

A publication of the Chinese Australian Historical Society

Website: <https://chineseaustralianhistory.org>

Email: contact.cahs@gmail.com

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Welcome Alex!

Dr Alexandra Wong has joined Michael Williams in developing the database and undertaking desktop research to provide the foundations for the Scattered Legacy project.



Community input

However, once set up, the ongoing force of Scattered Legacy will be community input. To become involved, please do not hesitate to write to:

Scattered.Legacy@gmail.com

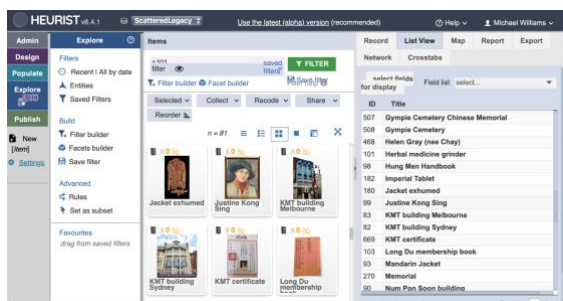
Facebook Group

For updates and sneak previews, join the Scattered Legacy Facebook Group:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/248239734665888/>

Scattered Legacy Update Michael Williams

Scattered Legacy aims to spotlight the Chinese dimension of Australian history by offering historical context and interpretation for diverse objects from across the nation, challenging its marginalization and exoticization.



Database being created – this is an image of the back end.

Enjoy data entry?

Volunteer training is available for those interested.



Scan for more
 information

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The [National Foundation for Australia-China Relations](#) provided funding for the Scattered Legacy project. The support of the Western Sydney University's Institute for Australian Arts and Culture is also acknowledged.



2023 CAHS Mid-Autumn Festival Walking Tour of Hurstville

Saturday, 30 September 2023
 11.15 am sharp, 11.30 am start.
 Cost: \$35 (includes refreshments)
 Bookings on [Eventbrite](#)

Discover Hurstville's rich intangible seam of Cantonese history, Cantonese food and cultural heritage on a walking tour of Forest Road Hurstville with Kevin Tang, Secretary of CAHS.

Hong Kongers came to Hurstville post-1989 and transformed it, bringing their cultural heritage from the Hong Kong of their youth in the 1950s and 1960s. This lost world of suburban Hong Kong is about to vanish, but there are still shades of old Kowloon in Forest Road.

Join CAHS for a walk back in time through vintage Hong Kong in the interstices of Sydney suburban culture in 2023.



Walking Tour, Hurstville, 2022. Photographer: Jeff Fatt

Doing Oral History in Chinese Australian Family History

CAHS/SAG Chinese Australian Research Interest Group
 Zoom, 7 October 2023, 3-5 pm AEDT.

Join Sophie Couchman, Kiko Ko and Christopher Cheng on Zoom for the next Chinese Australian Research Interest Group session on Oral History on Saturday, 7 October, 3-5 pm (AEDT). For CAHS members, the cost of registration is \$5.00, and for non-members \$20.00.

To register, [click here](#).

Biographies of the speakers

Sophie Couchman is a Professional Historian and Curator who has recorded numerous oral histories and used them in her research, exhibitions, walking tours and a forthcoming podcast series, 'Chinese Australian Whispers'. The National Library of Australia, Museums Victoria and the Museum of Chinese Australian History hold copies of Sophie's interviews.

Kiko Ko holds a Diploma in Family History from the University of Tasmania, is a member of Oral History NSW and currently conducts oral history interviews in Cantonese for the State Library of New South Wales.

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Christopher Cheng's foray into family history began with oral histories he conducted with his Australian uncle while travelling in the Pearl River Delta. An avid producer and consumer of oral history, Christopher's interviews are available at the National Library of Australia.

Please have your questions ready.

Recommended reading

Christopher Cheng, 'Mutual Language Barriers in the Oral Histories of Immigrants', *Agora*, vol. 58, no. 2, 2023, pp. 26-29. Available through your [library](#) or purchase through the [History Teachers' Association of Victoria](#).

A Journey into (Family) Oral History

Christopher Cheng

Email: mrQHeung168@gmail.com

I remember sitting around a campfire with Indigenous Australians near the Qld and NT border in 2007, a year before I left Australia for Hong Kong. On a cloudless night, I wondered what it would be like to be among family. Maybe I dreamt of this as my parents had separated for as long as I can remember, and as newcomers to a foreign country, they had overextended themselves making a new life. Not knowing much about my family's past, I went to Hong Kong to connect with my extended family, but to my dismay found everyone was just as busy, if not busier, in a competitive environment. As a result, I felt there were seldom occasions to get to know my relatives.

The longer I stayed in Hong Kong, the more I began to realise that my actual roots were in Australia. And one thing I

wanted to do since realising this was to better understand the lives of those who preceded my parent's generation in Australia. So, when a package from Australia arrived in Hong Kong, I suddenly felt the wisdom of Confucius' words: 'Isn't it wonderful to have friends who visit us from afar?' After opening the package and inserting the National Library CD into my laptop, I heard a remarkably familiar voice. It was Uncle Kenny (Ken Wong).¹ To clarify, Uncle Kenny is not my real uncle, but as 'fictive kin' he did watch me grow up in Cairns, and he translated for my mother when she struggled with expressing herself in English. Uncle Kenny and I were part of the lion dance troupe that performed every Chinese New Year and on several occasions throughout the year. To hear his voice again for the first time in a long time was like he was there, next to me, in my small Hong Kong apartment.

After completing my PhD in Australia, I was delighted to find that one of the priorities of the National Library of Australia was to collect the life stories of Australians of Chinese descent. This was an opportunity for me and other interviewers to help expand the National Library's oral history collection.² Unlike Diana Giese's interviews with post-war Chinese Australians, conducted in the English language in the 1990s, the interviews I conducted with Uncle Ken and other first-generation Chinese-speaking immigrant 'Aunties' and 'Uncles' were predominantly in Cantonese, the native or preferred language of my interviewees.

Friends who were also interviewed for the project described how they felt about being interviewed by the National Library. Emeritus Professor Kam Louie, who was Dean of the Arts Faculty at Hong

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Kong University, reflected on his experience:

As it turned out, I spoke a lot more than I intended to. The interviewer [Anna Zhu] was very good. She gave very simple prompts and because it was so free and almost conversational, we (I) talked and talked, and the recording lasted some three days! I have actually not listened to the recording. Simply no time. But perhaps my grandchildren might one day though I guess they would have to be researchers or retired and have time to do so because it is so long.

Aliza Chin, a recent history graduate, who has experience on 'both ends of the microphone', said:

It was because of my past experiences interviewing others that I felt that it was important to participate in this project [with the National Library] and to share my own experiences and memories with others. [... But] what was recorded was only a small snapshot into my life, and I hope to participate in more oral history projects in the future, both as an interviewer, and interviewee.

The above reflections show that both interviewers and interviewees spent considerable time properly recording the narrator's life stories. Beyond simply leaving behind memories, Kam and Aliza were prepared to undertake multiple or repeated interviews.

On 7 October 2023, the Chinese Australian Historical Society (CAHS), and the Society of Australian Genealogists (SAG) will co-host a special session on oral history via Zoom. It will feature oral historians: Dr. Sophie Couchman, Kiko Ko, and myself. We encourage those interested in coming to ask questions in advance, preferably by email, so we can tailor the session to better meet everyone's interests.



Carol Lo was interviewed by Dr Christopher Cheng for the National Library of Australia in 2023. The interview took place at the immigrant auntie's home and was conducted in Cantonese.

Sophie encourages those who are about to do oral history with their families for the first time to start by listening to recordings made by others. You can easily do this by listening to audio recordings deposited at various state and national libraries across Australia. While I didn't hear her advice before I began, fortunately, I had done what Sophie recommended out of curiosity. And from listening to other interviewers, I believe I have improved my own interviewing technique. Through listening to old interviews, and then recording new ones, I somehow felt that I had fulfilled my long-awaited 'Australian dream' of sitting under the Southern Cross with my immigrant elders recalling their 'bad ole days' around a campfire. I hope you'll also have the chance to do the same and feel enriched by the reservoir of experiences unique to your own family.

¹ [Kenny \(King Shiu\) Wong, ORAL TRC 3566, interviewed by Diana Giese](#) for the Post-War Chinese Australians Oral History Project, National Library of Australia. Dr Christopher Cheng has recently written about Uncle Ken's [golden jubilee](#) as a Chinese herbalist in Cairns in 2023.

² Visit the [National Library of Australia catalogue](#) to browse and listen to interviews from the Australians with Chinese heritage oral history project collection.

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[Eight Voices of Chinese Australians](#)

Michael Williams

CAHS History Week presentation is now [online](#).

During NSW History Week, with its theme [Voices from the Past](#), Dr Michael Williams presented eight writings by Chinese Australians in both Chinese and English, covering 150 years of Chinese Australian history. These Chinese voices provide an insight into many aspects of Chinese Australian history as spoken to us by Chinese Australians. Chinese Australian history unavoidably relies on European observers – often of dubious quality and perspectives. Nevertheless, there are instances – increasing over time – of Chinese Australians speaking in their voice.

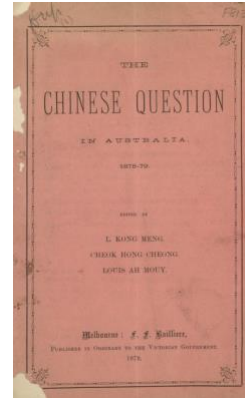


The defence of indentured labourer Ang in 1850, Papers related to Justice E. Wise, AW43/Item 2, Mitchell Library.

The selection of writings by Chinese Australians in both Chinese and English ranged from the first (certainly the earliest extant) piece of Chinese writing in Australia as an indentured shepherd named Ang in his defence in 1850 from a murder charge to a 1910 novel written in Literary Chinese on the eve of China's Republican revolution by the Melbourne based [Wong Shee Ping](#).

There are also reasoned attacks on discriminatory legislation, personal memoirs, old and new, poetry, letters from relations back in the village, and short stories expressing something of life

in 'white' Australia for someone of non-white heritage. Together, these 'Chinese 8' provide a fascinating insight into the many facets of Chinese Australian history spoken by Chinese Australians.



The Chinese Question in Australia, 1878-79, edited by L. Kong Meng, Cheok Hong Cheong, Louis Ah Mouy, [National Library of Australia](#).

Maurice Kwok Leong, social activist and community historian

Maurice Kwok Leong, social activist and community historian, was born in Hoiping (Kaiping) County, Guangdong, on 22 September 1919 and died in Melbourne on 28 June 2023, aged 103. John Fitzgerald, a historian of China and Chinese Australia and author of *Big White Lie: Chinese Australians in White Australia*, described Maurice Leong as 'a community historian' committed to sharing and preserving the records and stories of the Chinese-Australian communities. The Leong family were long associated with Melbourne's Chinatown, even before Maurice joined his father in 1936. The extended Leong clan ran wholesale and grocery businesses. They were also prominent patrons of the See Yup Society of Victoria (formed in 1856).

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During the 1960s, Maurice focussed on restoring the derelict See Yup temple and preserving the precious records. These treasures included 10,000 wooden tablets, each bearing the name and hometown of See Yup immigrants who died in Australia in the 19th century. In 2007, he initiated a project to clean, photograph, and digitally record the temple's spirit tablets. The tablets' transcriptions and oral histories recorded by Maurice, Sophie Couchman, Diana Giese and others provide an invaluable legacy for Chinese Australian history.

For further information, see John Fitzgerald, '[Centenarian preserved Chinese community history](#)', *The Australian*, 22 July 2023.



Maurice Kwok Leong. Photograph: Anthony Leong

Ah Toy and Sai Ying Lanes, Sydney

Ah Toy and Sai Ying Lanes off George Street, Sydney, commemorate the city's earliest Chinatown. They are also the [newest retail laneways in Sydney Place](#). This information about the naming of the lanes is from the [City of Sydney website](#).

Sai Ying Lane

Sai Ying Lane commemorates one of Australia's earliest Chinese immigrants, Mak Sai Ying (anglicised as Shying), who arrived in Sydney on 27 February 1818.

Three of Sai Ying/Shying's sons were cabinet makers, carpenters, and undertakers in Sydney. The lane also recognises the broader historical contribution of the Chinese community to Sydney's economic development.

Ah Toy Lane

Ah Toy came to Sydney in the 1850s. By 1865, he had a business as a carpenter and joiner at 115 George Street. From 1869 to the early 1880s, he operated a timber yard and factory at 202–208 George Street. Ah Toy's factory produced up-market furniture for David Jones. While the lane is named after Ah Toy, the name also recognises the contribution of Chinese cabinetmakers and the multicultural history of Sydney.



Douglas Lam and Darryl Low Choy, CAHS President, in Ah Toy Lane, 11 September 2023

[Subjects and Aliens](#)

**Kate Bagnall & Peter Prince (eds.),
ANU Press, 2023**

Kate Bagnall and Peter Prince are the editors of the recently published book *Subjects and Aliens*, which focuses on the histories of nationality, law and belonging in Australia and New Zealand. The book is available in print or [open access](#) through ANU Press and includes the following chapters:

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Sophie Couchman

'Not Substantially of European Origin or Descent': How Race Came to Shape Australian Enlistment during World War I', pp. 19-42.

Sophie Couchman found that Australian government officials wrongly assumed that men 'not substantially of European origin or descent' would not fight for their country. The officials held the view that Australians of non-European ancestry lacked allegiance despite being locally born and having British subject legal status. Sophie's case studies include Charlie Chung Quong and George Kong Meng.

Emma Bellino

'Australian is an Alien': The Position of Australian Women Married to 'Aliens', 1920-49', pp. 89-118.

Emma Bellino investigated the marital denaturalization of Australian women who married aliens, including Elizabeth Agnes Coon, Mary Mon Ping, Marjorie Lowe, née Wong, Dorothy Wong Yong Tai, and Lilian Hock Hing. During WWII, alien registration made some women feel like criminals for marrying a foreigner.



Upcoming Events

[Cultivating a Future: Chinese at the Queensland Agricultural Frontier](#)

Darryl Low Choy

Genealogical Society of Queensland

[Zoom](#) - Ticket sales (\$20-\$30) closing 3 pm, 13 October 2023, AEST.

'Triumph in the Tropics' has been a prevalent theme in tropical Queensland's

agricultural history. Chinese farmers played pivotal roles in the sugar cane, banana, and maize industries. Some were pioneers of these enterprises and the economic mainstays of agriculture in far north regional Queensland.

Many conventional local, regional, and state histories, including most industry histories, have not recorded or recognised the contributions of the Chinese to the success of an area or industry. Consequently, without this recorded public reference, the role of the early Chinese in these agricultural industries is absent from the Australian consciousness.



[Chinese workers on banana punts in the Innisfail \[Geraldton\] district, Queensland, c. 1902](#), APE-25 Cowley Photograph Album, John Oxley Library.

[Harrietville Chinese Mining Village](#)

The Uncovered Past

Dig With Us - Season 4

Harrietville, Victoria

January/February 2024

From the early 1860s, Harrietville was home to thousands of Victoria's Chinese gold miners. The largely undisturbed site at Harrietville includes mine workings, water races, building foundations, and gardens: a rare survivor of the heyday of Chinese gold mining in Victoria. The Uncovered Past will continue its Dig with Us program in January/February 2024. For more information, email uncoveredpastinstitute@gmail.com

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Charity and Culture: Chinese Youth Clubs in Queensland, 1930s-1940s

Natalie Fong

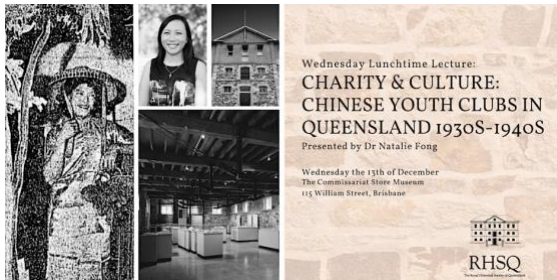
Royal Historical Society of Queensland

13 December 2023

Commissariat Store, Brisbane.

Join Natalie Fong to learn about her research on Queensland's Chinese youth clubs of the 1930s-1940s. The youth clubs held fundraising activities, including plays presenting Chinese history and culture to the broader community. Chinese youth clubs could also be patriotic and political, demonstrating support for Sun Yat-sen and the Chinese Republic.

Natalie Fong completed her PhD in History at Griffith University in 2021. Her thesis was titled '[Chinese Merchants in the Northern Territory, 1880-1950: A translocal case study](#)' and included the history of her ancestors. To register for the event click [here](#).



Northern Gateways: Chinese Heritage in Northern Australia Biennial Conference Darwin, 21-23 September 2024.

On 4 August 1874, the SS *Vidar* arrived in Port Darwin with 186 indentured Chinese labourers onboard. The [Chung Wah Society's NT Chinese Museum](#) will host the CHINA Inc 2024 biennial conference in Darwin. To mark this sesquicentenary of Chinese settlement in the Northern Territory. The event will be

the perfect opportunity to visit Darwin and the Northern Territory, including the NT Chinese Museum, the 'Hall of Ranking Sages' Temple, World War II exhibits, and various cultural institutions. Join the Conference 2024 mailing list by emailing museum@chungwahnt.asn.au

CAHS Values Your Membership

The focus of CAHS is its members. By joining or renewing your membership, you strengthen the work of CAHS in advancing the study of Chinese Australian history. To join or renew, please complete the membership form on the [CAHS website](#). The account details for the direct bank transfer are on the form.

Future Newsletter Suggestions

CAHS encourages members to share their stories and research interests by submitting short articles to the *CAHS Newsletter*. Please send your submissions to contact.cahs@gmail.com