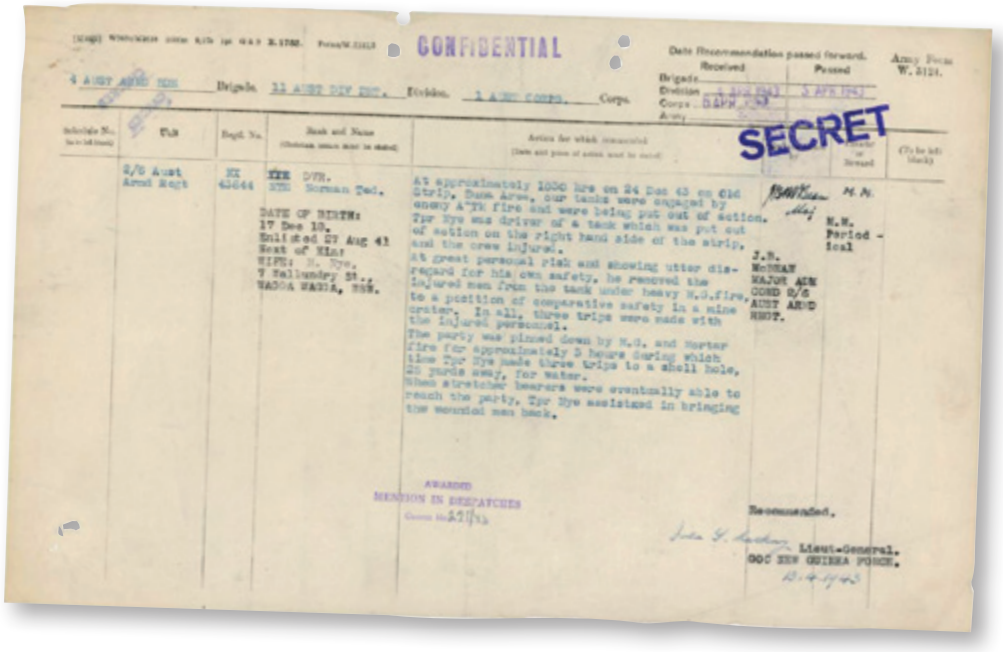
Arthur and Mabel Nye, Wagga Wagga.
Private collection

of Mrs Tart (formerly Margaret Scarlett), and that about five years ago he had visited Wagga for the farewell dinner given to Brennan. While in Wagga in 1891, and accompanied by Senior Sergeant Powell, he made a tour of inspection of the Chinese quarter, and 'was received with great ovation by the children of the flowery land resident in that locality'. The relationship between Brennan and Quong Tart was both professional and personal.

Some Wagga-based families had mixed experiences, but were still economically and socially successful, and their descendants continue to live in Wagga and surrounds today. Their experiences demonstrate the strength and power of family and informal kinship networks, and their success in an otherwise alien and difficult work environment. In the case of the Nye family, Daniel Nye, the patriarch, came to Australia in the 1860s paying his own way, though as he was a naturalised British citizen he may not have had to pay the entry tax. He made his way to Wagga where he met Ellen Richardson. They had several children; Arthur, Isabelle, Robert, Dolly and Jessie, and lived at Freer St, Wagga, the children attending Gurwood St School. Daniel was a hawker servicing the small country towns near Currawarna and may have been a court interpreter during the 1880s and 1890s. Arthur accompanied his father on his many bush trips and later became a boundary rider on one of the large properties near Currawarna. He married Hannah Mabel Rogers (Mabel) and they had six children, Jack. Robert, Marjory, Dorothy, Isobelle and Norman, all the children attending the Gurwood St School. Arthur continued hawking after Daniel's death in 1904 and worked as a market gardener and later a nurseryman at his Gosse Street home, becoming reasonably wealthy in the process, and not retiring until he entered The Haven in his late 80s.[418]

Arthur's sister Isabelle, Daniel's eldest child, ran the household in the absence of the parents (Ellen having left some years earlier). The children were, however, well provided for – they were well dressed,

[418] Information from Allison Nye, Castlemaine, and Lexa Shulz, Wagga Wagga.


CONFIDENTIAL

SECRET

Norman Ted Nye's recommendation for a military citation.
National Archives of Australia

well educated and well fed. Isabelle never married, working for a time with the Hamilton family at Illabo, cooking and cleaning, then travelling around the district, and returning to Wagga intermittently to help Hannah. In the 1940s she worked in Melbourne, before returning to live in Wagga. She built a house on land in Forsyth St, later living with Arthur and Hannah. 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 actions he was Mentioned in Despatches. After contracting malaria in the early part of 1942, he was evacuated to Australia and later discharged.[419]

Another Wagga family included Lucy Ah Kin, Ah Kim or Ah Kem and Joe Coey, a green grocer in Fitzmaurice St and later a tobacco farmer at Hillas Creek. The story of Lucy and Joe illustrates the difficulties in tracing family histories of some Chinese families and the ephemeral and uncertain circumstances in which many Chinese lived. If it suited them to change their names, they did, often anglicising them in the process to help avoid discrimination. The experiences of Lucy and Joe 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 certainly was at Wagga and Hillas Creek. Lucy's father John Ah Kin was a gold miner on the Jembaicumbene goldfield near Braidwood; her mother was Sarah Ratcliff.

[419] Recommendation for Award, 8883, NX438444, 12 April 1943, NAA, Canberra.

Charley On Won and Lucy Ah Kin's family.
Private collection

Charlie Wong Hing with Kirsty Hucker.
Museum of the Riverina, Wagga Wagga

Lucy was born in 1855 or 1856, spending her teenage years in various institutions, such as industrial schools, and as a domestic worker. Later at about the age of 17, she married Joe Coey at Wagga.

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. Later the family moved to Hillas Creek. Dolley Mary On was born 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 was born in 1892 and Richard Robert Cooey in 1895. The family later moved to Bathurst where Lucy and Joe again changed their names 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.

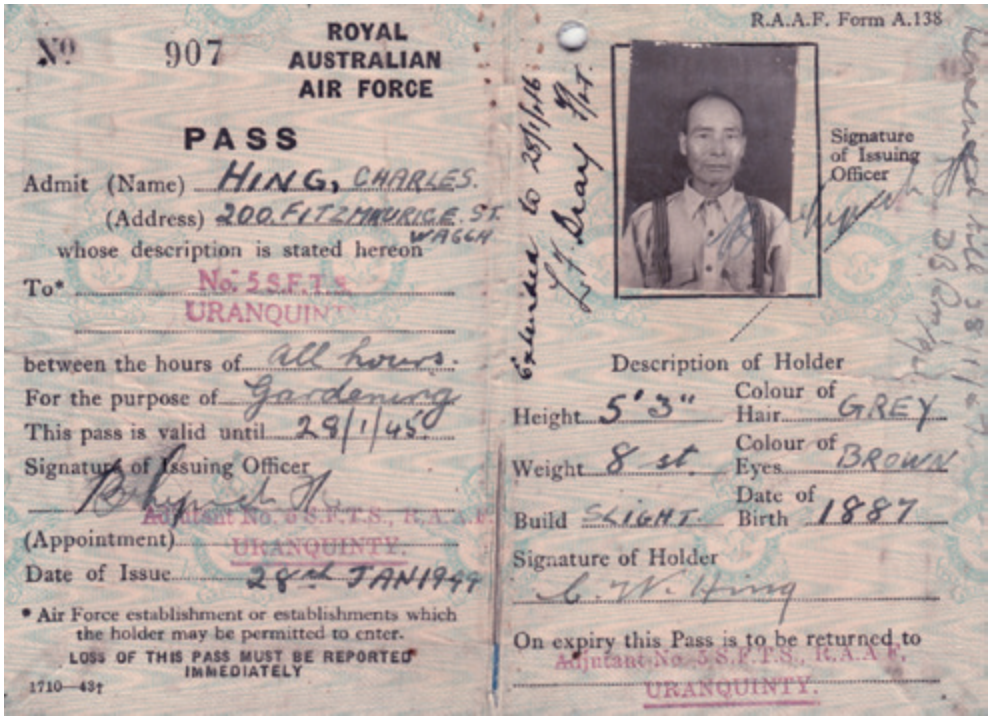
Charlie Wong Hing, date unknown.
Museum of the Riverina, Wagga Wagga

Occasionally, very strong and genuine relationships were formed between Chinese and white Australians. Perhaps the most heart-warming story concerns Charlie Wong Hing, a market gardener at North Wagga. When Frank Rynehart was very young Charlie played with him and the other children, using fruit as a substitute ball. Frank and the other children would belt the fruit with a cricket bat or hockey stick. When Charlie called at their home to deliver his produce, his mother would have a cup of tea ready for him. At Christmas time the Chinese men, including Charlie, would give a jar of ginger as a present. Frank said that Charlie was happy and well liked in the neighbourhood.[420]

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, swam ashore and made his way to the Riverina area where he later assumed the identity of a deceased fellow Chinese man. He went back to China at some stage for he had a son there, but left before the boy was born, so never actually saw him.

One of Charlie's customers was Eric Roberts, who at that time was living atop the present 2WG building in Wagga. The lives of the two men soon became insolubly interwoven. Eric had been a schoolteacher at Narrandera, but his real passion was the making of crystal radio sets, which he sold locally. His superiors soon told him that he had to make a choice between the crystal sets or teaching. He chose the former and went to Wagga, acquiring a licence to transmit radio and leasing a transmitter, later

[420] McMullen, *Transcript of interview with Frank Rynehart.*



Charlie Wong Hing's RAAF pass, 1945.
Museum of the Riverina, Wagga Wagga

building one himself. In the early 1930s Eric had very little money left after expenses and Charlie often gave him vegetables without charge. One time Eric noticed that Charlie had stopped coming. Seeing Charlie down the street one day he was told that Charlie could no longer bring vegetables because his horse had died. Eric responded by buying Charlie a horse.

In the Second World War Eric obtained Charlie a job as market gardener for the RAAF at Uranquinty.

Charlie liked the job as it gave him an opportunity to play fan - tan in the evenings on the base. After the War Eric employed Charlie as a gardener, cook and general help on his farm at Clear Springs, and he became more strongly allied to the family; 'Whatever Charlie wanted, he got'.

Often he would go to Sydney and mingle with the Chinese community and play fan-tan, always returning to the farm with a paper bag of chocolate frogs for the children. Charlie sent money to his son in China though a contact in Bourke St Melbourne. His son wrote to him a number of times, including during the difficult years of the Cultural Revolution when contacts with overseas people were discouraged and sometimes punished. The letters were transmitted through an uncle in Hong Kong. Writing in 1968, the son expressed his concern that his father was in a foreign land with no family to care for him, and urged him to make arrangements to return to China to live with his family, and assuring him that everything was alright at home. The uncle warned Charlie to consider carefully the question of returning to China, 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 later visited Charlie's family in China.

Despite the 1888 immigration restrictions, travel to and from China was a regular event for many

Charlie Wong Hing at Clear Springs, Jingellic.
Museum of the Riverina, Wagga Wagga

Charlie Wong Hing's son, daughter-in-law, grandsons, their wives and great grandchild in China, none of whom he ever met.
Museum of the Riverina, Wagga Wagga

The White Australia Policy

Chinese residing in Australia. As historian Michael Williams has commented, the regular flow of remittances, donations and gifts brought on trips to the villages meant that much of NSW's Chinese heritage resides there, the most visually conspicuous being the new and bigger homes with their defensive towers or a totally foreign house. Hong Kong came to play an increasingly important role, as a point of departure and arrival and a safe haven, for village life was not always safe, and Hong Kong provided a refuge from the poverty and corruption in the home villages.[421]

The *Immigration Restriction Act 1901* and the White Australia Policy replaced the colonial immigration restrictions, the new policy having its basis in these earlier restrictions on Chinese immigration, a continuing fear of the alien 'other', a resurgent Japan and perceptions of unfair economic competition. But, as historian A.T. Yarwood has 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.[422] The similarities between the language used by the politicians and metropolitan press in the Federation debates and those in 1888 is striking. 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.[423] The authorities, and in particular labour politicians, strictly administered and scrutinised the immigration regulations for Chinese people; any major concessions would have been a serious breach of policy.[424]

The new arrangements became effective on 21 October 1902, at which time NSW finally abandoned its poll tax for Chinese arriving by land. However, the tax remained for ships' passengers for another 6 months, other than for naturalised Chinese, and Chinese visitors had to pay the NSW government a bond of £100 in addition to the £100 bond demanded by the Commonwealth. The state law lapsed in mid 1903. 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 Chinese residents of long standing were denied certificates, despite numerous favourable character references.[425] One Wagga resident to apply successfully for a Certificate in 1903 was Ah Du, a market gardener. He had lived in Australia since 1886 and was departing for Hong Kong.[426]

---

421 Williams, *Chinese Settlement in NSW*, pp.12-13.

422 Yarwood, *Asian Immigration to Australia*.

423 Yarwood, *Asian Immigration to Australia*, pp.16-21, 68-82; Williams, Chinese Settlement in NSW, p.33.

424 Yarwood, *Asian Immigration to Australia*, pp.16-21, pp.115-118.

425 Shirley Fitzgerald, *Red Tape Gold Scissors: The Story of Sydney's Chinese*, State Library of New South Wales Press, Sydney, 1996, pp.33-37.

426 Certificates 03/213, 03/214, NAA, Sydney.

Ah Du's Certificate of Domicile, 1903.
National Archives of Australia

Another Wagga resident to leave Australia for Hong Kong in 1903 was Charlie Ng Kin, a storekeeper who had lived in Australia since 1887.

A Gundagai, and Tumut businessman who successfully applied for a Certificate of Domicile in 1905 was Dang Loon. His visit to China was unusual for he was accompanied by the wife and family of Dang Ah Hack, who were taking Dang Ah Hack's remains back to China for burial. Dang Loon, who was then known as Dang Goon Loon, was also a trustee in the estate of Ah Hack. The owner of the *Gundagai Times* described Dang Loon as a 'highly respectable man, always quiet and unassuming in manner, and is besides a worthy townsman in every way'.[427] In 1905, Dang Bown Sluey from Tumut 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.[428]

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, character being made more explicit than with the Certificates of Domicile. As Paul Jones has remarked, after Federation a pattern of regular, short term visits to the home villages and towns of Southern China became the norm. 120 approved journeys by Chinese in 1902 grew tenfold by 1905 and thereafter to several thousand in the following years. Wives and dependent children, students, businessmen and others were admitted for a short term basis on the basis of a CEDT. But the new arrangements were an administrative nightmare. Between 1902 and 1911 alone customs officers in each state received in excess of 400 operational guidelines on coloured immigration, some providing clarification of procedures following court action by the Chinese. The bureaucratic needs for administering the CEDT's was complex and involved photographs, hand prints and character references, including one from the local police, who had also to verify the accuracy of the photographs. The Chinese may have

427 Series SP 244/2, C05/5679, NAA, Sydney.

428 Series SP42/1, C1912/3324, C1913/4423, C1913/5044, NAA, Sydney.

Charlie Ng Kin's Certificate of Domicile, 1903.
National Archives of Australia

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.[429]

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', and S. Richards, a local merchant. He also obtained good references from 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 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'.[430]

More successful was Dang Bown Sluey from Tumut, the brother of the then late Dang Ah Chee. He applied for a CEDT in 1906 to permit him to return to China to help Tang Chee, Ah Chee's son, manage his father's businesses. On his application he stated that he was born in Canton in 1843 and came to Australia in 1868. 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

[429] Paul Jones, *Chinese-Australian Journeys, Records on Travel, migration and Settlement, 1860-1975*, NAA, Canberra, 2005, pp.16-21.

[430] Series SP42/1, C1913/5044, NAA, Sydney.

Book No. 475

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA. No. 082

DUPLICATE.

CERTIFICATE EXEMPTING FROM DICTATION TEST.

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

Date 14 MAR 1930

DESCRIPTION,

Nationality Chinese Birthplace [illegible]

Age [illegible] Complexion [illegible]

Height [illegible] Hair [illegible]

Build [illegible] Eyes [illegible]

Particular marks [illegible]

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

PHOTOGRAPH.

Dang Loon

Date of departure [illegible] Port of Embarkation [illegible]

Ship [illegible] Destination [illegible]

Date of Return 8 NOV 1930 Ship [illegible]

Port [illegible]

Customs Officer.

Book No. 453

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA. No. 013

DUPLICATE.

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 4th November 1928

DESCRIPTION.

Nationality Chinese Birthplace London

Age 61 years Complexion Dark

Height 5 ft 6½ ins (Boots) Hair Turning grey

Build Medium Eyes Brown

Particular marks Nil

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

Dang Loon

Date of departure 15th Dec 1928 Port of Embarkation Sydney

Ship Taiping Destination China

Date of Return 4 JAN 1929 Ship [illegible]

Port Sydney

Customs Officer.

CEDT certificates for Dang Loon, 1928 and 1930.
National Archives of Australia

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. 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 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.[431]

Dang Loon visited China again in 1915, 1928 and 1930. On the latter occasion he was accompanied by his wife Violet and their three children, Thelma, Dorothy and Donald. The manager of the Commercial Bank said that Dang Loon had been a customer for 20 years. Transactions had always been done in a satisfactory manner, and he held him in high esteem. Another referee, Mr Bendery, said he had known Dang Loon for about 20 years, and described him as a 'very highly respected resident', who 'bears an excellent character'. He had many business transactions with him and had found him 'strictly honest and very straightforward'. Violet also needed referees. One of them, the manager of the Commercial

[431] Series SP42/1, C1912/3324, C1913/4423, C1913/5044, NAA, Sydney.

Form No. 21. DUPLICATE.

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.
Immigration Restriction Acts 1901-1905 and Regulations.

No. 06/287

CERTIFICATE EXEMPTING FROM DICTATION TEST.

I, John Baxter the Collector of Customs for the State of New South Wales in the said Commonwealth, hereby certify that Dang Bown Sluey hereinafter described, who is leaving the Commonwealth temporarily, will be excepted from the provisions of paragraph (a) of Section 3 of the Act if he returns to the Commonwealth within a period of Three years from this date.

Date 3 Sept 06

J Baxter
Collector of Customs.

DESCRIPTION.

Nationality Chinese — Birthplace Canton
Age 63 years — Complexion
Height 5 ft 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 :—

AUSTRALIA H.M. CUSTOMS N.S.W. SYDNEY

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

Photographs of Clara and Gook Quen Sluey for their CEDT applications, 1906.
National Archives of Australia

Bank, said she had been an enthusiastic worker for the hospital, Red Cross, Benevolent Society, church and other institutions and held in the highest esteem by the townspeople. Another referee described her as an excellent worker for the hospital and 'charitable to a very marked degree'.[432] In 1928, Dang Loon was accompanied by his son, Albert Henry. One referee, Tom Wilkinson, a stock, estate and financial agent, stated that 'he always found him an honest and law abiding citizen'. Another referee, R. Blakeney, described him as 'highly respected' and an 'excellent character'. He had 'proved himself strictly honest and upright in all his dealings and has been a generous supporter of charity and all movements for the benefit of the town and district'.[433] Dang Bown Sluey, Dang Ah Chee and Dang Loon all had first wives in China (Dang Loon had one child from that relationship). Dang Bown Sluey also had a concubine. While the ties with the first wives may not have been strong, the desire to visit children conceived from those relationships must have been overwhelming, and a major reason for visiting China.

In another instance, William Flood Sam, a former Wagga resident, applied for CEDTs in 1915 for himself and for his son Percy to enable them to visit China. One referee, a Mr Shibley, stated that he had known William for many years and had always found him sober, honest and reliable. Another referee, Joseph Speirs, said that he had known William and his family for 15 years and had always found him to be a good hard working, sober man. One other referee, Mr Flannery, said that he had known William for 15 years and found him to be very honest, straightforward and industrious. Mr Flannery's father had known him for 30 years, and he also testified to his general good character. The local Police Sergeant

[432] SP 244/2, C30/2538, NAA, Sydney.

[433] Series SP 244/2, C28/11356, NAA, Sydney.

PAID WARRANT No. 8731 of 14/3/30

Book No. 475

Form No. 21.
DUPLICATE.

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.
Immigration Act 1901-1925 and Regulations.

No. 081

CERTIFICATE EXEMPTING FROM DICTATION TEST.

I, George Finlay Mitchell, the Collector of Customs for the State of NEW SOUTH WALES in the said Commonwealth hereby certify that Violet Loon (Mrs Long 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 of departure shown below.

Date 14 MAR 1930

Geo F G Mitchell
Collector of Customs.

DESCRIPTION.

Nationality	Chinese	Birthplace	Canton
Age	43 yrs	Complexion	Dark
Height	5' 3"	Hair	Black
Build	medium	Eyes	Brown
Particular marks	nil		

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

PHOTOGRAPHS.

Mrs Violet Loon
Mrs Violet Loon

Date of departure	22. 3. 30	Port of Embarkation	Sydney
Ship	Changte	Destination	China
Date of Return	8 NOV 1930	Ship	"Changte"
Port	Sydney		

Customs Officer

Violet Loon' CEDT document, 1930.

National Archives of Australia

Form No. 21.
DUPLICATE.

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.
Immigration Restriction Acts 1901-1905 and Regulations.

No. 06/288

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 Quong Wing 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

Collector of Customs.

DESCRIPTION.

Nationality	Chinese	Birthplace	Tumut NSW
Age	7 years	Complexion	
Height		Hair	Dark
Build	stout	Eyes	Brown
Particular marks	none visible		

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

PHOTOGRAPHS.

Date of departure	Sept 06	Destination	China
Ship	Empire		
Date of return	1st May 11	Ship	S/S Eastern
Port	of Sydney		

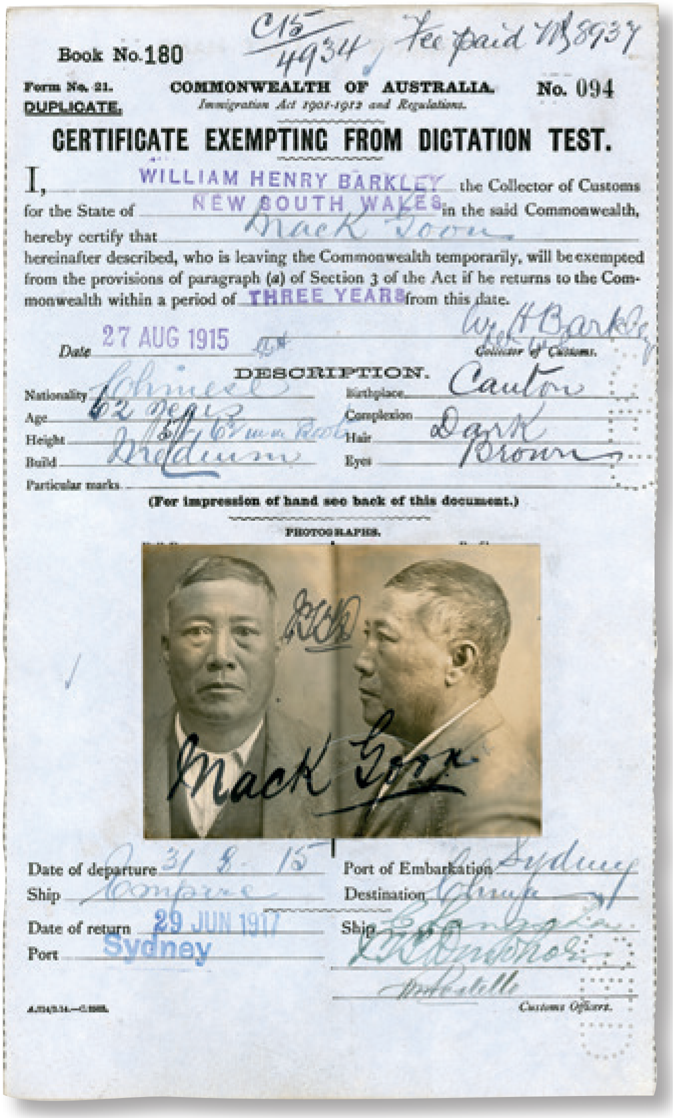
Customs Officer

Quong Wing Sluey's CEDT in 1906
when he was seven years old.

National Archives of Australia

William Flood Sam's CEDT photograph, 1915.
National Archives of Australia

Percy Flood Sam's CEDT photograph, 1915.
National Archives of Australia


Book No. 180

C15/4934 Fee paid MS 8937

Form No. 21. DUPLICATE. COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA. No. 094

Immigration Act 1901-1912 and Regulations.

CERTIFICATE EXEMPTING FROM DICTATION TEST.

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

Date 27 AUG 1915

W. H. Barkley Collector of Customs.

DESCRIPTION.

Nationality Chinese Birthplace Canton

Age 62 years Complexion Dark

Height [illegible] Hair Dark

Build Medium Eyes Brown

Particular marks

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

PHOTOGRAPHS.

Mack Goon

Date of departure 31.8.15 Port of Embarkation Sydney

Ship Empire Destination China

Date of return 29 JUN 1917 Ship Changsha

Port Sydney

Customs Officers.

Mack Goon's CEDT document, 1915.
National Archives of Australia

Mr McCabe stated that William had been married for forty years and had 12 surviving family members. His wife and six of his children were living in West Wyalong. Four of the children were married and he had five sons in the AIF. At the time of his application, he was a market gardener in West Wyalong. McCabe stated that William bore a 'good character'.[434]

Mack Goon, a labourer and cook, and a former resident of Tumut, was another successful applicant. He 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, where he was now a resident. 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'.[435]

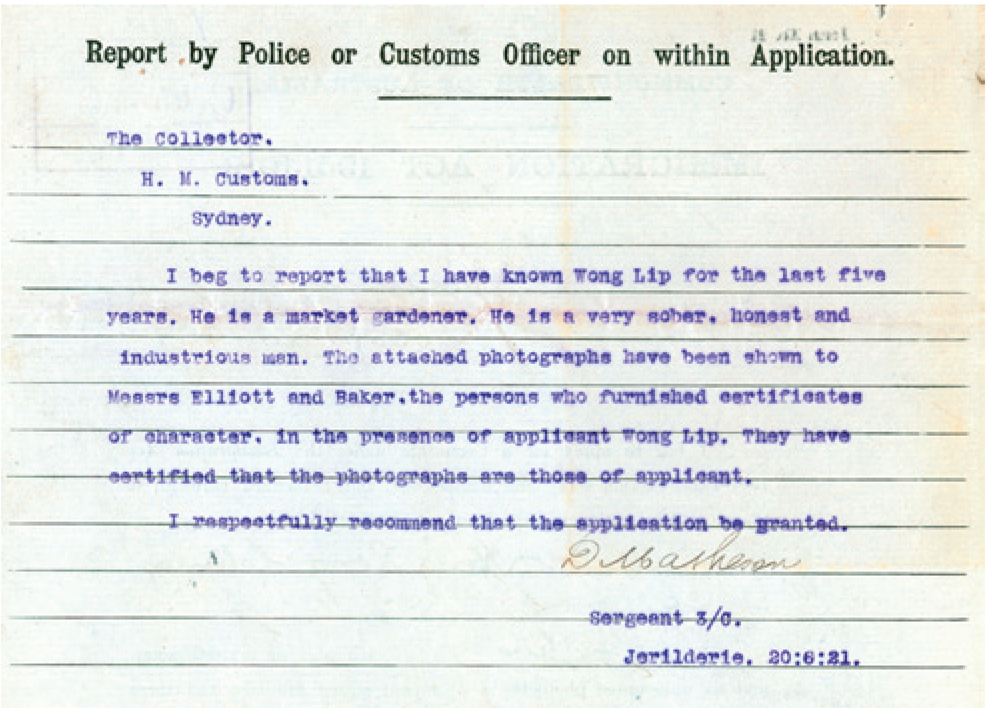
Wong Lip's CEDT application in July 1921 was almost certainly family related. At the time he was a market gardener at Jerilderie. He was 51 years of age and had been in Australia for 25 years, during which time he had worked as a scrub cutter on Coree Station (about 16 kilometres from Jerilderie), and 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.[436]

On his return to Australia he was accompanied either by his son, Toy Sun, or the boy arrived shortly after,

434 Series SP 42/1, C1915/4032, C1915/4058, NAA, Sydney.

435 Series SP42/1, C15/4934, NAA, Sydney.

436 Series SP42/1, C21/5853, NAA, Sydney.



Report by Police or Customs Officer on within Application.

The Collector.
H. M. Customs.
Sydney.

I beg to report that I have known Wong Lip for the last five years. He is a market gardener. He is a very sober, honest and industrious man. The attached photographs have been shown to Messrs Elliott and Baker.the persons who furnished certificates of character. in the presence of applicant Wong Lip. They have certified that the photographs are those of applicant.

I respectfully recommend that the application be granted.

D Matheson

Sergeant 3/C.

Jerilderie. 20:6:21.

Reference from Police Sergeant for Wong Lip's CEDT, 1921.
National Archives of Australia

commencing school at Temora in late 1924. Wong Lip had by then left Jerilderie and set himself up as an orchardist at Temora.

The CEDT applications by George Hock Shung, Dang Bown Sluey, William Sam Flood, Dang and Violet Loon, Wong Lip and Mack Goon are instances of the very obvious affection and regard with which some Chinese people 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, 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 he was the need to help his father, the school saying that his absences had been 'practically unavoidable'.

Toy Sun Wong Lip's passport, 1910.
National Archives of Australia

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 attendance record 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, he was absent for 26 days. The Department gave a stern warning 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 enforce his departure from Australia.[437]

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 could not grant 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 granted another 12 months exemption, with the usual warning about attendance.[438]

In early 1930 the Department was advised that Toy Sun had left Temora High School to attend the Sydney Efficiency Motor School, and would be living in Sydney. The Department refused permission for

[437] Series A1, 1929/3660, NAA, Canberra.

[438] Series A1, 1929/3660, NAA, Canberra.

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.[439]

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.[440] 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 enter 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 been an employee of Dang Ah Chee at Gundagai, and who had advertised the opening of his Hi Hing store at Mundarlo in the 11 January 1881 edition of the *Gundagai Times*.

The Collector of Customs in Sydney remarked that in cases like Florrie's it was exceedingly difficult to establish beyond doubt the identity of the immigrant. A comparison of photographs separated as in this case by 23 years was useless. In the past he had tried to prevent the admission of Chinese immigrants because he was unable to satisfy himself as to their identity, but

> as the immigrant usually had no difficulty in obtaining as many witnesses as necessary (usually Chinese) to swear that he or she was identical with the person who left Australia, the Magistrates, in the absence of rebutting evidence by the Department, dismissed the charge.

In the absence of evidence that Mrs Ching was not identical with Florence Ah Gow, he had no option but to admit her. [441]

The twist to this story involves Esther Doon, the wife of Dang Charles Doon from Tumut. Three of Esther's surviving children, Ted, Johnny and Grace, are adamant that she was born in China (even though the birth certificate states that she was Australian born), and came out under an assumed name, in her case Gow. As a local resident, and having spent his early years in Australia in the Gundagai area, Dang Charles Doon would have known the Ah Gow family very well, and would have been very well aware of the opportunities provided by cases such as that of Florrie Ching. Historian

---

439 Series A1, 1929/3660, NAA, Canberra.

440 Williams, *Chinese Settlement in NSW*, pp.32-33.

441 Series A1, 1917/16652, NAA, Canberra.

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 enter 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. The majority of post 1905 Chinese brides of Chinese-Australian men were never able to settle in Australia.[442]

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.[443]

Furthermore, their son Richard was still in China, where he married and had two children. He migrated to Australia in 1938 under the exemptions allowed for hiring of store assistants, and worked in his father's store in Tumut. But he could not bring out his wife, Chen, or the children. When the Second World War broke out Richard stayed in Australia, while his wife and children remained in the family village and avoided famine. Richard brought out his son Danny in 1950 under the student exemption provisions, but it was not until 1952 that the whole family was reunited.

The final twist to the Doon story concerns Florence Ching and her son Raymond, who were visiting their village in China when Raymond died. His birth certificate was then given to Ng Kwok Nung, who migrated to Australia under his new identity and later married Grace Doon, one of Esther's daughters. By coincidence, and unbeknown to each other at the time, the new Raymond came out to Australia on the same boat as Richard Doon.[444]

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 and not entirely free According to historian Andrew Junor the Department of Immigration 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. He was told to return to Sydney immediately or risk deportation. Although this threat was not enforced, Departmental officers 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

[442] 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.

[443] Information provided by Grace Ching, October 2011.

[444] Information provided by Grace Ching, October 2011.

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, particularly skilled chefs.[445]

As a final note on the Doon family's experiences, their apprehensions at being deported were mirrored by many other Chinese Australians, who had entered Australia illegally or under questionable circumstances. Charlie Wong Hing, the Wagga-based market gardener, had lived in Australia for many years and became naturalised not long before he passed away. Despite his advanced age and length of residence in Australia, however, he was concerned that he would be found out and deported.[446]

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, near Jiangmen, 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.[447]

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 of work. A local resident, Ken Hoad, wrote in support.[448] 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

---

[445] Junor, 'Chung On: Moonee Ponds and the lemon chicken long boom', pp.20-33; discussions with Danny Doon, September 2011; information from Lel Doon, September 2011.

[446] McMullen, *Transcript of interview with Frank Rynehart*.

[447] Joe and Reg Shai Hee, 'An Anecdote on the life of Chin See Shai-Hee', unpublished reminiscences, Sydney, 2004; information from Joe Shai Hee, February 2012; Series A2998, 1952/4657, NAA, Canberra.

[448] Joe and Reg Shai Hee, 'An Anecdote on the life of Chin See Shai-Hee', unpublished reminiscences, Sydney, 2004; information from Joe Shai Hee, February 2012; Series A2998, 1952/4657, NAA, Canberra.

Diaolous in Kaiping, Guangdong Province, China.

'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 by local Members of Parliament, Parker Moloney and Tom Collins, and by his bank manager.[449]

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 as protection against floods and as 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.[450]

---

[449] 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.

[450] 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; 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.

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, who was only released after payment of a large ransom. More pointedly for the Shai Hee family 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 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).[451]

Continued concerns about the 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. By the time of these representations William had left Tumut and was a business owner in Petersham, Sydney.[452]

The Minister for Immigration agreed that Chin See and the two children, Ted and Joe, be granted permission to remain in Australia without having to apply for periodic extensions of their CEDTs.[453] 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.[454]

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 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,

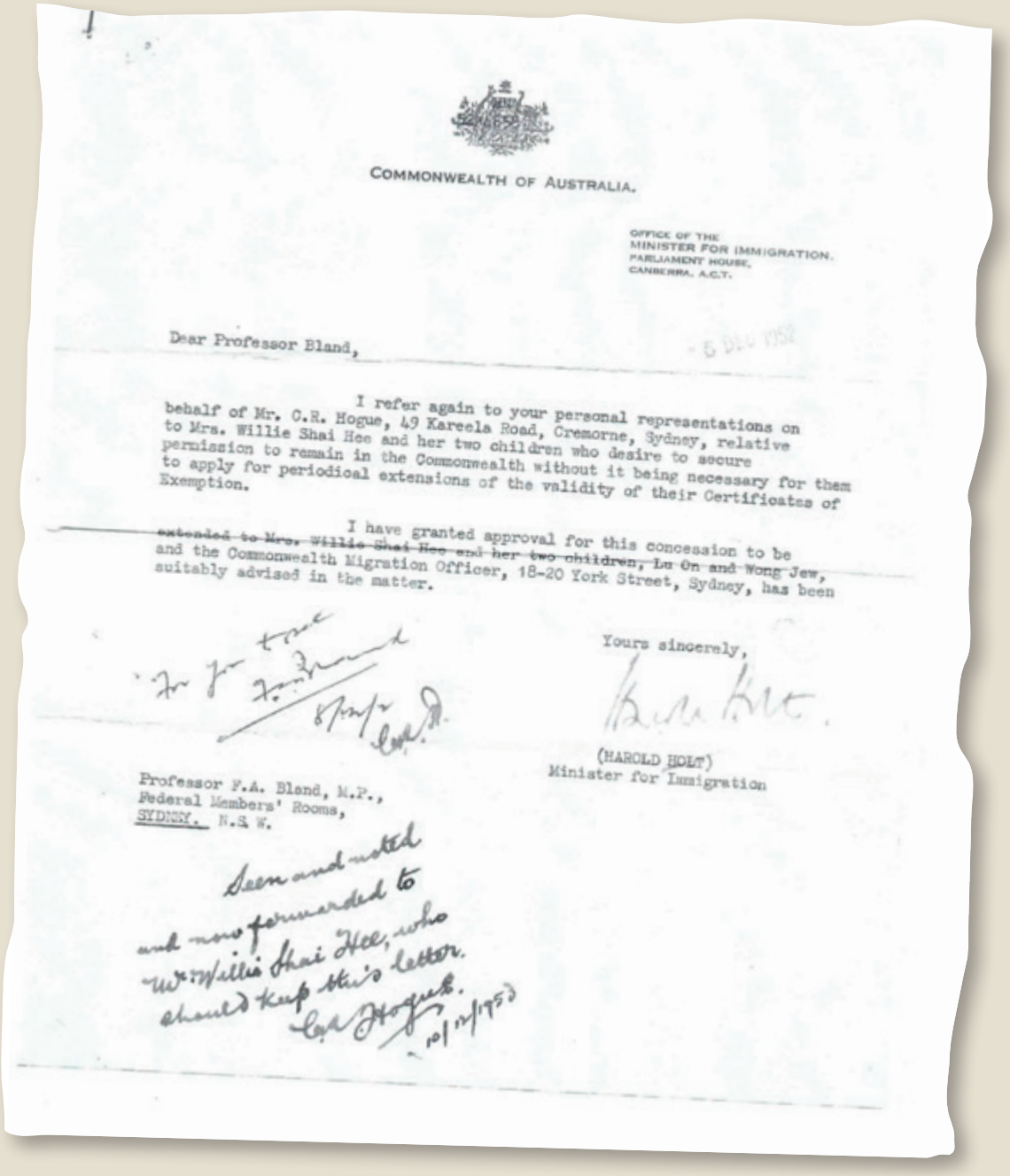
---

[451] Tan, Jin Hua, Selia, 'Kaiping Diaolou and Its Associated Villages: Documenting the Process of Application to the World Heritage List';; information from Reg and Joe Shai Hee and Jean Chin (née Shai Hee), February 2012.

[452] Letter from Clarrie Hogue to Harold Holt, Minister for Immigration, November 1952 (courtesy of Chris Shai Hee).

[453] Letter from Harold Holt, Minister for Immigration to Professor F.A. Bland, M.P, 5 December 1952 (courtesy of Chris Shai Hee).

[454] 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

Letter from Harold Holt regarding Chin See Shai Hee, 1952.
National Archives of Australia

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 from and to Australia by coloureds, permitting the entry of anyone who could satisfy officials that they had formerly lived in Australia.

Certificate of Registration of Alien for Soon Lum who wanted to move from Maribyrnong in Victoria to Toganmain Station, Darlington Point, near Narrandera, NSW in 1940.
Hay Gaol Museum, New South Wales

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.[455]

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 a local trader was permitted to introduce an assistant if he had gross turnover of at least £5000 a year. He could introduce an extra assistant for each £10,000 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.[456]

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.[457]

---

[455] A.C. Palfreeman, *The Administration of the White Australia Policy*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1967, pp.5-19.

[456] Palfreeman, *The Administration of the White Australia Policy*, pp.5-19.

[457] 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 intemperate language occasionally used by the press, would have been difficult to bear, and deep psychological scarring or worse was sometimes the result. Despite these provocations the Chinese presence in the Riverina was mainstream and spanned several generations to the present day. At times the Chinese men 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. That so many survived, and in many instances thrived, is an example to all Australians. 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 history.

Bibliography

Albury & District Historical Society (2005), *Bulletin 446*.

Albury & District Historical Society (2006), *Bulletin 446*.

Albury & District Historical Society (2006), letter to author, 14 January 2008.

Australian Heritage Commission (2002), *Tracking the Dragon*, Goanna Print, Canberra. The text for the publication was written by Dr Michael Pearson.

Bagnall, Kate (2008), 'A journey of love: Agnes Bruer's sojourn in 1930s China', in Deacon, et. al. (eds).

Bagnall, Kate (2012), 'That Famous Fighting Family', *Your History*, March-April, pp.37-40.

Barellan Progress Association and Improvement Society (1975), *Early Days in Barellan and District*, publisher unknown, Barellan.

Barnard, Jill, Sheehan, Mary (1991), 'The Chinese discovery of gold and settlement in Ararat', National Estate Program Grant No. 542.

Black Mountain Projects (2008), *Lockhart Heritage Inventory*.

Black Mountain Projects (2010), *Archaeological Heritage Assessment, Stage 1 Levee Upgrade*, Black Mountain Projects, Canberra

Blainey, Geoffrey (1963), *The Rush that Never Ended*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne.

Bland, F. A. (1952), letter to Clarrie Hogue, 15 December.

Boileau, Joanna (2009), *Families of Fortune. Chinese People in the Tweed*, Tweed Shire Council, in conjunction with the Power House Museum and NSW Migration Heritage Centre, Sydney.

Brennan, Martin (1884), 'Chinese Camps', *Votes and Proceedings*, New South Wales Legislative Assembly, 1883-1884, Vol 2, Sydney.

Bridle, Jack (1993), 'Memories and information of the Chinese', *Memories of Tumut Plains*, residents and ex-residents, Wilkie Watson, Tumut.

Bushby, John E.P. (1980), *Saltbush Country: History of the Deniliquin District*, the author.

Buxton, Geoffrey (1967), *The Riverina, 1861-1891*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne.

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

Cassell, Susie Lan (2002), (ed) *The Chinese in America. A History from Gold Mountain to the New Millennium*, AltaMira Press, Walnut Creek, pp.21-36.

Census (1872), *Votes and Proceedings*, New South Wales Legislative Assembly, Vol.2, pp.324-429.

Chan, Henry, Curthoys, Ann, and Chiang Nora (eds) (2001), *The Overseas Chinese in Australasia: History, Settlement and Interactions*, National Taiwan University and Australian National University, Canberra.

Chan, Sucheng (1986), *This Bitter Sweet Soil. The Chinese in California Agriculture, 1860–1910*, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles.

Chang, Iris (2004), *The Chinese in America*, Penguin Books, New York.

Chong, Elizabeth (1993), *The Heritage of Chinese Cooking*, Weldon Russell, Sydney.

Choi, C.Y. (1975), *Chinese Migration and Settlement in Australia*, Sydney University Press, Sydney.

Clark, C.M.H. (1979), *Select Documents in Australian History 1851-1900*, Vol. II, Angus and Robertson, Sydney.

Couchman, Sophie, Fitzgerald, John & Macgregor, Paul (eds) (2004), *After the Rush. Regulation, Participation, and Chinese Communities in Australia 1860-1949*, Otherland Literary Journal No. 9, Kingsbury.

Crawford, R.M. (1963), *Australia*, Hutchinson & Co, London.

Cronin, Kathryn (1982), Colonial Casualties. Chinese in Early Victoria, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne.

Curnow, Ross, 'Bland, Francis Armand (1882-1967), in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, Volume. www.adb.anu.edu.au/biography/bland-francis-armand-9525

Curthoys, Ann (1978), 'Conflict and consensus' in Curthoys & Markus (eds), pp.48-65.

Curthoys, Ann, and Markus, Andrew (eds) (1978) *Who are our Enemies?* Hale and Iremonger, Sydney.

Dang, Ah Chee (undated), *Letter Book*, Tumut and District Historical Society.

Dann, George Wing (1945), letter to Mrs Eileen Brown, 23 July, Doris Schofield Collection, Federation Museum, Corowa.

Darnell, Maxine (2001), 'Law and the regulation of life: The case of indentured Chinese labourers', in Chan, Henry et. al. (eds), pp.54-69.

Deacon, Desley, Russell, Penny and Woollacott, Angela (eds) (2008), *Transnational Ties. Australian Lives in the World*, ANU Press.

Deniliquin and District Historical Society, *Chinese Subscriptions to the Deniliquin Hospital 1872-1908*, unpublished paper, Deniliquin.

Edney, J. *Diary*, Museum of the Riverina, Wagga Wagga.

Egge, Geoffrey, *Papers*, Box 3173/5, MS12707, State Library of Victoria.

Eleventh Census, New South Wales, taken on the night of the 31st March, 1901, Government Printer, Sydney, 1904, pp.265-354.

Epstein, Anna (ed) (1998), The Australian family. Images and Essays, Scribe Publications, Melbourne.

Fitzgerald, John (2007), *Big White Lie. Chinese Australians in White Australia*, UNSWPress, Sydney.

Fitzgerald, Shirley (1996), *Red Tape Gold Scissors: The Story of Sydney's Chinese*, State Library of New South Wales Press, Sydney.

Florence, Robyn (2004), *The Chinese in the Shoalhaven*, Shoalhaven Historical Society, Nowra.

Foon Kee, Ah Loong, letter of 3 April 1937, in the possession of Betty Menzies (nee Choy), Wagga

Fosebery, Edmund, Inspector- General of Police (1878), 'Chinese (Information Respecting, Residents in the Colony)', *Votes and Proceedings*, New South Wales Legislative Assembly, Vol.7, 1878-1879.

Freeman Collett & Partners (1994), Fitzmaurice Street Precinct Main Street Study, Wagga Wagga City Council, Wagga Wagga.

"From Manchu to Mao. The life story of 'Uncle Bill' Liu" (1977), *The Asian*, November.

Frost, Warwick (2002), 'Migrants and technological transfer: Chinese farming in Australia, 1850–1920', *Australian Economic History Review* 42, No. 2, pp.113-131.

Grong Grong History Committee (2003), *Grong Grong. The Spirit of a Small Town*, Grong Grong History Committee, Grong Grong.

Groom, Jocelyn (2001), *Chinese Pioneers of the King Valley*, Centre for Continuing Education, Wangaratta.

Hales, Dinah (2004), 'Lost Histories: Chinese-European Families of Central Western New South Wales, 1850-1880', in Roberts (ed), pp.93-112.

Hay Historical Society (2006), Web-Site Newsletter, February, No IV.

Heidhues, Mary Somers (1993), 'Chinese organizations in West Borneo and Bangka: Kongis and *Hui*' in Ownby and Heidhues.

Hickson, Barbara, and Nicholls, Heather (2006), *Tracking the Dragon through the Central West and Western NSW*, report to the NSW Heritage Office, Sydney.

Hoare, Michael and Rutledge, Martha, '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.

Holst, Heather (2004), 'Equal before the law? The Chinese in the nineteenth-century Castlemaine Police Courts', pp.113-36, in Roberts (ed).

Holt, Harold (1952), letter to Professor F.A. Bland, M.P, 5 December.

Hogue, Clarrie (1952), letter to Harold Holt, Minister for Immigration, November.

Horsley, Emily, *A Gleam of Sunshine. The Story of the Horsley Family of Yabtree, Gundagai, NSW*, unfinished manuscript.

Horsley, R.F. (1891), *Diaries, 1876-1891*, in possession of Patricia Horsley, Yaven, near Adelong.

Huck, Arthur (1967), *The Chinese in Australia*, Longmans, Melbourne.

Jones, Paul (2005), *Chinese-Australian Journeys: Records on Travel, Migration and Settlement, 1860-1975*, National Archives of Australia, Canberra.

Junor, Andrew (2010), 'Çhung On: Moonee Ponds and the lemon chicken long boom', Honours thesis, University of Melbourne.

Karl, Rebecca E. and Zarrow, Peter (eds) (2002), *Rethinking the 1898 reform period: political and cultural change in late Qing China*, Harvard University Asia Center, Cambridge, Massachussets, 2002.

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

Kok, Ju Hin (2005a), *Chinese Lodges in Australia*, Golden Dragon Museum, Bendigo.

Kok, Ju Hin (2005b), *Chinese Temples in Australia*, Golden Dragon Museum, Bendigo.

Kuo, Mei-fen (2013) *Making Chinese Australia: urban elites, newspapers and the formation of Chinese-Australian identity,1892-1912*, Monash University Publishing, Melbourne.

Kwan Hong Kee (1938), *Autobiography of Mr Kwan Hong Kee*, Hong Kong, January 1938.

Kwong, Luke S.K. (1984), *Mosaic of the hundred days: personalities, politics, and ideas of 1898*, Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachussets.

Lancashire, Rod (2000), 'European-Chinese economic interaction. A pre-federation rural Australian setting', *Rural Society* 10, No. 2, pp.229-241.

Leslie, Donald Daniel (1998), *The Integration of Religious Minorities in China: The Case of Chinese Muslims*,

59th George Ernest Morrison Lecture in Ethnology, ANU.

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

Liu, Haiming (2002), 'The social origins of early Chinese immigrants: a revisionist perspective', in Cassell, pp.21-36.

Lockhart and District Arts Council (1999), *The Green Street Pavers. Golden Memories*, Lockhart and District Arts Council, Lockhart.

Loh, Morag (1983), 'John Egge: A Champion of the Rivers', *Hemisphere*, No.28, 1983, pp.35-39.

Lydon, Jane (1999), *Many Inventions. The Chinese in the Rocks, 1890-1930*, Monash Publications in History, Melbourne.McDonald, C.F. (1881), *Wantabadgery Station, Diary, 1879-1881*, A33/20, Mitchell Library, Sydney.

McGoverne, Terry (1992) 'Veteran remembers trip to hell', *Border Mail*, 15 February.

McGowan, Barry (2005), 'The economics and organisation of Chinese mining in Colonial Australia', *Australian Economic History Review*, Vol. 45, No. 2, pp.119-138.

McGowan, Barry (2006), 'Ringbarkers and market gardeners. A comparison of the Rural Chinese of New South Wales and California', *Chinese America History & Perspectives*. Chinese Historical Society of America, pp.31-46.

McGowan, Barry (2008), 'From fraternities to families: The evolution of Chinese life in the Braidwood District of New South Wales (NSW), 1850s-1890s', *Chinese Southern Diaspora Studies*, Vol. 2.

McGowan, Barry (2010), *Dust and Dreams. Mining Communities in Southern New South Wales*, UNSWPress, Sydney.

McGowan, Barry (2010), *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

McGowan, Barry (2013), 'Transnational Lives: Colonial Immigration restrictions and the White Australia Policy in the Riverina District of New South Wales, 1860-1960', *Chinese Southern Diaspora Studies. Sources, Language and Approaches in Chinese–Australian History, Volume 6, 2013*, pp.45-63.

McGowan, Barry and Li, Tana (2013), 'Charlie Wong Hing and the Son He Never Met', *Chinese Southern Diaspora Studies. Sources, Language and Approaches in Chinese–Australian History*,Volume 6, pp.166-171.

McGowan, Barry and Li, Tana (2013), 'An Example of Usury Within the Chinese Community: An Account from Wagga Wagga, 1923–1927', *Chinese Southern Diaspora Studies. Sources, Language and Approaches in Chinese –Australian History ,Volume 6, 2013*, pp.172-177.

McGowan, Barry and Smith, Lindsay (2008), *Tracking the Dragon through Southern NSW and the Riverina*, report to the NSW Heritage Office, Sydney.

Macgregor, Paul (1998), 'Dreams of jade and gold. Chinese families in Australia's history', in Epstein (ed), pp.25-28.

Mackenzie, Harold, M. (2008), *Mackenzie's Riverina. A Tour of the Hay District Pastoral Holdings of the 1890s*, Hay Historical Society.

McMullen, Claire (2013), T*ranscript of interview with Frank Rynehart*, Museum of the Riverina, Wagga Wagga.

Mar, Wendy Lu (1993), *So great a cloud of witnesses: A history of the Chinese Presbyterian Church, Sydney 1893-1993*, Chinese Presbyterian Church, Sydney.

Markus, Andrew (1979), *Fear and Hatred. Purifying Australia and California 1850-1901*, Hale & Iremonger, Sydney.

Maxwell, Kelvin (1980), *The Chinese in Australia, with particular reference to Narrandera*, unpublished research paper, Riverina College of Advanced Education, Wagga Wagga.

May, Cathie (1984), *Topsawyers: The Chinese in Cairns 1870 to 1920,* Studies in North Queensland History no.6, James Cook University, Townsville.

Morris, Sherry (1992), 'The Chinese Quarter in Wagga Wagga in the 1880s', *Wagga Wagga and District Historical Society Newsletter*. No.276.

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

Morris, Sherry (1997), 'Chinese Quarter Gambling', *Daily Advertiser*, 17 May.

Morrison Papers, Vol.66 of MS312, Mitchell Library, Sydney, pp.391-97.

Murray, Dian H. (1994), *The Origins of the Tiandihui. The Chinese Triads in Legend and History,* Stanford University Press, Stanford.

National Archives of Australia, Military Records, Leslie Edward Ah Wah, Series B8832002, Item NX157455, Canberra.

NSW Legislative Council, *New South Wales Parliamentary Debates*, Vol.33, 1887-1888.

Oh, Josephine, letter to Kate Bagnall, 20 October 2004.

Oh, Josephine, letter to Pam Archer, 30 June 1988.

Osborne, Diana A. (2008), 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.

Ownby, David (1993), 'Chinese *Hui* and the Early Modern Social Order: Evidence from Eighteenth-Century Southeast China', in Ownby and Heidhues, pp.38-44.

Ownby, David and Heidhues, Mary Somers (eds) (1993), "Secret Societies" Reconsidered. Perspectives on the Social History of Modern South China and South East Asia, M.E Sharpe, New York.

Palfreeman, A.C. (1967), *The Administration of the White Australia Policy*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne.

Palmer, Joan (1993), *Memories of a Riverina Childhood*, UNSWPress, Sydney.

Parr, Tom E. (1997), *Reminiscences of a NSW South West Settler*, Heatherstone Book, Carlton Press, Inc., New York.

Pennay, Bruce (2001), *From Colonial to State Border*, Charles Sturt University, Albury.

Recommendation for Award, 8883, NX438444, 12 April 1943, National Archives of Australia, Canberra.

Report of the Royal Commission into alleged Chinese gambling and immorality and charges of bribery against members of the police force, New South Wales Legislative Assembly, *Votes and Proceedings*, 1891-1892, vol.8.

Results of a Census of New South Wales, taken on the night of the 31st March, 1901 (1904), Government Printer, Sydney, pp.265-354.

Roberts, David (ed) (2004), *Active Voices, Hidden Histories: The Chinese in Colonial Australia, Journal of Australian Colonial History*, Vol. 6.

Rolls, Eric (1992), *Sojourners, The Epic Story of China's Centuries old Relationship with Australia*, Queensland University Press, St Lucia.

Rule, Pauline (2004), 'The Chinese camps in Colonial Victoria: Their role as contact zones', Couchman et al, *After the Rush*.

Serle, Geoffrey (1977), *The Golden Age. A History of the Colony of Victoria 1851-1861*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne.

Shai Hee, Chris (1984), 'interview of Chin See', unpublished manuscript, March.

Shai Hee, Joe and Reg (2004), 'An Anecdote on the life of Chin See Shai-Hee', unpublished reminiscences, Sydney.

Shen, Yuanfang (2001), *Dragonseed in the Antipodes. Chinese–Australian Autobiographies*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne.

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

Shung, Mervyn (date unknown) 'Probis Address. My life story by M.W. Shung', unpublished address Narrandera.

Sinn, Elizabeth (2003), Power and Charity. A Chinese Merchant Elite in Colonial Hong Kong, Hong Kong University Press, Hong Kong.

Smith, Lindsay (1988), 'Cold hard cash, a study of Chinese ethnicity and archaeology at Kiandra, New South Wales', MA, ANU.

Smith, Lindsay (2006), 'Hidden dragons. The archaeology of mid- to late-nineteenth-century Chinese communities in south-eastern New South Wales', PhD, ANU.

Speirs, Bill (1987), *The Beehive and the Broken Dam*, J.A. Bradley & Sons, Temora.

Sullivan, Constance, in Kitty Barnes (ed) (1986), *There's Gold*, the author, Mosman.

Sutherland, June (1996), *From Farm Boys to Phds. Agricultural Education at Wagga Wagga, 1896-1996*, Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga.

Stacey, Florence (1926), *History of the Anglican Church in Tumut, 1830-1926*, publisher and place of publication unknown.

Sydney Szue Yup Kwan Ti Temple (1998), *Sydney Szue Yup Kwan Ti Temple 100 year Centenary*, Sydney.

Tan, Jin Hua, Selia (2007), 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, Hong Kong.

Temora Centenary Committee (1980), *Temora Yesterday and Today, 1880-1980*, Temora Historical Society, Temora.

Terry, Mona (1985), *The Light Shines On: A History of Oaklands*, the author, Oaklands.

Thomas, Di (2001), 'Liquor accord on track', *Twin Cities Post*, 14 June.

Trevarthen, Cora (2006) 'Chinese Communities in northeast Victoria, 1861-1914', *Journal of Chinese Australia*, Issue 2, October, pp.1-15.

Trevaskis, Ada (1979), *A Schneider Family History 1849-1979*, the author, place unknown.

Tubbo Station (1866-1930), *Ledgers*, Charles Sturt University Regional Archives, Wagga Wagga.

Tubbo Station (1866-1930), *Letter Book,* Boxes 21-24, Charles Sturt University Regional Archives, Wagga Wagga.

Turner, Alan (1998), *Looking Backward. The Adelong Goldfield*, unpublished manuscript.

Wakeman, Frederic, Jr. (1997), *Strangers at the Gate. Social Disorder in South China 1839-1861*, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles.

War records for William Loolong, George Flood Sam, Henry Herbert Sam, James Francis Sam, Norman Sam, George Thomas Loolong, Series B2455, National Archives of Australia, Sydney.

Ward, J. S. M. and Stirling, W. G., *The Hung Society or the Society of Heaven and Earth*, Vols. I-III, The Baskerville Press, London, 1925.

Webster, R.H. (2001), *The First Fifty Years of Temora*, reprinted by Temora Heritage Committee, Temora Shire Council, Temora.

Williams, Michael (1999), *Chinese Settlement in NSW: A Thematic History,* report for the NSW Heritage Office, Sydney.

Wilson, Neil (2000), 'The dinky-di Poy Boys', *Herald Sun*, 29 July.

Wilton, Janis (2004), *Golden Threads: The Chinese in Regional New South Wales 1850-1950*, Powerhouse Museum, Sydney.

www.adb.anu.edu.au/biography/bland-francis-armand-9525

www. amol.org.au/goldenthreads/stories

www.chia.chinesemuseum.com.au/biogs/CH00016b.htm

www.daao.org.au/legal/eula.html

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

Yerong Creek Public School Centenary Committee (1981), *Yerong Creek Public School Centenary 1881-1981*, Yerong Creek Public School Centenary Committee, Yerong Creek.

Yong, C.F. (1977), *The New Gold Mountain. The Chinese in Australia 1901-1921*, Raphael Arts, Adelaide.

Zarrow, Peter (2005), *China in War and Revolution 1895-1949*; RoutledgeCurzon, New York.