

# Taking stock: 20 years of Australasian “overseas Chinese archaeology”

NEVILLE A. RITCHIE

*With the twenty-first volume of Australasian Historical Archaeology largely devoted to papers on 'overseas Chinese' studies in Australasia, it is timely to review work in this area on both sides of the Tasman Sea and look at possible directions and opportunities for the future.*

Historical archaeology in Australia and New Zealand can trace its origins back 40 or more years (Smith 1991, Connah 1988, Ritchie 2003a), but a disciplined approach to the archaeology of Australasia's migrant Chinese populations is a much more recent development, spanning barely the past two decades (a similar situation prevails in most other countries where large numbers of Chinese settled). 'Chinese archaeology' in Australia and New Zealand have taken quite different courses, but through professional affiliations, notably the Australasian Society for Historical Archaeology (ASHA) and occasional Chinese History workshops in both countries there has been much networking which has been mutually advantageous for both the practitioners and the end-products. As in most areas of research networking has been greatly facilitated by the advent of email, the Internet and on-line Discussion Groups. The following review of the development of overseas Chinese archaeological studies highlights the different approaches and common threads.

## AUSTRALIAN OVERSEAS CHINESE RESEARCH

The first review of 'archaeological studies of sites associated with the overseas Chinese in Australia' noted 'the overall effort has been ad hoc in design, hasty in execution, and the product is very poorly disseminated' (Bell 1996:13). In her landmark book, *Many Inventions: The Chinese in the Rocks 1890-1930*, Lydon (1999:191-199) critically reviewed the archaeology of the overseas Chinese in Australia (and New Zealand and elsewhere). With regard to Australia she noted:

Relatively little attention has been given to this area, reflecting the small disciplinary community. The aims and scope of projects have been limited by the nature of CRM survey work, and a lack of resources for documentary research, archaeological analysis and interpretation. Surveys have identified sites and features relating to Chinese occupation, surface collections have been made, and inventories produced, but there has been little serious attempt to design research programmes around archaeological questions' (Lydon 1999:191).

Lydon then briefly summarised the major archaeological, architectural and historic studies on Chinese sites and locales in Australia. It included a number of studies of Chinese temples (e.g. Brown & Ingleton 1966; Grimwade 1986, 1987, 2003), several surveys of Chinese sites in the Pine Creek area, Northern Territory (Bell 1983; McCarthy 1988 et al.), in northern Queensland, particularly the Palmer River goldfield (Jack et al. 1984; Bell 1992; Comber 1992, 1995), in South Australia (Luebbers & Bell 1986) and Tasmania (Gaughin 1991, 1995). Investigation of Australian urban Chinese sites was limited to almost incidental discoveries on the 'Commonwealth

Block' in Melbourne (McCarthy 1989b) and Lydon's published work on the Chinese community in the Rocks, Sydney (Lydon 1999).

In the 1990s, according to Lydon (1999:198), a rise in interest in their own history appears to have prompted the Chinese community, centred on the Chinese Australian Museum in Melbourne, to undertake or sponsor research. In October 1993, a conference, 'Histories of the Chinese in Australasia and the South Pacific' was held at the Museum. It brought together archaeologists, historians and the Chinese community for the first time. In addition to a session on the 'Archaeology of Chinese Mining Sites', Peter Bell reviewed the Australian distribution of pig ovens. The papers were published in a proceedings volume (McGregor 1995). In the same year a bibliography of publications addressing the archaeology of the Chinese in Australia, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea was produced (Bell, Grimwade & Ritchie 1993). In 1994, the Australian Historical Association conference in Perth had a session devoted to the history of the Chinese in Australia. Papers on material culture were presented by Bell, McCarthy, and Jack but only Jack's paper appeared in the subsequent publication (Ryan 1995) but see MacGregor (1995) and Bell (1996).

In 1994 the Museum of Chinese Australian History proposed that:

a staged systematic survey be undertaken of all sites which illustrate the role of Chinese people, and people of Chinese descent in Australia. The main aim of the project was to develop the basis of a detailed comparative understanding of the sites and their relevance to Chinese Australian, and general Australian history and heritage.

This project, overseen by a steering committee, was assigned to Austral Archaeology in association with historian Peter Bell and archaeologist Gordon Grimwade. Although, of necessity (not the least being funding limitations), this ambitious project was somewhat cutback from its original lofty '3 stage' aspirations, the outcome was a most useful document—'A thematic survey of sites of Chinese Australia history' (Austral Archaeology 1999). The main features being an excellent historical overview (a 25-page summary of Chinese history in Australia), a comprehensive annotated bibliography, and a state-by-state analysis of recorded sites and site investigations. The bibliography was based on one originally intended as a research tool to assist in the archaeological study of places occupied by people of Chinese origin in Australia and New Zealand in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The database analysis identified there were 435 recorded Chinese sites in Australia at the time, of which 186 were in Victoria. Needless to say, this is a small portion of the total estimated number.

Despite the inclusion of some recommendations for fieldwork for gathering further data, for reasons perhaps best left untold, the project took a new turn as the Chinese Australian Cultural Heritage (CACH) Project under the auspices of the Australian Heritage Commission. It drew on the earlier work of McCarthy, Bell and Grimwade, and under the supervision of a steering committee chaired by Henry Chan, resulted in *Tracking the Dragon: A Guide for Finding and Assessing Chinese Australian heritage places*, an eye-catching and very practical guidebook, (Australian Heritage Commission 2002).

Sandwiched in between these two studies, there was another seminal event in the development and exposition of overseas Chinese archaeology in Australasia. In February 2000 Henry Chan, assisted by Kate Bagnall, organised a workshop at the University of New South Wales, Sydney, on 'The Chinese in Australian and New Zealand History'. The workshop was really a full blown, amazingly successful and productive conference. It attracted just about every key practitioner in the field from New Zealand and Australia as well as many from around the Pacific Rim. It saw the creation and maintenance of numerous co-operative research networks, albeit born over a beer or two in the time-honoured way of conferences. Besides covering the gamut of historic Chinese migrant issues, the workshop included four sessions of particular interest to those involved and interested in Australasian Chinese historical archaeology, namely the plenary session which focussed on the 'Thematic Study of Chinese Historic Sites in Australia' (Austral Archaeology 1999), two sessions on the 'Archaeology of Chinese Sites', and a very relevant symposium on 'Temples and Tombstones: The Archaeology of the Chinese Dead'. In addition the public lecture at the Powerhouse Museum on 'Chinese Heritage Tourism: Ideas and Suggestions from the American Northwest' by U. S. guest speakers, Priscilla Wegars and Terry Abraham, presented another rich vein of possibilities.

In terms of publication it was proposed to produce two multi-authored volumes, a 'History' and an 'Archaeology' volume based on the papers presented at the workshop. They were to be edited by Henry Chan and Neville Ritchie respectively and it was hoped that both would be published by the University of New South Wales Press. But things have not worked out as planned. At this juncture negotiations for the publication of the 'history' monograph 'The Chinese in Australian and New Zealand History' (Chan in prep.) are still underway (Chan pers. comm. June 2003). When efforts to attract outside funding to publish the archaeology papers as a monograph came to nought and after much frustration and delays during which one paper went elsewhere, the remaining papers were offered for inclusion in *Australasian Historical Archaeology*, ASHA's annual journal. They form the basis of this volume, AHA 21.

Volume 21 begins with Barry McGowan's ground-breaking work on 'The archaeology of Chinese alluvial mining in Australia'. McGowan has pioneered the identification of "Chinese characteristics" in alluvial gold working sites in Australia. He first spoke on the subject at the ASHA conference in 1996. Since then he has refined his tailings typology, based on fieldwork in Victoria, the ACT and NSW, and identified further characteristics which will enable field workers to distinguish with much greater certainty between alluvial mining sites of Chinese, as opposed to European origin, and the techniques employed in working particular areas.

The next paper by Lindsay Smith has a similar theme and concern for identifying Chinese ethnicity in the field, in this case based on Smith's Masters research at Kiandra in the Australian Capital Territory. He defined specific vernacular architecture and traditional construction methods combined with the characteristic Chinese material culture evident at Kiandra, and advocates that these traits can be used to identify Chinese activity at similar sites elsewhere.

Kevin Rains' paper 'Rice bowls and beer bottles: interpreting evidence of the overseas Chinese at the Cooktown dumpsite' is also based on postgraduate research. It is a somewhat cautionary tale emphasising that there are no absolutes, the boundaries between Chinese and non-Chinese, and Chinatown and Cooktown are blurred and are likely to be so elsewhere. "Chinese-ness" when it is engaged with can be highly ambiguous in its physical manifestations, let alone its interpretation.

The next paper by Annie Muir on 'Ceramics in the collection of the Museum of Chinese Australian History, Melbourne' was a late entry. It was not presented at the Chinese workshop but was offered and is included in this volume because of its topicality and to assist workers in this field identify different types of Chinese ceramics. Such studies are an essential precursor to the identification of regional variations.

Gordon Grimwade's paper 'Gold, gardens, temples and feasts: Chinese temple, Croydon, Queensland', draws together archival, historic, photographic and archaeological evidence to interpret and promote a significant Chinese heritage place, the site of the Chinese temple at Croydon, and associated Chinese activities such as pig-roasting. Combined with his firm's excellent interpretative work on the Atherton Chinese temple, Grimwade is the recognised specialist in this area of overseas Chinese archaeology and presentation in Australia.

Terry Abraham's and Priscilla Wegars' paper 'Urns, bones and burners: overseas Chinese cemeteries', expands on the theme of the previous paper but offers more sociological insight into traditional Chinese cultural practices related to death, and their transfer and varied manifestations in overseas locations as evidenced by features such as markers, altars, bone houses and burners and what can be deduced from them by in-depth and comparative study.

The last paper in the volume is by Priscilla Wegars. Titled 'From old gold mountain to new gold mountain: Chinese archaeological sites, artefact repositories and archives in western North America and Australasia', it is in part based on Priscilla's public address at the Sydney workshop. Wegars, founder and curator of the Asian Comparative Collection at the University of Idaho, Moscow, Idaho (and also editor of its Newsletter), has an unsurpassed knowledge of Chinese material culture and overview of Chinese historical-archaeological work in the United States. The paper is really a guided tour of most of the major Chinese archaeological sites, surviving built heritage, artefact repositories and archives in western North America and to a lesser extent in Australasia. It is essential reading for anyone undertaking comparative work and for anyone planning a tour around 'Chinese sites' in any of the localities mentioned.

Another paper presented at the workshop 'Traces of a Chinese past: Chinese heritage sites in New Zealand' is absent from this volume. It was modified for inclusion in a recently published volume on the Chinese in New Zealand (Ritchie 2003b).

About the same time as the Sydney Chinese workshop, Henry Chan set up the ANZ-CH List on the University of New South Wales (UNSW) server. For four years it provided a fantastic networking tool for those undertaking historical and to a lesser extent archaeological research on the broadest spectrum of the Chinese experience in Australasia. Sadly recently Chan advised that the UNSW server was no longer able to host the list but he is in the process of setting up a monitored H-Huaqiao List as part of the international H-Net and will take steps to notify current subscribers to ANZ-CH when such a list has been set up on the Michigan State University server (Chan pers. com. August 2003).

The most recent event of note in terms of the development of Chinese Archaeology in Australasia was a small session at the joint 'Land and Sea' conference held in Townsville in October 2002. Convened by the writer, seven papers were pre-

sented, mainly updates on current work. Abstracts of the papers can be accessed on the James Cook University website <[http://www.faess.jcu.edu.au/saas/conferences\\_2002.html](http://www.faess.jcu.edu.au/saas/conferences_2002.html)>.

First up Henry Chan provided a thought provoking discourse on 'What's Chinese about "Chinese" ovens: innovation, diversity, and context in the interpretation of "Chinese" archaeological sites and artefacts'. The paper was 'a sinological critique of the recent discussion on the archaeology of "Chinese" ovens found in some parts of Australia' and raised issues concerning the interpretation of Chinese archaeological sites and artefacts and Chinese heritage places in Australia. The presenter, a Chinese historian with an interest in the historical archaeology and heritage of the Chinese in Australia, stressed the diversity of Chinese cultural practices (even within Guangdong), the varying patterns of Chinese migration and settlement in Australia and stressed that these factors might be reflected in differences in Chinese sites and artefacts in Australia.

Peter Bell, updated his pioneering study on Chinese ovens in Australia, of which the number and diversity continues to grow, for example, see work on Northern Territory sites by Malone Bjornkov (2001). Bell was followed by Zvonka Stanin's outline of her PhD research on the Chinese on the Loddon, Mount Alexander Goldfield (Victoria). Thomas Harvey's 'Opium dens, gambling, halls and ladies of the night: archaeology and the idea of "Chinatown"', was an exploration of Chinese settlement in Townsville, different conceptions of Chinatown, how preconceived stereotypes can influence our approach to archaeological theory and practice (see Harvey 2003). Barry McGowan then presented 'The archaeology of Chinese sites on the Braidwood goldfield, southern NSW', a further refinement and elaboration of his "Chinese mining recognition" work. Annie Muir presented a paper titled 'The Tongs: the archaeology of a Chinese family in inner Melbourne' based on the analysis of an assemblage recovered from a house excavated in a lane off Little Bourke Street, in Melbourne's Chinatown. From 1900 to 1912, the Tong family, the parents and their five children, occupied 24 Lacey Place. The paper focused specifically on the ceramic assemblage, both Chinese and non-Chinese, retrieved from one deposit in this house. The artefacts were examined to explore ideas of identity, ethnicity and gender, and how these may manifest themselves in material culture assemblages.

Gordon Grimwade delivered a paper on the recently completed conservation and interpretation project at the Temple of Hou Wang and Atherton Chinatown funded under the auspices of the Queensland Heritage Trails Network. This provided the basis for a recent paper 'Rediscovering Atherton Chinatown' published by the Australian Centre for Public History in *Locality: The Community History Magazine* with the theme 'The Chinese in Australia' is devoted to Australian Chinese studies under the guest editorship of the irrepressible Henry Chan (Chan 2003b). It includes papers by Harvey ('Uncovering Townsville's Hidden Chinese Past'), Hoskins (... Interpreting the Wong Family Store) and Williams (2003). The latter's recently completed PhD from the University of Hong Kong provides valuable Chinese perspectives into the settlement of Australasia since the late eighteenth century.

The latest development, now underway in Australia, is the Chinese Australian Cultural Heritage Project (known as the CACH project), which will eventually be a series of independent studies in each state and territory 'to collect information to identify, protect and nominate Chinese Australian heritage places to heritage registers' (Chan 2003a). The information will be maintained in a 'National Data Base of Chinese Australian Heritage Sites' that will be hosted by the National Institute for Asia and the Pacific at the Australian National University. The CACH project arises out of and is a redevelopment of the National Thematic Survey.

Chinese archaeological sites and built heritage have high potential for cultural tourism opportunities and interpretation, especially from a local or regional perspective. It is beyond the scope of this paper to identify or describe them but they include the whole gamut of Chinese heritage sites: temples, graves, stores, business buildings, gardens, mine workings and mining camps. Many are illustrated or mentioned in *Tracking the Dragon* (Australian Heritage Commission 2002) and others are described in detail in the papers in this volume and in the cited references. Obviously not all sites are created equal; some sites have a far higher potential for cultural tourism than others.

## NEW ZEALAND OVERSEAS CHINESE RESEARCH

The application of historical archaeology to the New Zealand Chinese situation has taken a somewhat different course from that in Australia. Both historians and historical archaeologists in New Zealand have been able to access the extensive ethnographic records produced by Rev. Alexander Don, the Presbyterian missionary charged with visiting and converting the Chinese miners on the southern goldfields to Christianity. Although he failed spectacularly in the latter endeavour, he left an enduring legacy in the form of photographs, numerous published reports and his *Roll of Chinese, 1883–1913*, a record of the Chinese on the southern goldfields over 20 years (reproduced in Ng 1993b). It lists the age, number of years of residence, occupation, clan, home village and other comments, such as movements, about the 3500 Chinese whom Don visited virtually each year. His *Roll* is truly a *Doomsday Book* of the Chinese in southern New Zealand in that period.

To this can now be added the seminal four-volume work *Windows on a Chinese Past* produced by Dr James Ng over the period 1993–1999. These volumes encompass 'How the Cantonese goldseekers and their heirs settled in New Zealand' (Vol.1), 'Round Hill and Alexander Don's Missions' (Vol.2), 'Immigration Issues and Biographies' (Vol.3), a complete reproduction of Don's 'Roll of Chinese' (Vol.4) and a lot more. Not only are these volumes definitive written records, they contain a wealth of photographs and pictorial records of the Chinese in New Zealand which had not been previously published.

A comprehensive web site, called 'the Chinese in New Zealand', which was established in 1998 is well worth a perusal, particularly the sections on the 'History of the Chinese in New Zealand' <http://www.stevenyoung.co.nz/chinesevoice/history.htm>. The webmaster welcomes input by researchers and students (Young n.d.).

Again Lydon (1999:196–199) has produced a convenient and independent assessment of the New Zealand archaeological work. The main difference is that in New Zealand 'the archaeology of the Chinese miners in southern New Zealand' has been the focus of a major study in its own right over many years by one individual—this writer. This work, a spin-off from the Clutha Valley Power project, centred round a doctoral thesis examining 'acculturation, adaptation and change' (Ritchie 1986), as well as numerous specific studies of Chinese and European artefacts, excavation and survey reports and syntheses (e.g. Harrison 1982; Piper 1988; Ritchie 1984, 1986a, 1986b, 1989, 1993, 2003b; Ritchie & McGovern-Wilson 1984; Ritchie & Park 1987). The project also resulted in the excavation and restoration of the Chinese miners' settlement at Arrowtown (Ritchie 1984) and its development as one of the leading cultural tourism sites in New Zealand. Over 100 000 visitors now visit the site every year.

Following the completion of the Clutha project, there has been relatively little analytical work on Chinese's site assemblages, a notable exception being Peter Bristow's MA study on 'Archaeology and ethnicity of the remote goldfields of Central

Otago' (Bristow 1994). But to the output from the Central Otago can now be added some site surveys and investigations in the Macraes area (Petchev 1996, 1997, 1998) and in the Old Man Range (Bristow 1992, 1995). In addition to these reports, some of the many Crown land site surveys that Jill Hamel has undertaken in southern New Zealand in recent years documents Chinese dwellings and mining sites, for example, in the Upper Waikaia (Hamel & Gordon 1989), the Nokomai Valley (Hamel 1989) and the Roxburgh Gorge (Hamel 1992). But while there has been this further work in Central Otago and just beyond, in the interim, no specific Chinese site investigations have been undertaken elsewhere in New Zealand.

At present there are as many recorded Chinese sites in New Zealand (about 580) as in all of Australia, although untold thousands of sites in Australia await formal recording or at least entry in a database, and many, but undoubtedly lesser numbers, await recording in New Zealand.

The first notable coming together of New Zealand Chinese researchers was at the 'Old and New Migrations Conference' held in the Otago Museum, Dunedin in November 1998. This brought together the full range of researchers from those principally interested in tracing their own family history, to unravelling the full story of the Chinese experience in New Zealand right up to the modern migrations of recent times, hence the conference theme.

Among those present at the 1998 conference were a small group, all specialists in various fields relating to the study of Chinese New Zealanders, who have recently published a multi-authored volume *Unfolding History, Evolving Identity: The Chinese in New Zealand*. The group under the editorship of Manying Ip (Ip 2003) approached this enterprise from various academic perspectives: history, sociology, psychology, archaeology, education, ethnic studies, journalism and archival research. Five of the contributors are NZ-born Chinese New Zealanders, three are immigrants from Malaysia and Hong Kong, one is Maori-Chinese and three are European New Zealanders. While all the papers are important contributions, perhaps those of most interest to historical archaeologists are the two that focus on the pre-1900 period from both a historical and archaeological perspective (Ng 2003; Ritchie 2003b).

While the number of archaeological excavations on Chinese sites in New Zealand is substantial, the work is largely limited to one area, Central Otago, so there is considerable scope for such work in other parts of New Zealand, such as Southland (Round Hill) and the West Coast. Many other aspects of Chinese endeavour outside of goldmining have not been touched as yet, including the Chinese urban merchant sites and other Chinese enterprises.

There is also a very real need to undertake a study in New Zealand, like the National Thematic Survey of Chinese historic sites in Australia, which aimed to provide a draft historical overview, a review of accessible information about Chinese heritage sites, the development of a national database, an annotated bibliography on Chinese sites, and a thematic and regional analysis of current databases and the quality of the information they contain.

There is great potential, too, for further work on Chinese mining sites and methodologies used to recover gold. By way of illustration, I will highlight the significant role played by Choie Sew Hoy (Charles Sew Hoy to Europeans). Born in 1838, he first went to California, then to Victoria, where he started a business. He came to New Zealand about 1868 and had established the leading Chinese business in Dunedin by 1871. From the outset he sponsored Chinese miners and was exporting scrap iron and the edible *muk yee* or Jew's ear fungus back to China. It is hard to imagine where all the scrap iron he exported came from at that time. Sew Hoy travelled extensively through the goldfields in the course of his business

with Chinese storekeepers, and like many Otago businessmen invested in goldmining ventures. These included the Main Gully, Mt Ida water-race from Lauder Creek to the Blacks/Ophir goldfields, a ten-acre quartz claim at Macetown, alluvial workings in tributaries of the Arrow River, and river claims at Maori Point on the Shotover.

But his reputation rests on his pioneering role in gold dredging which he initiated on his Big Beach claim, an extensive river flat on the lower Shotover River. In 1888 Sew Hoy commissioned Kincaird & McQueen, a Dunedin foundry, to design a new form of bucket dredge featuring a protruding bucket ladder lifted by a gantry, enabling the working of river beaches, flats and banks. It opened 15 000 acres (6070 ha) of new ground to dredging. Sew Hoy is credited with sparking the first Otago gold-dredging boom. His dredge, the first of four he owned, was the prototype for the New Zealand gold dredge which became recognised internationally as being at the forefront of dredge design. But Sew Hoy knew Big Beach would be worked out within a few years and, with his two sons, was on the lookout for other mining opportunities. In 1894 they commenced work on a new claim in the Nokomai Valley in Northern Southland, opting for hydraulic sluicing and elevating rather than dredging. This proved extremely productive. It finally closed shop in 1943—the last Chinese mining venture in New Zealand (see Hamel 1991). While nothing remains of Choie Sew Hoy's fleet of gold mini-dredges which worked the Big Beach claim between 1888 and 1897, his entrepreneurship has earned him a special place in New Zealand goldmining history. He was responsible for two major mining revivals centred on Big Beach and Nokomai (Ritchie 2003b:41–42).

There is also considerable scope for further research to identify "Chinese archaeological indicators", to further define Chinese mining techniques and devise a typology for their various manifestations on the southern goldfields. Such an exercise should have recourse not only to the physical evidence of mining but also to the location of Chinese hut sites and settlements and the wealth of information in archives such as the records of the goldfield Wardens' Courts (and their Australian equivalents).

Following the New Zealand government's recent poll tax apology to the New Zealand Chinese community, planning is under way to develop more historic Chinese New Zealand heritage sites for cultural-tourism purposes as part of a "New Zealand Chinese reconciliation" package. In this way the efforts of the pioneering Chinese sojourners and migrants in New Zealand will gain further recognition and understanding.

Projects being investigated in the South Island of New Zealand include:

- Conferring historic reserve status on the site and surrounds of the Arrowtown Chinese camp and produce further public interpretation of the site.
- Create an historic reserve in the Roxburgh Gorge to highlight and afford greater protection to the Chinese miners' rock shelters there.
- Undertake public interpretation and signage of Chinese sites in the Shek Harn Historic Reserve and Aldinga Conservation Areas in Otago.
- Possible conservation of Gay Tan's cottage at Macraes (though this building is privately owned).
- Undertake public interpretation of Chinese sites at Slab Hut Creek and Woods Creek on the West Coast.
- Undertake a complete Chinese heritage inventory, including archaeological sites, buildings, graves and workings.
- Public interpretation and/or restoration of Chinese workings or sites at Luggate, Cardrona, Alexandra, Lawrence, Arthur's Point, Clyde and Nokomai.

- Development of a historic New Zealand Chinese grave register.
- Development of Chinese heritage trails.
- Development of an 'educational super-site' package on the experience and contribution of the New Zealand Chinese.
- Development of a New Zealand Chinese heritage web site.

In response to concerns expressed by Dr James Ng to the New Zealand Historic Places Trust about the lack of recognition of Chinese endeavours in the southern goldfields, funds were obtained recently from the Otago Community Trust to undertake a small 'Chinese registration project' to formally register about a dozen Chinese archaeological sites and structures. These include a survey of the Lawrence Chinese Camp, Wong Gong's terrace and store in the Shotover valley, the Illustrious Energy hut (film set and genuine nearby workings) in Conroys Gully, Lye Bows orchard at Butchers Dam, Gay Tans house at Macraes, Ah Wee's tailings and hut on the Upper Clutha and the extensive Sew Hoy workings in the Nokomai Valley (Peter Petchey pers. comm. June 2003).

## BACK TO THE FUTURE

In the mid-1970s there were few archaeological or other reports (in New Zealand or overseas) that described the rough domestic wares and other artefacts associated with activities such as gambling and opium smoking which are widely found in overseas Chinese sites. The dissertation and academic papers that resulted from my work at that time embraced the now-maligned (with some justification) theoretical perspective of investigating acculturation, adaptation and change. Like other archaeological studies of the period, however, my studies were influenced by the need to document the range and diversity of overseas Chinese material culture and changes in it over time. In Australasia that phase is largely behind us now, because we have a good understanding of the range of artefacts likely to be found in Chinese sites, particularly rural ones, although there are always interesting surprises.

In *Many Inventions*, Lydon critically reviewed the major international archaeological studies of the overseas Chinese undertaken over the previous two decades, including my own work (Lydon 1999:198). She forthrightly criticised the notion, both implicit and explicit, in many of the studies 'that culture change comprises a mechanical, linear and quantifiable replacement of traditional traits by new ones (usually those of the majority culture), and the assumption that material evidence matches with human behaviour in a simplistic fashion'. While Lydon's study centred on a post-goldrush urban Chinese locale in a major port city, the Rocks in Sydney, where the social dynamics were likely to be very different from those at remote sites on the goldfields, her point was well made. At times, archaeologists have too readily assumed that degrees of similarity or difference in material culture indicate a specific and measurable degree of interaction. For example, the proportions of 'ethnic artefacts' in an assemblage (e.g. Chinese-made, modified or distinctly butchered, in the case of animals) are argued to represent 'social-distance' in a mechanistic equation of material and social patterns. Lydon stressed that differences are often the foci of interaction rather than representing social isolation and distance. She advocated an approach whereby the interpretation of archaeological evidence must place greater weight on symbolic meaning and cultural context, and proffered a notion of culture as differentiated and dialectical, of social change as the interplay between structure and event, and material culture as playing a dynamic role in creating and expressing cultural identity. Consideration of the symbolic dimensions of the archaeological record relies on contextualisation to understand its deployment in these processes.

Lydon's points are valid, but few archaeologists in recent times, including myself, have ever regarded acculturation in such a simplistic manner. While the old maxim 'the absence of evidence is not evidence of absence' is equally true of archaeological deposits, the repeated presence of specific artefacts or styles of construction in archaeological sites is a real reflection of particular behaviours, which may reflect both retention of traditional behaviours and in many instances the adoption of 'foreign traits', if not some degree of acculturation. Many apparent instances of 'acculturation' probably simply reflect non-availability of traditional products or construction materials—caused, for example, by the closure of local Chinese shops, thus compelling the Chinese to buy European wares as substitutes. It does not mean that they totally changed their mindset and simultaneously rejected long-held Chinese beliefs and celebrations, and even if they did, it would be difficult in most instances to deduce such changes from archaeological field remains alone.

Cultural beliefs and practices are by their nature dynamic and multi-dimensional, but one of archaeology's strength is pattern recognition, and the best way to recognise Chinese 'archaeological patterns', and gain insight into both idiosyncratic and more routine expressions of cultural behaviours is by systematic field surveys, and focussed investigations and studies. These, of course, need to be informed by cultural context, historical research and established and new theoretical frameworks to define, verify and interpret patterns, both physical and symbolic.

In conclusion, past work on Chinese heritage sites in Australasia has been highlighted and some future directions addressed, albeit somewhat non-specifically. Some differences, at least of timing, are apparent between what is happening in New Zealand and Australia. The CACH project is the major Australian Chinese heritage focus at present and may drive things in future, whereas in New Zealand, opportunities are being explored as part of a reconciliation package with the New Zealand Chinese community centred on compensating for past wrongs, notably the imposition of the poll tax.

There is no sustained academic interest in overseas Chinese archaeology in either country, and what there has been in recent years has been fairly ad hoc, taking advantage of archaeological mitigation opportunities as they arise or as part of Masters thesis projects. If major new insights are to be gained from archaeology there needs to be some substantial Chinese heritage projects addressing specific questions at PhD level or set up as long term university projects. Behavioural, cultural and symbolic patterns are best defined by multi-investigation projects, rather than 'one-offs'. Ideally new projects will investigate under-researched areas of inquiry or regions where there have been few or no archaeological studies. Some ideas can be gleaned from the various studies mentioned in this summary and applied elsewhere. Obviously urban Chinese sites are grossly under-studied, as are non-gold related Chinese rural sites and activity centres. Even substantial goldfields such as the Westland goldfield in New Zealand have hardly been touched from a Chinese-study perspective.

While it's a truism to state Chinese heritage sites mean different things to different people, what people want or expect changes over time too, depending on the social and political climate. Today many people of Chinese descent are happy to see their forgotten history, their role and contribution to society highlighted, and to gain further understanding of the life and times of their pioneer forebears through both archaeological and historical research. They also want to see Chinese heritage sites preserved and learn more about them through historical archaeology and cultural interpretation. As the recent workshops attest there is a heartening increase in interaction between the European and Chinese communities in

both countries with regard to the preservation of Chinese heritage and no shortage of material to work with. There are literally thousands of unrecorded Chinese heritage sites in Australia and New Zealand with stories to tell.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to Henry Chan and Gordon Grimwade for useful comments on the draft and additional information.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- AUSTRAL ARCHAEOLOGY 1999 A thematic survey of sites of Chinese Australia history, unpublished draft report commissioned by the Museum of Chinese Australian History, Melbourne 72pp. Compiled by Austral Archaeology in association with P. Bell and G Grimwade.
- AUSTRALIAN HERITAGE COMMISSION 2002 *Tracking the dragon: A guide for finding and assessing Chinese Australian heritage places*, Australian Heritage Commission, Canberra, ACT, Australia.
- BELL, P. 1983 *Pine Creek: A report to the National Trust of Australia (Northern Territory) on an archaeological assessment of sites of historical significance in the Pine Creek District*, National Trust of Australia (Northern Territory), Darwin.
- BELL, P. 1992 *Historic sites associated with mining and Chinese settlement in Northern Queensland*, report to the Australian Heritage Commission, Canberra.
- BELL, P. 1995 'Chinese ovens on mining settlement sites', in P. Macgregor (ed.) *Histories of the Chinese in Australasia and the South Pacific: Proceedings of an international public conference held at the Chinese Australian Museum, Melbourne, 1993*, Chinese Australian Museum, Melbourne, pp. 213–219.
- BELL, P. 1996 'Archaeology of the Chinese in Australia', *Australasian Historical Archaeology* 14:13–18.
- BELL, P., G. GRIMWADE and N.A. RITCHIE 1993 'Archaeology of the overseas Chinese in Australia, New Zealand and Papua-New Guinea: A select bibliography', published as a Supplement to the *Australasian Society for Historical Archaeology Newsletter* 23(1).
- BIRMINGHAM J., D. BAIRSTOW and A. WILSON (eds) 1988 *Archaeology and colonisation: Australia in the world context*, Australian Society for Historical Archaeology, Sydney.
- BJORNKOV, M. 2001 'Rock, mortar and traditions: An archaeological study of Chinese 'ovens' in the Northern Territory', in C. Fredericksen, C. and I. Walters (ed.) *Altered states: Material culture transformations in the Arafura Region*, NTU Press in association with the Centre for South East Asian Studies, Darwin.
- BRISTOW, P. 1992 'A site survey of historic goldmining sites in the Fraser River, Campbells Creek and Nuggety Gully, Old Man Range', unpublished report, Anthropology Department, University of Otago.
- BRISTOW, P. 1994 'Archaeology and ethnicity of the remote goldfields of Central Otago', unpublished Master of Arts thesis, Anthropology Department, University of Otago.
- BRISTOW, P. 1995 'Excavation of a miner's hut (S143/226) in the Old Man Range', *Archaeology in New Zealand* 38 (1):37–47.
- BROWN, P. and S. INGLETON 1966 A study of Chinese joss houses in Australia, thesis, Bachelor of Architecture, University of Melbourne.
- CHAN, H. and K. BAGNALL 2000 Programme and abstracts, unpublished papers from the Workshop on the Chinese in Australian and New Zealand History, February 2000, University of New South Wales, Sydney.
- CHAN, H. 2003a 'Chinese Australian Cultural Heritage (CACH) Project: Guidelines for State/Territory Committees', 3pp.
- CHAN, H. 2003b 'Recovering and presenting the hidden history of Chinese Australia', *Locality*, Autumn 2003, Australian Centre for Public History, University of Technology, Sydney, pp. 1–5.
- CHAN, H. (ed.) In prep. *The Chinese in Australian and New Zealand history*, a volume based on papers presented at the Workshop on The Chinese in Australian and New Zealand History, University of New South Wales, February 2000.
- COMBER, J. 1992 *Palmer goldfield heritage sites study (Stage 2)*, unpublished report, James Cook University, Queensland Department of the Environment and Heritage, Brisbane.
- COMBER, J. 1995 'Chinese sites on the Palmer goldfield, Far North Queensland', in P. Macgregor (ed.) *Histories of the Chinese in Australasia and the South Pacific: Proceedings of an International Public Conference held at the Chinese Australian Museum, Melbourne, 1993*, Chinese Australian Museum, Melbourne, pp. 203–212.
- CONNAH, G. 1988 *'Of the hut I builded'*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- GAUGHWIN, D. 1991 *North-east Tasmania historic sites inventory project*, Forestry Commission, Launceston.
- GAUGHWIN, D. 1995 'Pig ovens in North East Tasmania: An archaeological view', in P. Macgregor (ed.) *Histories of the Chinese in Australasia and the South Pacific: Proceedings of an international public conference held at the Chinese Australian Museum, Melbourne, 1993*, Chinese Australian Museum, Melbourne, pp. 230–247.
- GRIMWADE, G. 1986 'Artefacts of Hou Wang temple', in B. G. R. Reynolds (ed.) *Report on Atherton Chinatown, North Queensland. Vol. II*, Material Culture Unit, James Cook University of North Queensland, Townsville.
- GRIMWADE, G. 1987 "'Lit Sung Goong": Cairns Chinese Temple', *Records of Cairns Museum No.2*, Cairns Museum, Cairns.
- GRIMWADE, G. 2003 'Rediscovering Atherton Chinatown', *Locality*, Autumn, pp. 7–11, Australian Centre for Public History, University of Technology, Sydney.
- HAMEL, J. 1989 Gold mining in the Nokomai Valley: A second report, unpublished report for the Department of Conservation, Dunedin.
- HAMEL, J. 1992 Report on Doctors Point mining area, Roxburgh Gorge, unpublished report for the Department of Conservation, Dunedin.
- HAMEL, J. & J. P. GORDON 1989 Gold mining and farming in the Upper Waikaia: An archaeological survey, unpublished report for the Department of Conservation, Dunedin.
- HARRISON, A. 1982 *Lake Roxburgh archaeological survey*, N.Z. Historic Places Trust, Cromwell.
- HARVEY, T. 2003 'Behind the façade: Uncovering Townsville's hidden Chinese past', *Locality*, Autumn, pp. 4–6.
- HOSKINS, I. 2003 "'What's in Store?": acquiring and interpreting the contents of the Wong family store', *Locality*, Autumn, pp. 12–17.
- IP, M. (ed.) 2003 *Unfolding history, evolving identity: The Chinese in New Zealand*, Auckland University Press, Auckland.

- JACK, I., K. HOLMES and R. KERR 1984 'Ah Toy's garden: A Chinese market garden on the Palmer River goldfield, North Queensland', *Australian Journal of Historical Archaeology* 2:51–58.
- LUEBBERS, R and BELL, P 1986 'Chinamans well and stone quarries Historic Site, Coorong National Park', South Australian Heritage Committee, Adelaide.
- LYDON, J. 1999 *Many inventions: The Chinese in the Rocks 1890–1930*, Monash Publications in History No.28, Department of History, Monash University, Clayton.
- MacGREGOR, P (ed.) 1995 *Histories of the Chinese in Australasia and the South Pacific: Proceedings of an international public conference held at the Chinese Australian Museum, Melbourne 1993*, Chinese Australian Museum, Melbourne, 1995.
- McCARTHY, J. 1986 *Pine Creek heritage zone archaeological survey*, National Trust of Australia (Northern Territory), Darwin.
- McCARTHY, J. 1988 'The new gold mountain: Chinese trade networks in Northern Australia', in J. Birmingham, D. Bairstow and A. Wilson (eds) *Archaeology and Colonisation: Australia in the World Context*, Australian Society for Historical Archaeology, Sydney, pp. 139–148.
- McCARTHY, J. 1989a "Would-be diggers and old travellers": The Chinese at the Union Reefs and the Twelve Mile in the Northern Territory 1876–1910, unpublished report for the National Trust of Australia (Northern Territory).
- McCARTHY, J. 1989b Archaeological investigation of the Commonwealth offices and Telecom corporate offices building sites, Vols. 1–5, unpublished report for Department of Administrative Services, Melbourne.
- NG, J. 1993a 'How the Cantonese goldseekers and their heirs settled in New Zealand', in *Windows on a Chinese past* Vol. 1, Otago Heritage Books, Dunedin.
- NG, J. 1993b 'Don's roll of "Chinese"', in *Windows on a Chinese past* Vol. 4, Otago Heritage Books, Dunedin.
- NG, J. 1995 'Round Hill: Alexander Don: missions: mixed marriages: the opium evil', in *Windows on a Chinese past* Vol. 2, Otago Heritage Books Dunedin.
- NG, J. 1999 'Larrikinism and violence: Immigration issues: 20th century assimilation: biographies', in *Windows on a Chinese past* Vol. 3, Otago Heritage Books, Dunedin.
- NG, J. 2003 'The sojourner experience: The Cantonese goldseekers in New Zealand, 1865–1901', in Manying Ip (ed.) *Unfolding history, evolving identity: The Chinese in New Zealand*, Auckland University Press, Auckland.
- PETCHEY, P. 1996 Upper Tipperary dam site archaeological report, unpublished report for Macraes Mining Co., New Zealand.
- PETCHEY P. 1997 Gifford Road Chinese camp site; Site No 142/50, unpublished report for Macraes Mining Co., New Zealand.
- PETCHEY, P. 1998 Chinese archaeology at Macraes Flat, paper presented to the Old and New Migrations' conference, Dunedin, November 1998.
- PIPER, A. 1988 'Chinese diet and cultural conservatism in nineteenth-century southern New Zealand', *Australian Journal of Historical Archaeology* 6:34–42.
- RITCHIE, N.A. 1984 *The Arrowtown Chinese settlement: Report on the excavation and management recommendations*, New Zealand Historic Places Trust, Cromwell.
- RITCHIE, N.A. 1986a 'The written word: Writing equipment from Chinese sites in Central Otago, New Zealand *Archaeological Association Newsletter* 29 (1):41–51.
- RITCHIE, N.A. 1986b Archaeology and history of the Chinese in Southern New Zealand during the nineteenth century: A study of acculturation, adaptation, and change, unpublished PhD thesis, Anthropology Department, University of Otago, Dunedin.
- RITCHIE, N.A. 1989 'Johnny come lately: Chinese miners in New Zealand', in M. Trotter and B. McCulloch (eds) *New Zealand Unearthed*, Bookmakers, Auckland. pp. 120–123. Revised edition published as "Johnny come lately: Chinese miners on the Central Otago Goldfields", in M Trotter & B McCulloch (eds) *Digging up the past*, revised Penguin Books, Albany New Zealand, 1997.
- RITCHIE, N.A. 1993 'Form and adaptation: Nineteenth century Chinese miners' dwellings in Southern New Zealand', in P. Wegars (ed.) *Hidden Heritage: Historical archaeology of the overseas Chinese*, Baywood Publishing Co., Amityville, New York, pp. 333–371.
- RITCHIE, N.A. 2003a "'In-sites", historical archaeology in Australasia: Some comparisons with the American colonial experience', *Historical Archaeology* 37(1):6–19.
- RITCHIE, N.A. 2003b 'Traces of a Chinese past: Archaeological insights into the New Zealand Chinese experience in southern New Zealand', in M. Ip (ed.) *Unfolding history, evolving identity: The Chinese in New Zealand*, Auckland University Press, Auckland, pp. 31–48.
- RITCHIE, N and R. MCGOVERN-WILSON 1984 'A study of avifaunal remains from Chinese sites in Central Otago, New Zealand', *New Zealand Journal of Archaeology* 8:61–71.
- RITCHIE, N and S. PARK 1987 'Chinese coins down under: Their role on the New Zealand Goldfields', *Australian Journal of Historical Archaeology* 5:41–48.
- RYAN, J. (ed.) 1995 *Chinese in Australia and New Zealand: A multidisciplinary approach*, New Age International Publishers, New Delhi, 1995.
- SMITH, I. 1991 'The development of historical archaeology in New Zealand, *Australian Journal of Historical Archaeology* 9:6–13.
- WILLIAMS, M. 2003 'Chinese Australia – the view from the village'. *Locality*, Autumn 2003, pp. 18–22. Australian Centre for Public History, University of Technology, Sydney.
- YOUNG, S. n.d. 'The Chinese in New Zealand', a website maintained by Steven Young of Wellington and devoted to the study of the Chinese in New Zealand.