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Dark Dragon Ridge: Chinese people in Wollongong, 1901-39

Peter Charles Gibson
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Dark Dragon Ridge:
Chinese People in Wollongong, 1901-39

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree

Master of Arts (Research)

from

University of Wollongong

by

Peter Charles Gibson, BA (Wollongong)

School of Humanities and Social Inquiry

Faculty of Law, Humanities and the Arts

2014
I, Peter Charles Gibson, declare that this thesis submitted in fulfilment of
the requirements for the award of Master of Arts (Research), in the
School of Humanities and Social Inquiry, University of Wollongong, is
my own work unless otherwise acknowledged. It has not been submitted
in whole or in part for a degree at this or any other institution.

Peter Charles Gibson
18th of March 2014
Abstract

This thesis sheds new light on Chinese people in Australia's past by examining Chinese in the town of Wollongong, on the New South Wales South Coast, between 1901 and 1939. Although the historiography of Chinese people in Australia has advanced considerably over the last few years, more local-level histories are needed to understand their diverse experiences. There are several areas that this thesis explores: early Chinese immigrants to Wollongong; Chinese agriculture; business, community life; and the engagement of local Chinese with government and the law.

Drawing on a range of sources including English and Chinese-language newspapers, Commonwealth, State and local government records, church records and oral histories, I have uncovered an unexpectedly rich Chinese history in a town better known for being predominantly ‘white’. Chinese experiences in Wollongong were distinct in many respects, possibly due to the small size of the Chinese population. Chinese people were often successful, and there is remarkably little evidence of any sustained attack on their livelihoods, as was seen in other parts of ‘White Australia’.

The sheer volume of new information uncovered shows that at some point after 1939 there was a ‘whitewashing’ of the past, either deliberate or accidental, and this has broader implications for local history around Australia.
Acknowledgements

I would firstly like to thank my primary supervisor, Julia Martínez. Julia is a true professional whose steady guidance made this thesis possible. She consistently provided me with direct and timely advice and has never been too busy to help me, despite having many projects of her own to work on. I would also like to express my gratitude to my secondary supervisor, Glenn Mitchell, for his encouragement and willingness to render assistance.

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I am also grateful to several Wollongong local history enthusiasts, especially members of the Illawarra Family History Group. Indeed, many thanks go to Terry Bugg and Karin Parker for helping me get started with this research. I also thank Terry Nunan, Zofia Laba and Les Dion for their contributions.
A number of wonderful people translated Chinese characters for me and aided in my understanding of Chinese culture. I thank Frank Huang again, Cathy Wang (王鳳儀), Kai Huang (黄孖), Jessica Tian (田煒), April Luo (罗敏) and Sara Wang (王字). I am also lucky to have had the support of the Venerable Masters and volunteers at Wollongong’s Nan Tien Temple over the course of writing this thesis, as well as Allison and Darren!

Most importantly, I would like to thank my mother and father. They have been ever-patient with me and have contributed more to this research than I could have ever wished for. Not only did my father interact with Chinese people in Wollongong during the era of the White Australia policy, and was thus able to offer valuable insights, but my mother helped me to look through several microfilm reels of information. Both of them read several drafts of this thesis. My thanks also go to my sister Karen, my brother David and my cousin Kim for their support and encouragement.

Finally, I thank the Australian Government for the opportunity to undertake this research through the Research Training Scheme. Australia is absolutely the ‘lucky country’ and I feel lucky to have been born with Australian citizenship: something which many others around the world struggle so hard to attain.
Author’s Note

Throughout this thesis, I have elected to use traditional Chinese characters rather than the simplified ones used in mainland China today. I have done this because traditional characters are the ones that appear on documents and in Chinese-language newspapers of the period under consideration.

Wherever possible, I have used the recorded English names of Chinese people, followed by their Chinese character names. I have used the Hanyu Pinyin system of Romanisation in cases where recorded English names are unavailable.

I have noted the English names used for various places in China during the period, but defer to Pinyin names for their ease of location on modern maps (e.g. Xiamen rather than Amoy).

Translations of the titles of the Chinese-language sources included in this thesis have been provided.
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Introduction

This thesis tells the untold story of Chinese people in Wollongong between 1901 and 1939.¹ Wollongong, on the New South Wales South Coast, was home to a small Chinese population over this period.² In 1901, 100 or so ethnic Chinese and so-called ‘half-castes’ lived and worked alongside around 13,000 ‘whites’, with their number falling to about 60 out of a total population of 25,000 by 1939.³ Chinese people engaged in a number of activities in order to make their livings locally. They were involved in agriculture and small business, contributing to the local economy in ways hitherto unrecognised. Chinese residents also had to deal with their neighbours, various governments and the law on a day-to-day basis, sometimes to their benefit and at other times to their detriment.

In writing a history of Wollongong’s Chinese, I offer a fresh look at Chinese people in Australia at the height of the White Australia policy. I respond to calls for what Andrew Markus described as ‘precise and curious’ considerations of Australia’s Chinese past: local histories to supplement existing colonial and national histories, which can miss important details.⁴ Several such local histories have already been

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¹ By ‘Wollongong’, I refer to an area which is currently Wollongong City, administered by Wollongong City Council, but was once administered by four local governments. Throughout this thesis, I use ‘Wollongong’ and ‘the Wollongong area’ interchangeably and ‘the Wollongong town centre’ for what is now the suburb of Wollongong and was once Wollongong Municipality.


³ Census of New South Wales (NSW), 1901; Census of the Commonwealth of Australia, 1921; Census of the Commonwealth of Australia, 1933; NSW Alien Returns, 1939, NAA SP11/25; by ‘white’, I refer to those of substantial European descent, though 'white', 'Anglo', 'Anglo-Celtic' and 'European' are problematic terms; on Australian national identity, see, for example, Richard White, Inventing Australia, Allen and Unwin, St. Leonards, 1981.

⁴ Andrew Markus, 'Chinese in Australian History', Meanjin, 42: 1, 1983, pp. 90-91; see also Adam McKeown, Introduction: The Continuing Reformulation of Chinese Australians', in Couchman,
written and have revealed aspects of Australia's past not seen as yet; the richness of Chinese community life in small towns is one example.\textsuperscript{5} Through this exploration of the history of Chinese in the town of Wollongong, I continue this work. I look below the surface of 'White Australia' to what Jennifer Cushman called Chinese people 'on their own terms'.\textsuperscript{6} Wollongong, with its small Chinese population and majority 'white' working-class population, was distinct from most other locales studied thus far, including Cairns, Darwin and Sydney.\textsuperscript{7} It can therefore act as a useful new lens through which to view the history of Chinese people in Australia.

The title 'Dark Dragon Ridge' is the translation of the Chinese characters used for the name 'Wollongong' (烏龍岡) in Australia's old Chinese-language newspapers, and in records of the Australasian Chinese Nationalist Party, or Kuomintang.\textsuperscript{8} This title was chosen to illustrate a Chinese connection with the local area which has been overlooked until now. It also represents some of the 'precise and curious' details that can be uncovered in the course of conducting a local historical study: in this case, that Wollongong had a commonly-used Chinese name derived from the apparently dragon-like shape of the escarpment behind it.


\textsuperscript{8} See, for example, 'Chinese Soccer Team' (中國足球隊之將至), \textit{Tung Wah Times (東華報)}, 4 August 1923; Donation Book for KMT Headquarters (Wollongong, Yoe Wah-Gow) [澳洲國民黨建築雪梨支部黨所捐一冊，民國九年(封面寫有烏龍岡阜周華九兄)], Kuomintang Australasia Archives (KMTA) A191, 1920.


**Literature Review**

This thesis follows on from a recently impressive but far from complete body of historical research on Chinese people in Australia. Much of this research is fairly new: a 'refreshing sea breeze' blowing through the field of Australian historical scholarship, as Barry McGowan put it.\(^9\) In this review, I initially discuss histories of Wollongong and how most have overlooked Chinese people. I then discuss general histories of Australia's Chinese which focus primarily on 'white' dealings with them. Next, I address general histories which look beyond Anglo-Australians to Chinese people themselves. I then consider local research on Chinese people in Australian communities; I start in northern locales and then move on to southern and western locales. Finally, I explore the possibilities for future research in this field and explain where my own research fits into the literature.

Wollongong is a place with seemingly little Chinese history. While the Chinese Dion family who started the famous local Dion’s Bus Service in 1923 has been the subject of two publications, other Chinese people have scarcely been mentioned in relation to Wollongong’s past.\(^10\) Possibly the most widely-consulted local history, the 1997 compilation edited by Jim Hagan and Andrew Wells, *A History of Wollongong*, emphasised Wollongong’s early dairy and mining industries and its transformation into the ‘Steel City’ through steel manufacturing and ‘white’

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working-class political activism. Chinese people are absent; only after World War Two, wrote Stephen Castles, did Wollongong become a ‘multicultural city’. Wollongong’s status as a ‘white’ and often working-class place has been emphasised in a number of other local histories as well. Of particular note are histories of the 1938 Dalfram Dispute in Port Kembla which while dealing with local working-class opposition to Japanese aggression in China mention nothing about local Chinese. Local histories written during the 1980s in the lead up to the 200th anniversary of British settlement in Australia are notably Eurocentric, as are earlier ones such as Frank McCaffrey’s early pioneer history. Recently, this situation has started to change; the Illawarra Migration Heritage Project in particular has begun the process of restoring people of non-British ancestry, almost exclusively southern and eastern Europeans, to local history. Still, Chinese people await further investigation.

Generally, most histories of Chinese people in Australia featured them only in relation to ‘white’ Australian nationhood before 1975. Myra Willard's 1923 *History of the White Australia Policy to 1920* is an example of this kind of Eurocentric history. Willard referred to Chinese in terms of their alleged inability to 'mix' with 'Western peoples'.\(^{17}\) Keith Hancock wrote in a similar tone in his 1930 general history *Australia*; he lamented the 'half-breed children of coolie and poor white who can find no firm place in either of the competing civilisations'.\(^{18}\) Both works were written at the height of the White Australia policy and echo the anti-Asian political rhetoric of the period. As the policy crumbled, however, historians began focussing less on alleged Chinese inability to become 'Australian' and more on anti-Chinese racism. Three important books on anti-Chinese immigration restriction, for instance, were Alexander Yarwood's 1964 *Asian Migration to Australia*, Anthony Palfreeman's 1967 *The Administration of the White Australia Policy* and Charles Price's 1974 *The Great White Walls Are Built*.\(^{19}\) Chinese people featured in these histories mainly for 'what was done to them' rather than what they did, to borrow K. Daniels's words.\(^{20}\)


\(^{20}\) K. Daniels, ‘Westerns from the East: Oriental Immigrants Re-appraised’, *Pacific Historical Review*,}
After 1975, a number of Chinese-focussed broad histories of Chinese people in Australia emerged; these were situated 'within the Chinese community itself', or so Jennifer Cushman put it. Two such works published in 1975 and 1977 respectively were Choi Chingyan's *Chinese Migration and Settlement in Australia* and Yong Chingfatt's *The New Gold Mountain*. These books revealed aspects of Chinese people in Australia not formerly apparent, such as their connections to home villages in China and their political activities in Australia.

Another significant book in this vein was Morag Loh's 1989 *Dinky-Di*, about previously unrecognised Chinese involvement in the Australian defence forces. Two more broad histories of Chinese in Australia were penned by Eric Rolls. His first work, *Sojourners*, published in 1992, addressed the experiences of Chinese in the 19th century, while Rolls's second work, *Citizens*, published in 1996, concerned the 20th century. The primary theme of both works was the Chinese contribution to Australia. Rolls argued that 'without the Chinese, Australia would be a lesser country'. Other Chinese-focussed histories, like Kate Bagnall's 2006 thesis 'Golden Shadows on a White Land', recognised Chinese contributions to Australian life as well: family life in Bagnall's case,

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21 Cushman, 'A “Colonial Casualty”', p. 100.


particularly in terms of the shared history of ‘whites’ and Chinese people. One of the most recent national histories of Chinese in Australia, John Fitzgerald's 2007 book *Big White Lie*, also shed light on Chinese-Australian commerce and politics under the White Australia policy.

From 1982, local histories of Australia's Chinese were also written, with Chinese people in Cairns the first subjected to detailed study in Cathie May's book *Topsawyers*, published in 1982. May addressed several subjects, including the role of Chinese in the early development of Cairns, their social and economic organisation and their engagement with the wider community. She found that the importance of Chinese people to the local economy often allowed them to live with 'whites' in relative harmony: something overlooked in broad histories. Another book concerning Chinese people in Cairns, written much later in 2003, was Henry Reynolds's *North of Capricorn*. One of his chapters, “‘Eating with the Chows’—The Chinese in Far North Queensland’, borrowed much from May but also built on her work with new primary source material. Reynolds echoed May's conclusion: Cairns was a town where 'whites' 'ate with the Chows', or where Chinese and 'whites' lived together with a high degree of mutual respect and understanding. A recent study on Cairns, with similar revelations and highly-detailed heritage site information, was

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Sandi Robb's book *Cairns Chinatown*.\(^{30}\) The area further north around Thursday Island was similarly discussed in Guy Ramsay's 2004 chapter 'The Chinese Diaspora in Torres Strait'. Ramsay revealed a largely unrecognised Chinese presence there and showed the contribution of Chinese merchants to early northern Australian shipping.\(^{31}\) Also relevant to Chinese people in Cairns was Kevin Wong Hoy's and Kevin Rains's 2009 compilation of essays *Rediscovered Past*. Through the lens of local historical analysis, many of these essays revealed new information about Chinese communities in and around the Cairns area.\(^{32}\)

Chinese in Darwin have also been studied by local historians, with similarly new information about Australia's Chinese past brought to light. One of the first histories of Chinese people in Darwin was Timothy Jones's 1990 work *The Chinese in the Northern Territory*. This book traced the Chinese contribution to the town and the Northern Territory, which, Jones suggested, led to their 'total acceptance in the community'.\(^{33}\) A subsequent book on Darwin was Diana Giese's 1995 *Beyond Chinatown*, which was essentially a collection of Chinese stories gathered by Giese to redress imbalances in earlier histories; according to Giese, these had always been written 'by Europeans, for Europeans'.\(^{34}\) The stories told to Giese revealed previously unrecognised Chinese involvement in agriculture, business and the labour movement.

More work on Chinese people in Darwin, particularly in relation to the labour


movement, can be found in Julia Martínez's 1999 thesis 'Plural Australia'. Martínez showed that 'White Australia' was far from political and social orthodoxy in Darwin: that Chinese and 'whites' coexisted without conflict in most cases.\textsuperscript{35} Another Darwin study, already discussed in relation to Cairns, was Reynolds's \textit{North of Capricorn}. His chapter 'Darwin and the Chinese Territorians' also charted Chinese activities in Darwin, showing that Chinese people considered themselves locals, despite their frequent portrayal as 'aliens' in Eurocentric histories of Chinese people in Australia.\textsuperscript{36}

Also relevant here is Martínez's 2011 study on Darwin Chinese women in politics: these women defied traditional conceptions of both race and gender.\textsuperscript{37}

Sydney's Chinese have been studied by local historians as well. The first major work written on Chinese people in Sydney was Shirley Fitzgerald's \textit{Red Tape, Gold Scissors}, published in 1996. Fitzgerald's book offered a new, in-depth look at Chinese life in Australia, including Chinese community activities and Chinese interaction with Europeans.\textsuperscript{38} Sydney's Chinese, specifically those in the Rocks, were also examined at length by Jane Lydon in her 1999 thesis and book \textit{Many Inventions}. Lydon maintained that discrimination was not the defining feature of Chinese settlers' experiences; rather, she argued, their economic contribution defined their experiences.\textsuperscript{39} This differed from arguments regarding racism found in a number of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{36} Reynolds, \textit{North of Capricorn}, p. 120.
\item \textsuperscript{38} Fitzgerald, \textit{Red Tape, Gold Scissors}.
\item \textsuperscript{39} Jane Lydon, \textit{Many Inventions: The Chinese in the Rocks, 1890-1930}, Monash Publications in
\end{itemize}
earlier, broader histories. A 2005 Chinese-language study along similar lines was Cai Shaoqing’s publication on the New South Wales Chinese Chamber of Commerce in Sydney.\(^{40}\) Additionally, biographies of at least two prominent Sydney citizens of Chinese background—Quong Tart and L. J. Hooker—were written fairly recently, revealing the existence of a new kind of Australian hero.\(^{41}\) More recently, Mei-fen Kuo's 2013 book *Making Chinese Australia* drew on Chinese-language sources to chronicle the formation of Chinese identity in turn-of-the-century Sydney: a subject which had also formerly been 'whitewashed'.\(^{42}\)

Other places in New South Wales have likewise been focal points for histories of Chinese people. A 1998 thesis by Lindsay Smith concerned Chinese gold miners at Kiandra in southern New South Wales. Smith observed frequent, though perhaps unexpected, cooperation between Chinese and 'whites' in local mining ventures.\(^{43}\) Janis Wilton's 2004 book *Golden Threads* also revealed new information about Chinese experiences in regional New South Wales. Wilton argued that the Chinese contribution to this region was significant, but that their presence was sparsely recorded and usually overshadowed. Yet, she argued, this presence could be

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uncovered by referring to various local history sources, particularly oral histories. Another revelatory book on Chinese people in regional New South Wales, which similarly used a localised, multi-source approach, was Joanna Boileau's *Families of Fortune*. Studies on various New South Wales locales have also been done by Barry McGowan. Perhaps most relevant was his 2008 article ‘Reconsidering Race’. In this study, McGowan showed the Chinese contribution to the town of Braidwood and argued that anti-Chinese racism, whilst being a fact of life, was not as significant as often assumed, nor were Chinese people powerless to resist it. Robyn Florance also published a 2008 New South Wales Heritage Office study about Chinese people on the South Coast between 1850 and 1950, revealing previously unknown Chinese involvement in agriculture, business and religion. Similarly, in this thesis I reveal a previously overlooked presence of Chinese market gardeners in Wollongong and that they were quite successful and powerful locally.

Chinese in Melbourne have attracted modest attention from historians; still, they have revealed important information not seen in broad histories of Chinese people in Australia. Alison Blake's thesis 'Melbourne's Chinatown', written in 1975, was the first work on this topic. Blake charted the development of Chinatown from

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48 See also Peter Charles Gibson, ‘Chinese Market Gardeners in Wollongong, 1876-1939’, paper presented at Dragon Tails 2013, the 3rd Australasian Conference on Overseas Chinese History and Heritage, University of Wollongong, Wollongong, 6-8 July 2013.
the 1850s up through the years of the White Australia policy. Sophie Couchman published a piece much later in 1995 on the importance of the Chinese banana trade to Melbourne. Indeed, like others, her study demonstrated a previously unrecognised Chinese contribution to Australia. In her 2001 article, Couchman also explored the engagement of Melbourne's Chinese residents with their 'white' neighbours, showing that victimisation seldom marred positive experiences based largely on mutual economic benefit. Another Couchman study dealt with women in Melbourne’s Chinatown. She demonstrated that Chinese men frequently had intimate relationships with 'white' women, irrespective of the social stigma surrounding these unions.

Chinese in other parts of Victoria have been the subject of more local histories than those in Melbourne alone. A 1992 study penned by Linda Brumley, Liu Bingquan and Zhao Xueru entitled *Fading Links to China* concerned Chinese gravestones at Ballarat. It showed that the burial of many Chinese in the town defies the image of the Chinese sojourner, which is ever-present in Eurocentric histories. Another work was Chou Bonwai’s 1995 piece on Chinese sojourners in several Victorian towns, including Ballarat and Bendigo, though Chou portrayed Chinese people as sojourners, not settlers. Two additional histories of Chinese in Victorian

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52 Sophie Couchman, "Oh, I Would Like to See Maggie Moore Again!": Selected Women of Melbourne's Chinatown', in Couchman, Fitzgerald and Macgregor (eds.), *After the Rush*, p. 186.
54 Chou Bonwai, 'The Sojourning Attitude and Economic Decline of Chinese Society in Victoria,
towns were written in 2004: Rob Hess's history of Australian Rules football set mainly in Ballarat and Rod Lancashire's study of vineyards in the northern Victorian town of Wahgunyah. Through in-depth local studies, these historians showed that Chinese people were settled, involved and contributing members of their communities. Further relevant local research, in this instance on Chinese people in Mount Alexander in central Victoria, can be found in Keir Reeves's 2005 thesis 'A Hidden History'. Reeves painted a complex picture of Chinese experiences: a mix of high-level anti-Chinese rhetoric coupled with benign Chinese-European interaction at the grass-roots level. Another study was Carol Holsworth's 2008 book on Chinese people in the town of Echuca, which showed that Chinese participated actively in local community life, even under the White Australia policy. Additionally, an important history of Chinese in Bendigo was Valerie Lovejoy's 2009 thesis 'The Fortune Seekers of Dai Gum San'. Lovejoy's research was channelled into several articles, most of which cast Bendigo's Chinese as successful negotiators of cultural and linguistic boundaries. The most recent Bendigo work was Amanda Rasmussen's 2013 article on Chinese participation in local politics: she showed that Chinese were active and contributing at the local level in spite of their almost total absence between 1860s-1930s, in Macgregor (ed.), Histories of the Chinese in Australasia and the South Pacific, pp. 59-74.


exclusion from colonial and national politics.\textsuperscript{60}

Chinese people in other Australian locales, sadly, have not attracted much interest from historians. One work was Helen Vivian's 1985 study of Chinese sites in northern Tasmania, which was among the first local studies of Chinese in Australia. Vivian offered insights into their economic and social organisation; according to her, many Chinese were settlers, not sojourners, most had dealings with non-Chinese and most were never passive victims of racism.\textsuperscript{61} Anne Atkinson's 1988 work \textit{Asian Immigrants to Western Australia, 1829-1901} dealt with Chinese people in Perth and Broome. Atkinson noted their vital role in the early development of these places.\textsuperscript{62}

There was also a significant 1995 book by Jan Ryan, \textit{Ancestors}, which was also about Chinese people, mainly in Perth and Broome. Ryan portrayed Chinese as the pioneers of the west, even linking them to the 'bushman' image traditionally associated with European pioneers. She also noted the differences between Chinese experiences in the east and west of Australia, concluding that the experiences of the overseas Chinese varied markedly with location.\textsuperscript{63}

Recent histories of Chinese in Australia, both general and local, have been impressive, but there is substantial scope for further research in the field. Henry Chan, for instance, noted in 2001 the huge potential for using Chinese-language sources, and for considering important cultural features of overseas Chinese, such as

\textsuperscript{62} Anne Atkinson, \textit{Asian Immigrants to Western Australia, 1829-1901}, University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands, 1988.
the 'qiaoxiang', or 'native place'.\textsuperscript{64} Michael Williams echoed Chan's sentiments in 2002. He argued that the 'qiaoxiang' paradigm of historical inquiry, which must inevitably draw on Chinese-language sources, is a viable alternative to traditional colonial and national paradigms.\textsuperscript{65} In addition, historians such as Andrew Markus and Janis Wilton have shown both the potential and need for more local-level histories of Australia's Chinese.\textsuperscript{66} Indeed, Chinese in the cosmopolitan north and major southern centres have been studied to the neglect of those in other locales. Another topic suitable for much deeper analysis is Chinese people in relation to the White Australia policy. John Fitzgerald posited in 2007 that the policy operated 'above the everyday concerns of the towns and cities', implying a need for more studies situated on Chinese people within those towns and cities.\textsuperscript{67}

In this thesis, I traverse some underexplored avenues of research regarding Chinese people in Wollongong and Australia. My work is centred primarily on Chinese people themselves: I draw on Chinese-language sources and consider places of origin in China in an effort to transcend Eurocentric history. I explore an unknown location in relation to Australia's Chinese past, that is, Wollongong, in Australia's temperate south. I thus build on the number of Chinese people in Australia subjected to historical scrutiny thus far. Furthermore, I consider some experiences of Chinese people living and working under the White Australia policy, assessing its impact on their day-to-day activities, as well as their responses to it.

\textsuperscript{65} Williams, 'Destination Qiaoxiang', p. 1.
\textsuperscript{66} Markus, 'Chinese in Australian History', pp. 90-1; Wilton, \textit{Golden Threads}, p. 121.
\textsuperscript{67} Fitzgerald, \textit{Big White Lie}, pp. 220-1.
This thesis draws on a number of theoretical and methodological approaches. Most of these have already been deployed by historians of Chinese in Australia. I consult John Fitzgerald's 2007 book *Big White Lie* for some inspiration. Fitzgerald examined Chinese people, predominantly in the area of business, 'on their own terms' in Sydney, Melbourne and other places with Chinese-language sources, and against a backdrop of their oft-assumed status as outcasts in 'White Australia'.\(^6\) I do much the same, but in Wollongong and in relation to Chinese from all walks of life. I also draw inspiration from Janis Wilton's *Golden Threads*. She pieced together stories of the lives of Chinese people in northern New South Wales and then used these stories to reflect on the experiences of Chinese in Australia generally. I attempt to do this in relation to Wollongong.\(^6\) Additionally, I draw on microhistory: an approach to history which uses small-scale studies to explore large-scale narratives, such as those at the national level. As microhistorian Carlo Ginzburg described, microhistorians inquire on the small scale in an effort to reveal complex interactions often neglected on the large scale. According to Levi, such small-scale studies can then be used to make 'far wider generalisations'.\(^7\) Whilst I am cautious not to make overambitious generalisations using the Wollongong case, like Levi, I inquire on the small scale with a view to re-examining colonial and national historical narratives.

To conduct this research, I use a range of historical source material. I use local newspapers the *Illawarra Mercury* and the *South Coast Times* (Wollongong

\(^6\) Wilton, *Golden Threads*, pp. 4-5.
Argus before 1900). I also consult the Sydney Morning Herald, the Australian Town and Country Journal, as well as union publications such as Labour Daily and Common Cause and one of Australia’s Chinese-language newspapers, the Tung Wah Times (東華報). Government records are also central to my research. I use records linked to the Federal Immigration Restriction Act. I also draw on New South Wales State Government records, including bankruptcy files, court transcripts, birth, death and marriage registers and probate packets. Further, records of the four local governments which administered the Wollongong area over the period in question are particularly useful. These include rate assessment rolls, rate books, lists of electors, minutes and items of correspondence. I also draw on church registers of births, deaths and marriages, as well as a number of published local oral histories.

I treat historical sources in a number of ways. In examining newspapers and official records, I endeavour to be mindful of literary principles, of seeing texts as products of social relationships. Raymond Williams, for instance, viewed works of literature as manifestations of the societies that produced them, advising that texts be read in social contexts.71 I also keep Foucault's principle of discourse analysis in mind, that is, that agency and power are interwoven in discourse.72 I try to read relevant sources 'against the grain' to identify hidden meanings, such as stereotypes about Chinese people held by newspaper reporters and government clerks. Regarding published oral histories, I try to be mindful of work done on memory and history in the field of Chinese-Australian history. Diana Giese, for instance, noted of Chinese in Darwin that oral histories can complement government records; they can even challenge official versions of events, but should not necessarily be relied on for

precise details. As such, where feasible, I use oral histories to complement official records. At all times, too, I do my utmost to maintain an awareness of the powerful legacy of the White Australia policy. I aim to produce a local community history of Chinese people in Wollongong ‘on their own terms’, that is, by seeking to find Chinese voices wherever possible rather than simply those of ‘white’ powerbrokers during this period.

**Thesis Outline**

Chapter One offers a background to the era of the White Australia policy, addressing 19th-century Chinese migration to and activities in Wollongong. Early Chinese indentured labourers, fishermen, market gardeners, tobacco planters and shopkeepers, as well as Chinese sailors and the formation of the area's first labour union, are discussed. I divide the chapter according to what I have identified as four distinct phases of Chinese migration to Australia in the 19th century: early arrivals; contract labour; the gold rushes; and post-rushes arrivals. I begin each section with a look at Chinese people in Australia generally and then situate Wollongong's Chinese in this bigger picture. I consider the number of Chinese people coming, their occupations on arrival, their localities of origin in China, their movements back to China and their engagement with 19th-century 'whites'.

In Chapter Two, I describe the development of Chinese agriculture in

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Wollongong between 1901 and 1939. Local Chinese market gardens grew all manner of fruit and vegetables, often with substantial profits. There was also a small but thriving Chinese dairy farming industry. The chapter is set out according to various aspects of Chinese agriculture: its variety, location, scale, labour organisation and longevity.

Chapter Three concerns Chinese business in Wollongong. I demonstrate the wide variety of Chinese commercial ventures, starting with a well-known local bus company and then moving on to other commercial ventures. Other aspects of Chinese business are also explored, such as the degree to which shops clustered together into a ‘Chinatown’ and the scale and success of various business operations, along with their advertising efforts and longevity.

In Chapter Four, I discuss Chinese community life, including Chinese marriage and intermarriage. The chapter is structured according to several themes, namely family life, political and religious activities, competition and the maintenance of links with home villages in China.

Chapter Five concerns Wollongong’s Chinese in relation to government and the law. I cite cases of Chinese people trapped in China by bureaucracy, support for patriotic causes, legal action, voting and opium smuggling. Chinese experiences of the *Immigration Restriction Act* significantly shaped Chinese lives, and I consider these as well as their efforts to resist it. I also examine Chinese experiences of the New South Wales State Government and the four local governments of Wollongong, then talk about local Chinese in relation to democracy and, finally, the law.
Chapter One

Chinese in 19th-Century Wollongong

As many as 100,000 Chinese people moved to, around and from Australia during the 19th century.¹ From different parts of China—primarily the Pearl River Delta counties of Guangdong—they travelled around 7,000 km on ships which took a number of weeks to arrive at 'New Gold Mountain' (新金山).² Chinese in the colony of New South Wales worked in shepherding and domestic service from the early 1820s; as indentured labourers from 1847; in gold mining and related work during the gold rushes from the 1850s to the 1870s; and in different forms of agriculture and business after the gold rushes. The Australian colonies implemented anti-Chinese immigration restrictions in 1888.³ These were reaffirmed in the Immigration Restriction Act at Australian Federation in 1901, which effectively prevented most Chinese people coming to Australia.⁴ Some Chinese remained after the restrictions, but many returned to China.⁵

In this first chapter, I investigate the experiences of Chinese in 19th-century

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² Eric Rolls, Sojourners: The Epic Story of China's Centuries-Old Relationship with Australia, University of Queensland Press, St. Lucia, 1992, p. 72.
New South Wales and Wollongong in order to provide a backdrop to my consideration of Wollongong's Chinese between 1901 and 1939. I look at the number of Chinese people coming, their roles on arrival, their places of origin in China, their reasons for leaving, their patterns of travel back to China and their interactions with 19th-century Europeans or ‘whites’.

**Early Arrivals**

The first Chinese people came to New South Wales in the early 1800s. One of the earliest was Mak Sai Ying, or John Shying, who arrived in 1818, bought land in Sydney, married an English woman and became a publican.\(^6\) Recently, historian Kate Bagnall suggested that Man Sue Bach may have also arrived around the same time as Mak Sai Ying, or even earlier.\(^7\) Three Chinese men were employed by the Macarthur family in Sydney in 1821 as well: a carpenter called Matchiping, an unnamed servant and an unnamed cook.\(^8\) Captain Patton of the *Westmoreland* also brought 10 Chinese into Sydney in 1822.\(^9\) Further, Presbyterian minister John Dunmore Lang employed two cabinetmakers, Quong and Tchiou, in 1827, and landowners including Andrew Brown employed Chinese shepherds during the 1830s and early 1840s.\(^10\) The number of early Chinese arrivals was small. According to Maxine Darnell, only 15 Chinese

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8 Eric Rolls, *Sojourners*, p. 32.
settlers were recorded in New South Wales between 1827 and 1847.\textsuperscript{11}

The origins and motives of the first Chinese arrivals are uncertain. Mak Sai Ying is said to have arrived in Sydney from somewhere in Guangdong.\textsuperscript{12} He was in the position to buy land, meaning he was probably well-off; perhaps he was an entrepreneur seeking to increase his wealth in Australia. He also married a European woman, had children and returned to China periodically.\textsuperscript{13} John Watt, who migrated to Sydney in 1840, was from Amoy, or Xiamen (廈門), Fujian (福建), though travelled to New South Wales from England, having been taken there by missionaries as a small boy.\textsuperscript{14} Watt entered the colony as a domestic servant and settled there.\textsuperscript{15} Other Chinese may have arrived as seamen, taken on in China to replace deceased European sailors.\textsuperscript{16} Growing contact with Europeans through the tea trade—and through conquest after the British invasion of China in the First Opium War of 1840-2—opened up new migratory routes for Chinese people. These were what Philip Kuhn referred to as 'abrupt departures from the past' and would have proven attractive to some seeking to escape the domestic trouble which plagued southern China for most of the 19th century.\textsuperscript{17}

Since the early 1800s, it had been thought by colonial powerbrokers that Chinese might be useful in developing the colonies, and these visions were realised to some extent.\textsuperscript{18}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[12] Doyle, Research Papers—John Shying; Rolls, \textit{Sojourners}, p. 32.
\item[14] The current Chinese characters for Xiamen (廈門) were not the ones used in this period.
\item[18] Price, \textit{The Great White Walls Are Built}, p. 38; Fitzgerald, \textit{Red Tape Gold Scissors}, p. 30; Jack,
minister John Dunmore Lang in Sydney, for instance, were valued for their economy.\textsuperscript{19} In 1827, their cheap furniture was, according to Lang, ‘tolerably well made’.\textsuperscript{20}

New South Wales census data suggests there may have been Chinese people in Wollongong before 1851. Data for 1833 and 1836 shows three ‘pagans’ in the county of Camden, to the south of Sydney, where Wollongong was located.\textsuperscript{21} Perhaps they were Chinese, perhaps Indian: the rural character of the area and the roving presence of Chinese and Indians around Sydney suggest shepherds from one place or the other.\textsuperscript{22} The 1846 census also shows three ‘Mohomedans or pagans’ and two practitioners of unspecified religions in the Illawarra district, of which Wollongong was the main town. At the same time, there were 11 foreign-born males and three foreign-born females in the district, with 'foreign-born' referring to places outside the British Empire.\textsuperscript{23} Because India was part of the Empire, a few of these recorded non-Christians could have been Chinese. By 1851, Wollongong had 12 people who practised unspecified religions, plus 16 foreign-born men and six foreign-born women.\textsuperscript{24} Some of these people could also have been from China. The total population of the Wollongong area was about 2,500 in 1851.\textsuperscript{25}

John Dunmore Lang took over 2,000 acres of land near Wollongong in 1830

\textsuperscript{20} Fitzgerald, \textit{Red Tape Gold Scissors}, p. 30;
\textsuperscript{21} Census of NSW, 1833, 1836.
\textsuperscript{23} Census of NSW, 1846.
\textsuperscript{24} Census of NSW, 1851.
\textsuperscript{25} Appendix 2a, in Hagan and Wells (eds.), \textit{A History of Wollongong}, p. 267.
and it possible that he employed Chinese workers there. There is no record of him employing Chinese in the local area, but he was clearly an advocate of Chinese labour at a time when there were a number of foreign-born non-Christians around.

**Under Contract**

Between 1847 and 1853, approximately 3,300 Chinese indentured labourers, all males, were ‘imported’ into New South Wales from Amoy, or Xiamen, Fujian. A few hundred also went to Victoria and South Australia. At the height of the arrivals, according to Robert Towns’s figures, each ‘shipment’ consisted of about 200 Chinese. They went to work as shepherds, farmhands, domestic servants and general hands. A small number of labourers were also recruited from Hong Kong and, later, Swatow or Shantou (汕頭) in far eastern Guangdong, and then Singapore. Xiamen dialect, a form of Hokkien, and most dialects of Guangdong are mutually unintelligible, and most of these places differ culturally, meaning the labourers recruited in the different ports would have had little in common, even though they were all ‘Chinese’.

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Indentured labourers came to Australia chiefly because of poverty in China, the efforts of British labour agents and a strong demand for cheap labour. The agricultural areas around Xiamen in particular were poor, populated by peasants living under desperate circumstances. As such, some signed labour contracts with British recruiters in efforts to improve the lots of their families, always intending to return home. Kidnapping and fraud were also used by recruiters. The parents of two boys brought to New South Wales on the Nimrod, for example, alleged that the boys had been 'enticed away' from their homes. Contracts for Chinese labourers were harsh in relation to food, remuneration and working conditions. Chinese were also indentured for five years rather than the standard three for non-Chinese labourers. Wang Singwu claimed there was little difference between Chinese 'coolies' and African slaves. Within New South Wales, a number of indentured labourers

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33 Darnell, 'The Chinese Labour Trade to NSW', pp. 72-4.
successfully settled where they arrived or moved elsewhere in the colony after their contracts expired, but most appear to have returned to China.  

After 1847, the majority of their employers lauded the advantages of Chinese labourers over European ones. Patrick Leslie, for example, who owned land in what is now southern Queensland, claimed that his Chinese labourers were reliable and never got drunk, unlike his Englishmen. Other colonial masters, however, experienced rebelliousness from their new servants: absconding was the chief complaint. Simultaneously, European labour groups agitated against the so-called 'Chinese slaves'. They were, according to the working-class oriented People's Advocate newspaper in Sydney, 'the most accomplished thieves, adroit swindlers and professed cheats that the world can produce'. Indeed, they were often presented as the enemies of Australia's 'white' working class.

Several indentured labourers from Xiamen were brought to the Wollongong area in 1852. Correspondence between Robert Towns and Henry Osborne—a land grantee at Dapto, near Wollongong—indicates that five men came from Xiamen on the Spartan at a cost of £54. One was identified as 'Sang' or 'Song', but the other four were not identified. Registers from St. Luke's Anglican Church at Dapto list John Chin Chi, John Chi, John Jui Dan, Thomas Gam and John Tanzi, with three of these men described as Amoy natives and one, John Chin Chi, as an employee of

39 Rolls, Sojourners, p. 65.
40 Darnell, 'Master and Servant, Squatter and Shepherd', pp. 59-65.
44 Robert Towns Correspondence, Mitchell Library, MSS 307/5, 12 August 1852; see also Australian Dictionary of Biography, <www.adb.anu.edu.au>.
45 RTC, Mitchell Library, 307/184.
Henry Osborne. Similarly, records from St. Francis Xavier's Catholic Church in Wollongong list Thomas Gam, Joseph Chuchin and Gerrry Loung. Amoy is also nominated as Joseph Chuchin's birthplace on his death certificate. It is unclear, though, which of these men made up the original five who came to Wollongong in 1852. Osborne may have even procured more than five indentured labourers because many of those brought from Amoy, or Xiamen, by Towns went to unnamed clients. A number of Osborne's contemporaries, such as Alexander Berry on the Shoalhaven estate to the south of Wollongong, employed upwards of 20 such men. 1856 census data certainly suggests Osborne had more than five Chinese labourers. It shows 13 Chinese in the Wollongong area, with 11 outside the town centre, probably at Dapto. Nonetheless, these numbers were a small percentage of the total 3,500 indentured labourers brought into New South Wales around this time. Meanwhile, the entire population of the Wollongong area was about 3,500 in 1856.

On arrival, Chinese labourers worked in dairy farming, one of Wollongong's emerging industries. Henry Osborne had a dairy operation, so these men almost certainly tended cows for their periods of indenture, much like Chinese on Berry's estate and those on Hubert de Castella's farm in Victoria. John Chin Chi was also described in church registers as a 'domestic servant', meaning he was also a so-called

47 St. Francis Xavier's Catholic Church, Register of Marriages, WCLA, 25 July 1855, 25 November 1859; Register of Baptisms, WCLA, 27 May 1864; NSW Register of Deaths, 1904/8883.
48 Maxine Darnell, 'Indentured Chinese Labourers and Employers Identified, NSW, 1828-56'.
49 Darnell, 'Indentured Chinese Labourers and Employers Identified, NSW, 1828-56'.
50 Census of NSW, 1856.
Historian Robyn Florance wrote about John Chin Chi felling trees, too, though some years later, in the 1860s, and to the south of the Wollongong area on one of Osborne’s other farms. It also seems likely that these labourers would have had some small hand in the cultivation of staples such as wheat and barley, given that Wollongong’s economy tended mostly towards mixed agriculture during this period.

When their contracts expired in 1857, some former indentured labourers put down roots locally. John Chin Chi, John Chi, John Jui Dan, Thomas Gam, John Tanzi, Joseph Chuchin and Gerry Loung all married European women and started families in the Wollongong area. One former indentured labourer, Thomas Gam, also sent for his brother, John Gam. John arrived in 1857, possibly from China, to assist his brother, but he dramatically committed suicide with a pistol in 1860 after a dispute with Thomas over money. Associates of the former Xiamen indentured labourers to settle in Wollongong, at least for a time, were Hang Wang, Joe Ritchie, Hoar Miar, Sha Hu, Ong Ing, Twa-hie and John Pow. Thomas Gam and John Chie were both naturalised in 1872 and then became landholders and voters, possibly even ‘respectable’ citizens. They continued on in the dairy industry as independent farmers, as did some of their children. Significantly, the former indentured

55 Florance, Tracing Chinese Footsteps on the South Coast of NSW, p. 15.
56 Lee, ‘”Rocked in the Cradle”’, pp. 40-1.
57 ‘Determined Suicide of a Chinaman’, Illawarra Mercury, 10 January 1860; ‘By Electric Telegraph’, Empire, 13 January 1860.
59 Registers of Certificates of Naturalisation, NSW State Archives (NSWSA) 4/1202-5, Register 3 p. 125, 127; NSW Electoral Rolls, Illawarra Electoral District, 1874-5 p. 720, 1876-7, p. 794.
60 [Gams] ‘Avondale’, Illawarra Mercury, 3 September 1872; ‘Fatal Accident’, Illawarra Mercury, 2
labourers did not go back to China, not even for a visit, at least judging by the number of children they had, the frequency of their births and the fact that most of the Chinese men listed in St. Luke's Church registers died locally.

Henry Osborne treated Chinese favourably, as suggested by their apparently uneventful employment history and the fact that only one appears to have absconded: 'Cha' in 1855. Osborne does not seem to have lauded the advantages of his Chinese workers publicly, unlike Patrick Leslie, yet he does not appear to have criticised them either. These men were also able to find European wives and were welcomed into the local church community. There was one case of anti-Chinese agitation in 1858. Thomas Gam and John Chin Chi were accused of voting in the New South Wales July 1875; [Chies] 'Wollongong Agricultural Show', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 January 1885; 4 February 1886; 3 February 1887; 12 February 1887.
62 'Sydney Police Court', *Empire*, 25 January 1855; see Hang Wang's allegation of inadequate food, 'Local Intelligence', *Illawarra Mercury*, 2 June 1856.
election that year despite being unnaturalised, and thus ineligible to vote, and were subject to anti-Chinese racism in the local Illawarra Mercury.\textsuperscript{63} For the most part, however, their experiences with local Europeans seem to have been benign.

\textit{The Gold Rushes}

In 1853, thousands of Chinese gold-seekers started arriving in Australia. The precise number of men—and they were almost always men—is unknown. Gold-seekers may have made up 80 percent of the total number of 19th-century Chinese migrants: potentially 80,000. From 1855, two years after the start of the Victorian gold rush, they began arriving in New South Wales.\textsuperscript{64} Chinese peaked at around 13,000 there in 1861.\textsuperscript{65} Not all were miners: merchants, gardeners, fishermen and 'protectors' came to support the miners, making money by selling them equipment and food.\textsuperscript{66}

Chinese gold-seekers came primarily from 15 counties surrounding the Pearl River Delta in Guangdong.\textsuperscript{67} The vast majority of Victoria's Chinese were Siyi (四邑) natives from four counties to the south-west of the Pearl River Delta. In New South Wales, most were from the counties of Zhongshan (中山), or Xiangshan (香山), Zengcheng (增城), or Zengyi (增邑), and Dongguan (东莞), which also

\textsuperscript{63} 'A New Description of Voter', Illawarra Mercury, 21 January 1858.
\textsuperscript{65} Price, \textit{The Great White Walls Are Built}, p. 77; Curthoys, "Men of All Nations, Except Chinamen", p. 106.
\textsuperscript{67} Williams, 'Destination Qiaoxiang', p. 31.
surround the Pearl River Delta.\textsuperscript{68} There were also numerous Sanyi (三邑) people in the colonies. These people came from the three Delta counties closer to Guangdong's capital, Guangzhou.\textsuperscript{69} Additionally, there were gold-seekers from five other Delta counties (see Map 1.2), some Hakka or Kejia people (客家), as well as some people from Shantou and Xiamen.\textsuperscript{70} Members of the latter two groups, though, were often runaway indentured labourers already resident in the colonies.\textsuperscript{71}

Chinese people came during the gold rushes mainly because of poverty, domestic turmoil, gold fever and easy access to European shipping. During the 19th

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{68} Choi, \textit{Chinese Migration and Settlement in Australia}, p. 4; Price, \textit{The Great White Walls Are Built}, pp. 70, 80.
  \item \textsuperscript{69} Price, \textit{The Great White Walls Are Built}, p. 78.
  \item \textsuperscript{70} Choi, \textit{Chinese Migration and Settlement in Australia}, pp. 17-9; Kronin, \textit{Colonial Casualties}, p. 17.
  \item \textsuperscript{71} Rolls, \textit{Sojourners}, p. 102; Jack, 'Some Less Familiar Aspects of the Chinese in 19th-Century Australia', p. 50.
  \item \textsuperscript{72} Williams, 'Destination Qiaoxiang', p. 66.
\end{itemize}
century, land shortages in Guangdong made farming difficult and famines frequent.\textsuperscript{73} Hardship was magnified by the political upheaval and lawlessness brought about by China’s Taiping rebellion (1850-64) and other trouble in Guangdong.\textsuperscript{74} When news of gold in Australia and California reached the Delta counties during the early 1850s, many families received it eagerly and sent men to bring back gold in attempts to improve their situations. As prospector Lum Khan Yang said of Australia, ‘we happily heard intelligence regarding a new goldfield in an English colony’.\textsuperscript{75} Hong Kong's importance as a trading port, and close proximity to the Pearl River Delta, also ensured that gold-seekers had ready access to shipping. British ships for the most part took them to Australia, with many going on the ‘credit-ticket’ system: a form of indentured labour organised by Chinese merchants like John Alloo, Louey Ah Mouy and Lowe Kong Meng.\textsuperscript{76} The defining feature of the movement of people from China during the gold rushes was their intention to return to assist their families, and many did, becoming known as 'Gold Mountain Men' (金山人).\textsuperscript{77}

Chinese gold-seekers were initially admired, but were soon met with hostility, violence and racist legislation. Anne Curthoys claimed that 'mirth and astonishment’ were common themes of first contact between Chinese and Europeans. Thrift, diligence and ingenuity were regularly attributed to Chinese miners.\textsuperscript{78} Yet, this later degenerated into ill-feeling, most famously with the New South Wales Lambing Flat riots of 1861.\textsuperscript{79} The rise of Australia's Chinese population saw more competition with

\textsuperscript{73} Choi, \textit{Chinese Migration and Settlement in Australia}, pp. 5-8.
\textsuperscript{74} Williams, 'Destination Qiaoxiang', p. 43; Bowen, 'The Merchants', p. 30.
\textsuperscript{75} Lam Khan Yang, cited in Bowen, 'The Merchants', p. 30.
\textsuperscript{77} Rolls, \textit{Sojourners}, p. 106; Williams, 'Destination Qiaoxiang', p. 32.
\textsuperscript{78} Curthoys, 'Men of All Nations, Except Chinamen', p. 106.
\textsuperscript{79} Curthoys, 'Men of All Nations, Except Chinamen', pp. 110-5; C. N. Connolly, 'Miners' Rights:
Europeans for resources which, in conjunction with notions of European racial superiority, sparked conflict. Anti-Chinese agitation prompted governments to prevent Chinese people coming to the colonies. Immigration restrictions were implemented in Victoria in 1855, South Australia in 1857, New South Wales in 1861 and Queensland in 1877, but certain restrictions were repealed at various times thereafter. These laws had a noticeable effect; indeed, by 1871, there were 28,351 Chinese people recorded in Australia, which was 10,000 or so less than the 38,247 recorded in 1861.

There was no gold in Wollongong, but at least three Chinese gold-seekers tried to pass through the area in 1852, almost certainly on their way to the goldfields further west and south. In May, the body of a Chinese man was discovered at Fairy Meadow, just north of Wollongong. Around the same time, two bodies of Chinese men were discovered at Shellharbour, south of the Wollongong area. These men had travelled great distances and starved to death, having eaten nothing but leaves towards the end of their journeys. Eric Rolls described several Xiamen indentured labourers absconding from their duties and heading south through New South Wales as being among the first miners on the Victorian goldfields. These unlucky travellers to Wollongong were probably among the Xiamen absconders. Indeed,

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80 For 19th-century European racial theories see, for instance, Frank Lewins, 'Race and Ethnic Relations', in Curthoys and Markus (eds.), *Who Are Our Enemies?*, pp. 10-9; for counter-theories, see Kane Collins, 'Imagining the Golden Race', in David Walker and Agnieszka Sobocinska (eds.), *Australia's Asia: From Yellow Peril to Asian Century*, University of Western Australia Publishing, Crawley, 2012, pp. 99-120.
82 Choi, *Chinese Migration and Settlement in Australia*, p. 22.
83 'Chinamen Dying in the Bush', *Empire*, 21 May 1852.
84 'Chinamen Dying in the Bush', *Empire*, 21 May 1852; 'News from the Interior', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 November 1852.
arrivals from Guangdong normally went directly to Melbourne by ship before 1855, with few having reason to travel south overland.\(^86\)

Other Chinese people passed through Wollongong in the 1850s and 1860s heading to or from the goldfields. In 1855, three men—John Sing, James Ding and Sing Kean—came to the area from, or so they said, 'the Turon diggings', near Bathurst in northern New South Wales. In Wollongong, they worked for butcher Archibald Beitson, yet they were accused of theft and fled. They set off for Wide Bay in what is now southeast Queensland, where gold was discovered in 1851.\(^87\) Still, they were apprehended in Sydney and sentenced to five years hard labour.\(^88\) Later, in 1866, two Chinese men—George King and John Ah Hock—presented at Wollongong police station claiming their horses had been stolen in the mountains just west of Dapto. Police claimed, however, that the horses had already been stolen by these Chinese men near Goulburn, close to other New South Wales goldfields, and the men were gaoled.\(^89\) These men may have found mining 'like trying to catch the moon at the bottom of the sea' and resorted to petty theft to make money.\(^90\) The 'Ah' in John Ah Hock's name suggests that the latter two men spoke a Cantonese dialect—with 'Ah' an informal title of address in Cantonese—but it is impossible to be completely certain or more specific about the origins of these gold rush visitors.\(^91\)

'Celestial fishermen' fished the waters around Wollongong in the 1850s and 1860s as well. They worked on Lake Illawarra in 1859, in the Wollongong area's

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87 'Gold at Wide Bay', *Freeman's Journal*, 6 November 1851.
88 'Central Criminal Court', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 June 1855.

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south, having arrived from Sydney by ship and travelled overland on bullock carts from Wollongong harbour to set up camp on the banks of the lake. There, they began supplying their countrymen on the goldfields with fish, which they probably salted and packed on site. Later, in 1862, a party of five Chinese fishermen set up a camp at Waniora Point at Bulli to Wollongong's north. From this base, they worked the ocean for mutton fish, or abalone, which reputedly fetched a good price in China.

According to Chin Ateak, who spoke before a government commission of inquiry in 1880, there were hundreds of Chinese fishermen operating in New South Wales during the 1850s and 1860s. Shirley Fitzgerald noted that they were affiliated with merchant Ah Chuney, from Guangdong, and 'dotted along the coast north and south of Sydney'. Given their likely affiliation with Ah Chuney, Wollongong’s Chinese fishermen would have probably been from one of Guangdong's Pearl River Delta counties, at least going by the tendency of most overseas Chinese to associate with others from the same areas in China.

Chinese gold-rush visitors seem to have been welcome in Wollongong, or at least tolerated. The starved travellers elicited sympathy from local Europeans. Chinese fishermen were also praised for their thrift and hard work by the Illawarra Mercury. The local fishing industry was practically non-existent in 1860, so these

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92 'Celestial Fishermen', Illawarra Mercury, 17 January 1859.
93 'A New Article for Export', Illawarra Mercury, 31 January 1862.
95 Fitzgerald, Red Tape Gold Scissors, p. 91; for the Chinese fishing industry on the NSW South Coast see Florance, Tracing Chinese Footsteps on the South Coast of NSW, p. 22-3; more generally see Alister Bowen, 'The Central Role of Chinese People in Australia's Colonial Fishing Industry', Journal of Australian Colonial History, 12, 2010, pp. 97-118.
97 'Chinamen Dying in the Bush', Empire, 21 May 1852.
98 'Celestial Fishermen', Illawarra Mercury, 17 January 1859; 'A New Article for Export', Illawarra
men did not compete with others.\textsuperscript{99} The alleged criminals, whilst they were indeed prosecuted, do not seem to have suffered discrimination either. Remarkably, local Member of Parliament Robert Owen even opposed moves to enact racist legislation against Chinese people in New South Wales in 1858, lamenting how unjust it was 'to charge any crime against these people'.\textsuperscript{100} Perhaps their small number in Wollongong—between ten and 20, plus 20 or so Xiamen labourers and their families, compared to a total population of between 3,500 in 1856 and 5,400 in 1871—ensured Chinese people a relatively quiet stay. This was often the case in other areas with few Chinese people.\textsuperscript{101} No doubt their seemingly friendly reception was also due to local capitalists' interests in hiring cheap labour and selling coal, even the steamship \textit{Illawarra}, on the China market in the 1860s.\textsuperscript{102}

\textit{After the Rushes}

From the 1870s, Chinese people in New South Wales worked chiefly as market gardeners, free agricultural labourers, cabinetmakers and shopkeepers. All these roles were found to be sufficiently profitable to them after the gold ran out.\textsuperscript{103} After immigration restrictions in most of the colonies were lifted in the late 1860s, a large number of Chinese people arrived. Although precise figures are unavailable, shipping

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\textit{Mercury}, 31 January 1862.
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\textsuperscript{100} 'Chinese Immigration Bill', \textit{Empire}, 25 June 1858.
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\textsuperscript{101} McGowan, 'Reconsidering Race', pp. 325-31.
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records cited by Choi Chingyan show consistently more Chinese arrivals than departures in New South Wales from 1877 to 1888.\textsuperscript{104} An overall increase of approximately 15,000 Chinese people was seen in the colony during this 11-year period.\textsuperscript{105} In 1881, 38,533 were recorded in Australia: roughly 10,000 more than in 1871 and around the same number as in 1861.\textsuperscript{106}

Chinese arrivals after the gold rushes came from the same places and for similar reasons as the gold-seekers. Whilst domestic turmoil in Guangdong eased somewhat toward the end of the 19th century, the pressures of living still drove men—almost always with the blessing of their families and the ultimate goal of return—to try to earn money overseas. Land shortages remained problematic around the Pearl River Delta over this period, as did political instability and lawlessness. Additionally, while gold fever dissipated after the rushes, many men continued to return to their villages 'with glory', showing others that wealth could still be found in Australia and elsewhere.\textsuperscript{107} The apparent success of these men prompted fellow villagers to try to emulate them. Chinese commercial ventures in Australia after the rushes also tended to be less risky than those during it, which enabled men to leave China with a greater sense of surety about what awaited them in their destinations than may have been the case previously. This was an important consideration in their decisions to leave.\textsuperscript{108} An increasing number of Chinese were also born in Australia, the result of some Chinese-Chinese unions but mainly of Chinese-European ones.\textsuperscript{109}

\textsuperscript{104} Choi, \textit{Chinese Migration and Settlement in Australia}, p. 23.
\textsuperscript{105} Choi, \textit{Chinese Migration and Settlement in Australia}, p. 23.
\textsuperscript{106} Choi, \textit{Chinese Migration and Settlement in Australia}, p. 22.
\textsuperscript{107} Williams, 'Destination Qiaoxiang', p. 52.
Chinese people in the Australian colonies also moved in large numbers from exhausted goldfields to established population centres after the gold rushes. Sydney, for example, witnessed a 10-fold increase in the recorded size of its Chinese community over this period: from 296 in 1871 to 3,474 in 1901.110 Chinese people frequently depended on European customers for their new livelihoods, so they often had to move closer to them. This movement was not only to metropolitan centres but also to regional centres. In the case of large-scale agriculture, Chinese people moved to various other locations, including Cairns, where the produce they grew was shipped to Sydney and Melbourne. In places like Cairns, being in close proximity to European customers was less important.111

In 1878, employees of the Australian Steamship Navigation Company went on strike over the company's employment of Chinese sailors, which sparked mob violence in Sydney and panic in the Chinese community.112 This incident and others were followed up with new immigration restrictions, firstly in New South Wales in 1881 and then Australia-wide in 1888.113 New arrivals had to pay a £100 poll tax under the 1888 restrictions and they fell sharply as a result.114 The official 1881 figure of 38,533 Chinese people in Australia dropped to 29,627 by 1901, at which point the Immigration Restriction Act made coming to Australia impossible for most

110 Census of NSW, 1871; Census of NSW, 1901.
114 Choi, *Chinese Migration and Settlement in Australia*, p. 22.
Chinese. Discrimination was not all-pervasive over this period, but it was at least as pronounced after the rushes as it was during them. Chinese people in Wollongong increased markedly following the gold rushes. 1871 census data shows seven local China-born people. Church records also indicate just over 20 local Australia-born Chinese at this time. These were mostly the former indentured labourers and their families: a tiny, close-knit Chinese community. From 1876, however, the situation began to change. 1881 census data is incomplete for Wollongong, but local government records show a steady rise in the number of Chinese ratepayers after 1876. By 1890, there were at least 10, each of whom would have had several Chinese business partners or employees. 1891 census data shows 35 Chinese people living locally, compared to just seven in 1871. 1901 census data indicates 53 Chinese and six so-called 'half-castes'. All these census figures, however, are certainly an underestimation: the fact that there were between 10 and 30 Chinese ratepayers alone listed in local government records in the period from 1890 to 1901 suggests there were many more Chinese people locally. There were probably around 100 at the turn of the century, with census collectors to blame for unreliable data. One collector reported seeing a gorilla-like monster in the area in 1871, which actually turned out to be 'a Chinaman taking exercise'. Many Chinese may have been ignored by potentially prejudicial census collectors. Over the same

115 Choi, *Chinese Migration and Settlement in Australia*, p. 22.  
116 Choi, *Chinese Migration and Settlement in Australia*, p. 22.  
117 Census of NSW, 1871.  
120 Census of NSW, 1891.  
121 Census of NSW, 1901.  
period, Wollongong's total population increased from approximately 5,400 in 1871 to around 18,000 in 1901, driven up by economic prosperity brought on by the growth of the coal mining industry. Chinese people in Wollongong were still few compared to those in Sydney, who numbered 3,474 in 1901.

Chinese arrivals of the late 19th century gravitated towards agriculture, but a few also went into business. The first on local government assessment rolls in 1876—Lee Wah and Ah Nam—were market gardeners in the Wollongong town centre. Others Chinese to arrive in the late 19th century and take up gardening were Sam Hop Lee, George Young Song (應生), Charlie Ching Won (青云), Chew Hoan (翰), Duck Lee, Wong Gee and Gee Gong, to name a few. In 1878, Chinese tobacco planters also started work at Mount Pleasant, just to the north-west of the Wollongong town centre. Chinese businesspeople began arriving in the 1870s as well. The first on record was Hoong Sing Long, who opened a 'fancy goods store' on Crown Street in Wollongong's town centre in 1876. Some other 19th-century businesspeople were Sun Yee Yong, Son Gee, On Chong Lee, Ah May, Hob Kay and Yun Hop (元合). Market gardener Charlie Ah Woy made a successful transition

125 Census of NSW, 1901.
126 WMC Assessment Rolls, 1876-7, p. 21-2.
127 Sam Hop Lee Immigration File, National Archives of Australia (NAA) SP42/1 C1925/5741; Tommy King Immigration File, NAA SP42/1 C1913/2885; George Young Immigration File. NAA SP42/1 C1927/1152; George Young Song Immigration File, NAA SP42/1 C1903/2995; Charlie Ching Won and Jimmy Mann Hong Bankruptcy File, NSW State Archives (NSWSA) 13655/10/23453; [Chew Hoan and Duck Lee] Chew Hoan Bankruptcy File, NSWSA 18157/10/23585; WMC Assessment Rolls, 1899-1900, North Ward, p. 25.
129 'Chinese Store', Illawarra Mercury, 19 December 1876; see also Zofia Laba, Identifying Early Illawarra Pioneers from Diverse Cultural Backgrounds from Settlement to the 1940s, Migration Heritage Project, Wollongong, 2013.
from agriculture to business in the late 19th century, moving from gardening to cabinetmaking in 1895.\textsuperscript{131} He was like many Chinese people in Cairns, who Cathie May described as ‘microcosms of occupational diversity’.\textsuperscript{132}

Post-rush Chinese came to Wollongong both directly from China and from other places in Australia, some of which were former goldmining centres. Sam Hop Lee arrived directly from Guangdong in 1888, as did Gee Gong in 1890 (on the ship \textit{Chingtu}), Yun Hop in 1892 and Wong Gee in 1894.\textsuperscript{133} George Young Song, though, who originally migrated to Australia from Guangdong in 1885, came to Wollongong indirectly through the New South Wales gold-mining town of Hillston in 1893.\textsuperscript{134} Charlie Ching Won’s case was similar: he most likely arrived in northern Australia from Guangdong’s Zhongshan/Xiangshan in 1874 and eventually made his way to Wollongong in 1893.\textsuperscript{135} Chew Hoan and Duck Lee also came to Wollongong indirectly in the 1890s from Nowra on the South Coast of New South Wales. 10 years prior, according to Chew Hoan’s court testimony, they left their home village of Pak Shik, Zengcheng/Zengyi county, Guangdong.\textsuperscript{136}

Chinese people who came to Wollongong after the gold rushes tended to depart quickly. Most market gardeners operated for a few years before moving on.\textsuperscript{137} The Chinese tobacco planters also moved on quickly; they were only recorded in the

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[131] WMC Assessment Rolls, Municipal Rolls and Municipal Lists, 1876-1901.
\item[132] WMC Assessment Rolls, 1895-6, East Ward, p. 44; 1893-4, East Ward, p. 27.
\item[133] WMC Assessment Rolls, 1895-6, East Ward, p. 44; 1893-4, East Ward, p. 27.
\item[134] WMC Assessment Rolls, 1895-6, East Ward, p. 44; 1893-4, East Ward, p. 27.
\item[135] WMC Assessment Rolls, 1895-6, East Ward, p. 44; 1893-4, East Ward, p. 27.
\item[136] WMC Assessment Rolls, 1895-6, East Ward, p. 44; 1893-4, East Ward, p. 27.
\item[137] WMC Assessment Rolls, 1895-6, East Ward, p. 44; 1893-4, East Ward, p. 27.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
area in 1878 and 1879.\textsuperscript{138} Further, businessmen Hoong Sing Long, Sun Yee Yong and Co., Son Gee, On Chong Lee and Ah May were ratepayers in Wollongong Municipality for only a year each between 1877 and 1889.\textsuperscript{139} Of course, some Chinese stayed longer in Wollongong, like gardener George Young Song who vowed to live there 'for the remainder of my (his) life'.\textsuperscript{140} Still, there was an overall pattern in this period of Chinese people arriving, staying for two or three years, and then leaving, occasionally to be replaced by others on the same garden site or in the same business premises. It is probable that Wollongong’s consumers could only support a modest number of gardens and businesses, and that well-developed Pearl River Delta county networks easily enabled men to either try their luck elsewhere in Australia or return to China.\textsuperscript{141} The first Chinese beggar in Wollongong was recorded in 1897, which suggests overall Chinese prosperity prior to that.\textsuperscript{142}

Chinese people in Wollongong during the late 19th century were valued members of the community for the most part, but they also suffered anti-Chinese discrimination. Several were active in church, like George Say Ying and John Sue.\textsuperscript{143} These men and a few others also married European women and had families locally. In addition, Chinese such as Ah Uin donated money to Wollongong’s Alfred Memorial Hospital and their generosity was lauded by the \textit{Illawarra Mercury}.\textsuperscript{144}

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\textsuperscript{138} 'Wollongong', \textit{Sydney Morning Herald}, 13 January 1879.
\textsuperscript{140} Oaths Act 1900, Sections 21, 24, George Young Song Immigration File.
\textsuperscript{141} Williams, 'Destination Qiaoxiang', pp. 106-64.
\textsuperscript{142} 'The Scrap Album', \textit{Illawarra Mercury}, 11 February 1897.
\textsuperscript{143} St. Michael's Anglican Church, \textit{Register of Baptisms}, 19 November 1882; 8 November 1885; 2 May 1894; 3 May 1895; Sarah Sue killed her baby on Wollongong Beach in 1889, 'Committed for Murder', \textit{Illawarra Mercury}, 28 December 1889; 'Central Criminal Court', \textit{Sydney Morning Herald}, 19 February 1890.
\textsuperscript{144} 'Wollongong', \textit{Australian Town and Country Journal}, 31 January 1885; 'A. M. Hospital', \textit{Illawarra Mercury}, 15 July 1886.
\end{flushleft}
Chang Woo Gow, the touring 'Chinese Giant', was warmly received locally in this period as well. Yet, there were several cases of anti-Chinese violence. At least one was against shopkeeper Hoong Sing Long in 1876, who complained that he was 'hit in the eye' by a European thug. There were also anti-Chinese rallies held by local coalminers in 1878 and 1879 which were sparked by the visit of some Chinese sailors to Bulli wharf and resulted in the formation of the area's first union. Regardless, Wollongong's Chinese often opposed perceived injustice. In 1895, for example, market gardener Wong Gee, with the help of Australia-born Sydney solicitor Otto Kong Sing, sued his European landlord in the Supreme Court of New South Wales over an alleged breach of his lease. It would appear that their increased but still small number over this later period, combined with their economic utility, gave Chinese people some degree of security and power locally.

**Conclusion**

The history of Chinese people in Wollongong during the 19th century has several distinct features, making it distinct from broader narratives of Chinese in Australia and highlighting the utility of local-level research. Evidence suggests the likelihood of Chinese shepherds and agricultural labourers in the area during the early 1800s,

145 'Chang Woo Gow', Illawarra Mercury, 11 August 1871.
146 'Court of Petty Sessions', Illawarra Mercury, 11 July 1876; see also 'Court of Petty Sessions', Illawarra Mercury, 12 June 1877; Stephen Castles, 'The Emergence of Multicultural Wollongong', in Hagan and Wells (eds.), A History of Wollongong, p. 206.
147 'Anti-Chinese Meeting at Bulli', Illawarra Mercury, 13 December 1878; 'Anti-Chinese Meeting', Illawarra Mercury, 24 December 1878; 'Supplying the A. S. N. Company with Coal', Illawarra Mercury, 27 December 1878; 'General Meeting of Illawarra Miners', Illawarra Mercury, 31 December 1878.
though indentured labourers from Xiamen were the first Chinese people explicitly recorded in Wollongong. Most arrived in 1852, worked as dairy farmers, settled locally after their contracts expired, married European women and started families. These men appear to have found a sense of home in Wollongong: they did not experience extremes of racism seen in other places. During the gold rushes, because there was no gold in Wollongong, few Chinese people arrived. The activities of those who did come were limited to passing through, short-term labouring, petty crime and fishing. Their Chinese origins other than Xiamen and Guangdong are unavailable and they seem to have been welcome, or at least tolerated, in the area. Wollongong’s Chinese population only began to grow significantly after the gold rushes. Some Chinese arrivals came directly from Zhongshan/Xiangshan and Zengcheng/Zengyi counties around the Pearl River Delta. Others came from various Australian locales. Few remained long in the area, many were valued members of the community and some suffered persecution from local Europeans but not without a fight.
Chapter Two
Chinese Agriculture, 1901-39

Agriculture was the economic lifeblood of many Chinese people in early 20th-century Australia. Market gardens were at the centre of Chinese communities in metropolitan areas, including Sydney and Melbourne, and accounted for a large proportion of these cities’ supply of fresh fruit and vegetables.¹ Chinese market gardeners, as Janis Wilton noted, also occupy a firm place in 'popular imagery and memory'.² The 'little men crossing the bridge on the willow-patterned plates' often dominate impressions of Chinese people in Australia’s past.³ Chinese agriculturalists were a significant force Australia-wide in 1901, with one estimate attributing three quarters of the vegetables grown in Australia to them. Still, they had virtually vanished by the 1930s due to the White Australia policy.⁴

This chapter examines Chinese agriculture in Wollongong in the period from 1901 to 1939. It is structured according to five themes, these being the different kinds of agricultural operations and produce, the location of agricultural operations, their scale, labour organisation and longevity.

Variety of Chinese Agriculture

Between 1901 and 1939, Chinese agriculture in Australia was highly varied. Queensland agriculturalists ran market gardens and plantations where they cultivated bananas, sugar, rice, coffee and other items, much of which was shipped to cities in the south. Northern Territory operations were similarly diverse. According to Diana Giese, Chinese gardens in Darwin grew 'cabbages, lettuce, tomatoes and celery, mangoes, pineapples and bananas, sugarcane...cucumbers and melons, pumpkin, beans, sweetcorn and spinach'. Northern New South Wales also had a thriving Chinese banana industry and several Chinese tobacco plantations. In Australia's temperate south, agriculture was less varied, but it still involved a considerable range of produce. Most places had Chinese market gardens which cultivated fruit and vegetables for European consumers. There were Chinese tobacco plantations and vineyards in Australia's south as well.

Wollongong was host to as many as 50 Chinese market gardens between 1901 and 1939. Charlie Ching Won (青云), Tommy Ah Moy (亞梅), Tommy Quan Lock (黃巖均) and Jimmy Mann Hong (洪晚) all testified in court that they worked on market gardens around Wollongong in 1903. Thomas Dion (黃帝安) also stated in court that he was a market gardener just north of Wollongong in 1918. Local government records show the presence of Chinese market gardens as well. These were usually described as 'Chinese gardens' by rates assessors. In 1901, Wong Gee was listed by Wollongong Municipal Council assessors as the leaseholder of a 'Chinese garden' in the Wollongong town centre. Ah Moon, Sun Hung Wah and Ah Sun On were listed likewise. Chinese market gardens also appear in local reminiscences. Jean Robertson recalled visiting the gardens of Harry Hong, George Say Ying and Sam Lee as a young girl in Wollongong in the early 1900s. Jack Devitt, a Wollongong boy in the 1920s, had similar memories of Chinese market gardens at Bulli, to the north of Wollongong. He often visited that of George and Sam Wong.

Chinese gardeners cultivated a wide range of produce. Thomas Dion said in court that he grew cabbages, peas, beans, pumpkins, cucumbers, watermelons,
tomatoes, cauliflowers, rockmelons, rhubarb, potatoes, marrows, lettuces and beetroot.\textsuperscript{16} Chinese gardener Sam Lee—Dion’s forerunner on the same site at Fairy Meadow—grew oranges, peaches, plums, peas, carrots, pumpkins, cabbages, turnips and herbs: a fact revealed by the prizes he took out at the Wollongong Agricultural Show prior to 1907.\textsuperscript{17} Show results indicate that Wong Gee cultivated oranges, beans, pumpkins, rhubarb, turnips, rockmelons, watermelons, peas, onions, celery, marrows, tomatoes, cabbages, cucumbers, leeks, chillies and pumpkins.\textsuperscript{18} Charlie Ching Won grew roughly the same, as well as flowers, on his garden.\textsuperscript{19} As Jean Robertson recalled, 'the produce of the gardeners was as prolific as it was varied'.\textsuperscript{20} There is no evidence, however, that local Chinese market gardens grew anything specifically for Chinese consumers, at least not on a large scale. The one 'Chinese' product of which there is evidence, 'Chinese ginger', appears to have been grown to give to non-Chinese customers at Christmas time.\textsuperscript{21} This conforms to the practice of Chinese market gardens in Sydney growing European produce almost exclusively for European customers, but it differs from the practice in Darwin, where there was higher demand for traditional Chinese produce from a larger Chinese community.\textsuperscript{22}

Chinese gardens in Wollongong grew annual crops before perennials. Most of the produce just noted is of the annual kind, as opposed to oranges, peaches and plums, which come from trees that crop for longer than a year. Thomas Dion recalled

\textsuperscript{16} Testimony of Thomas Dion, Di On v. Council of Municipality of North Illawarra in the Supreme Court of NSW, p. 310-3.
\textsuperscript{17} 'Wollongong Agricultural Show', \textit{Sydney Morning Herald}, 4 February 1903.
\textsuperscript{18} 'Wollongong Agricultural Show', \textit{Sydney Morning Herald}, 4 February 1903; 6 February 1909; 3 February 1911; 2 February 1912.
\textsuperscript{19} 'Wollongong Agricultural Show', \textit{Sydney Morning Herald}, 4 February 1897.
\textsuperscript{20} Robertson, ‘An Octogenarian Remembers’, p. 45.
\textsuperscript{21} 'No “Ginger” for Christmas', \textit{Illawarra Mercury}, 26 November 1912; Devitt, 'Reminiscences of Jack Devitt', p. 118.
Sam Lee having about 100 fruit trees in 1907. Dion kept some of these trees when he took over the lease from Lee that year, but admitted 'I don't understand growing fruit trees...all of my countrymen grow vegetables', he said. This was common for Chinese gardeners in the Wollongong area. Many seem to have moved from garden to garden, with few staying long enough in one place to grow perennials. Wong Gee changed gardens at least four times between 1895 and 1918. Harry Hong also switched gardens at least once after 1901, as did Jimmy Chong. Even gardeners who stayed in the same locations for long periods, like Thomas Dion and Sam Lee, still seem to have derived all but a fraction of their incomes from cultivating annuals. In Sydney, growing onions, which make the soil too acidic, and then switching gardens was often practised by Chinese: the same may have been the case in Wollongong. Switching plots could also have been an effective disease control measure, especially given that Irish blight threatened potatoes on local Chinese gardens in 1910.

There were also Chinese dairy farms in Wollongong between 1901 and 1939. One farm belonged to John Chi, a former indentured labourer from Xiamen, and may

23 Testimony of Thomas Dion, [Di On v. Council of Municipality of North Illawarra in the Supreme Court of NSW, p. 310-3].
24 Testimony of Thomas Dion, [Di On v. Council of Municipality of North Illawarra in the Supreme Court of NSW, p. 321].
25 Wong Gee v Adolphus Waldron in the Supreme Court of NSW, NSWSA 20/11381 323, August 1895; WMC Assessment Rolls, 1901-2, North Ward, p. 15; 1905-6, North Ward, p. 33; 1906-7, West Ward, p. 74; 'Wollongong Court', [South Coast Times, 25 January 1918].
28 'Onion Growers Have Good Luck' ([種洋蔥者之行運]), [Tung Wah Times (東華報)], 28 November 1925.
29 'Irish Blight at Dapto', [Kiama Independent], 1 January 1910; 'South Coast News', [Shoalhaven Telegraph], 12 January 1910.
have been established as early as the 1870s. His farm was listed by Central Illawarra Municipal Council rates assessors in 1908. Two sons of John Chi, James and David Chie, and one son of former indentured labourer John Tanzi, George Tansey, all operated dairy farms locally as well. David Chie was also listed as a 'dairy farmer' in the Sands Business Directory from 1926. George Tansey had a leather dealership attached to his farm as well. Chinese dairy farms are noteworthy because they are rare in the literature and because dairying was once seen as a way to drive Chinese people out of agriculture near Cairns in the early 1900s in accordance with the White Australia policy. Chinese people were believed to have been incapable of dairy work, as illustrated by a children's song coined around this time: 'Ching Chong Chinaman went to milk a cow; Ching Chong Chinaman didn't know how'.

Chinese dairy farms in Wollongong produced different items. As indicated by results of the Dapto Agricultural Show, the Chies produced milk for everyday use, table cream and cream for making butter. Members of the Chie family also bred dairy cattle for their own use and for sale on the open market, as did at least one member of the Tansey family, George. Yet, these farms were never limited to dairy

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30 NSW Electoral Rolls, Illawarra Electoral District, 1876-7, p. 794.
31 Central Illawarra Municipal Council (CIMC) Ward Books, WCLA C15/1-3, 1907-8, p. C.
33 Sands Business Directory, 1926, p. 100A.
36 Frost, 'Migrants and Technological Transfer', p. 128.
37 'Dapto Agricultural Show', Sydney Morning Herald, 19 February 1923; 19 January 1925.
38 'Wollongong Agricultural Show', Sydney Morning Herald, 3 February 1887; 12 February 1887; 25 February 1938.
products and cattle. James Chie also raised poultry and grew potatoes and peas. He bred horses as well. By 1939, he had won prizes in four different categories of horses at the Dapto and Wollongong Agricultural Shows. On occasion, Chinese dairy farmers and market gardeners may have been at odds in Wollongong. In 1909, a hungry bull was mutilated after raiding a Chinese garden. In addition, the previous year, a dog belonging to market gardener Ah Yen went on a poultry killing spree, claiming the lives of many valuable farm birds over the course of at least two months.

**Geographical Centrality**

Chinese agriculture in Australia during the early 20th century was often on the fringes of towns. Paul Jones observed that many Chinese market gardens operated on 'the margins of the towns and cities' in the interwar period. Janis Wilton also noted that Chinese gardens in country New South Wales were usually 'on the periphery'. Even Sydney's Chinese market gardens were concentrated in the southern suburbs of Alexandria and Botany, peripheral to the city: logical, perhaps, given the absence of vacant plots in the city for cultivation. Large Chinese banana and sugar plantations

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39 'Dapto Agricultural Show', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 March 1908; 28 February 1912.
41 'Dastardly Act', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 May 1909; 'Week by Week', *South Coast Times*, 29 May 1909.
42 'The Fowl Killer', *Illawarra Mercury*, 25 September 1908; 'Week by Week', *South Coast Times*, 3 October 1908.
in the Cairns area were similarly far-removed from the Cairns town centre, probably by virtue of the unavailability of large tracts of land within it.\textsuperscript{46} In certain cases, though, the separateness of Chinese agriculture from ‘white’ communities was sinister, linked to notions of European racial superiority. Barry McGowan, for example, noted the regular segregation of Chinese agricultural camps from ‘white’ settlements in rural New South Wales.\textsuperscript{47}

The tendency of Chinese gardens to remain on the fringes does not seem to have applied in Wollongong, with several operating in the town centre probably in order to be close to customers. As shown by municipal records, George Say Ying had a garden on Moore's Lane directly opposite the Wollongong Town Hall just before the turn of the century.\textsuperscript{48} After 1900, 'Mr. Sue' occupied the same garden site.\textsuperscript{49} According to 1901 census data, Harry Hong also had a garden on Barella Street—present day Burelli Street—in 1901.\textsuperscript{50} Barella Street ran parallel to Crown Street, where the Town Hall was built. The highest concentration of Chinese market gardens in the Wollongong town centre was on western Crown Street, about 1½ km west of the Town Hall. Council assessment rolls indicate that Sun Hung Wah, Ah Sun On, Charlie Ah Woy, Mau Lee, George Young Song (應生), Ah Wah and Wong Gee all had gardens there in the early 1900s.\textsuperscript{51} This location—'Garden Hill'—was not as close to the Town Hall, but it was just a short walk from the main train station and

\textsuperscript{46} Sandi Robb, \textit{Cairns Chinatown}, pp. 25-7.  
\textsuperscript{47} McGowan, 'Ringbarkers and Market Gardeners', p. 34, 37; see also Lancashire, 'Blanche Street, Wahgunyah', p. 192.  
\textsuperscript{48} WMC Assessment Rolls, 1896-7, North Ward, p. 30; The Wollongong Town Hall was completed in 1887 and constituted the heart of Wollongong from that year on, replacing Market Square, see A. P. Fleming, \textit{Old Market Square: Historic Heart of Wollongong}, Illawarra Historical Society, Wollongong, 1976.  
\textsuperscript{49} WMC Municipal Lists, WCLA SLR352-WOL, 1899-1900, East Ward, p. 28.  
\textsuperscript{50} Census of NSW, 1901, District 38, Sub-district T21, p. 11.  
two main hospitals. Other Chinese market gardens just a little farther away included those of Yup Sun on Smith Street, Ah Moon on Gipps Street, Charlie Ching Won on Northfield's Lane (the current University of Wollongong site), Lee Hop on Charlotte Street and Ah Yin on Swan Street. None of these was further than 2½ km away from the Wollongong Town Hall. They were clearly much more central than Chinese market gardens in Sydney. A few European gardeners, such as Walter Buckle, operated in these locations as well.

Map 2.1: Chinese market gardens in the Wollongong town centre, 1901-39 (the Town Hall is marked with a star)."
Other Chinese market gardens were scattered across Wollongong some distance from the town centre but usually in suburban sub-centres. Charlie Sang Ho, Sam Lee, Jimmy Chong and Thomas Dion started gardens at Fairy Meadow, 3 km north of the Town Hall, between the years 1898 and 1907. These were at the heart of one of the region’s other local government areas, North Illawarra Municipality. Charlie Ching Won, Tommy Ah Moy, Tommy Quan Lock, Jimmy Mann Hong and Jimmy Chong also kept gardens at Bulli, 10 km north of Wollongong itself, in the early 1900s. The foremost of these was located just across from Bulli Hospital and was adjacent to Bulli Courthouse: central to the suburb of Bulli. War Hop, Pak Chung (伯祥), Gee Sin, Charley Ah Ling, George and Sam Wong and Tommy King also kept gardens at Bulli in the period from 1901 to 1939. Furthermore, there were Chinese gardens around Dapto (搭吐), 15 km south west of the Wollongong Town Hall. Ah Gowie, Young Kong War, Ah Chew and Kum Yee had gardens there in the early 1900s. These might appear far-flung, but Dapto was the Wollongong area’s centre of industry: a large smelting works operated there between 1895 and 1905.

Central Illawarra Municipality, where Dapto was located, was also the wealthiest of

57 Testimonies of Charlie Ching Won, Tommy Ah Moy, Tommy Quan Lock and Jimmy Mann Hong, Charlie Ching Won and Jimmy Mann Hong Bankruptcy File, p. 66, 67, 68, 73.
Wollongong's four local government areas over the period in question.\textsuperscript{61}

Those Chinese market gardens which were far-removed from important local centres were always near the train line.\textsuperscript{62} There were gardens in the village of Otford, in mountainous bushland around 30 km north of Wollongong itself (see Image 2.1).\textsuperscript{63} While Otford was remote, it had a train station, which meant Chinese gardeners there were in an excellent position to send produce to either Wollongong or Sydney for sale. Additionally, Sam Hop (參合), Tommy King (梁景), George Sang and Zhang Yun (張允) operated market gardens at Helensburgh (和倫埠), about 35 km north of the Wollongong Town Hall.\textsuperscript{64} Helensburgh's population was much larger than Otford's because of its coal mining industry and it also had a train station.

\textsuperscript{62} For Chinese market gardens along the Sydney-Wollongong line see 'Vegetable-Growing', \textit{Sydney Morning Herald}, 20 March 1916.
\textsuperscript{63} Otford's 'Chinese gardens', circa 1910, WCL Image Collection P02/P02854.
\textsuperscript{64} [Sam Hop] Sam Hop Immigration File, NAA SP42/1 C1922/1836; [Tommy King] Tommy King Immigration File, NAA SP42/1 C1913/2885; [George Sang] \textit{Sands Business Directory}, 1928, 181A; [Zhang Yun] 'Old Chinese Swallows a Pistol' (老華人吞槍自盡), \textit{Tung Wah Times}, 23 August 1930.
Map 2.2: Chinese agriculture in the Wollongong area, 1901-39.\textsuperscript{65}

\textsuperscript{65} Original map from Sheldon, 'Local Government to 1947', p. 104.
Wollongong's Chinese dairy farms were at Dapto, approximately 15 km southwest of the Wollongong town centre. John Chi, his sons James and David Chie, and George Tansey all had their farms close to each other there. The dairy farms of Xiamen-born John Chi and his son James were on the same street, Kanahooka Road, as the smelting works. Their farms were also in the immediate vicinity of St. Luke's Anglican Church: a spiritual centre of the Dapto community. Wollongong's dairy industry was also concentrated in Dapto between 1901 and 1939. John Chi had his farm next to those of major ‘white’ dairy farmers in 1908, one of whom, William Beach, was a prominent local and international identity. As such, even though Chinese farms were peripheral to the Wollongong town centre, they were not relegated to the fringes, as is often asserted of Chinese agriculture; rather they were established in close proximity to important community hubs in this locale.

Image 2.1: Chinese market gardens at Otford, circa 1910.

66 Otford's 'Chinese gardens', circa 1910, WCL Image Collection
68 CIMC Ward Books, 1907, p. C.
69 CIMC Ward Books, 1907, p. B.


Scale of Chinese Agriculture

The scale of Chinese agriculture in Australia is often unclear. There were once massive Chinese sugar and banana plantations in Cairns which involved hundreds of men, thousands of acres of land and thousands of pounds in profits.\(^{70}\) Chinese market gardens in Sydney were also large in terms of their cumulative manpower usage.\(^{71}\) One government statistician estimated in 1918 that three quarters of the fresh produce eaten in Australia during the last 30 years of the 19th century was grown by Chinese market gardeners.\(^{72}\) Nevertheless, as Warwick Frost observed, reliable information on the scale of Chinese agriculture in most parts of Australia is hard to obtain because broad agricultural histories fail to recognise the Chinese contribution.\(^{73}\) Frost also claimed that Chinese agriculture in Australia after 1901 tended mostly towards 'small-scale market gardening', with only a handful of studies offering any evidence to the contrary.\(^{74}\)

The number of Chinese market gardens in the Wollongong area was significant: up to 50 operated at different times between 1901 and 1939. From 1901 to 1907, there were at least 18 Chinese leases on market gardens in Wollongong Municipality.\(^{75}\) Over the same period, there were at least five such leases on market gardens in North Illawarra Municipality.\(^{76}\) Records for Central Illawarra Municipality are sketchier, but 1908 assessment rolls reveal at least two Chinese

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70 May, Topsawyers, p. 111-6.
72 Frost, Migrants and Technological Transfer, p. 114.
73 Frost, Migrants and Technological Transfer, p. 122.
74 WMC Assessment Rolls, 1901-7; WMC Municipal Lists, 1901-7.
75 NIMC Municipal Lists, WCLA N8/1, N8/2, N8/3, N8/4, N8/5, 1902-5; NIMC Municipal Rolls, WCLA N7/1, N7/2, N7/3, N7/4, 1901-4; NIMC Rate Books, 1901-8.
market gardens operating there. Comprehensive records for Wollongong’s other local government area, Bulli Shire, have not survived. All local government records after 1908 have either perished or survived but have not listed leaseholders. Around 25 other Chinese gardens feature in census data, court transcripts, State Government records, local memories, newspaper reports, immigration files and the *Sands Business Directory*. Of the 50 or so total, perhaps 20 operated simultaneously at peak in the early 1900s, which is a number not too far-removed from the 70 or so at Waterloo—Sydney’s Chinese market gardening nexus—around this time. Meanwhile, just a handful of European gardens operated locally. In 1895, one observer lamented the 'lack of gardens' run by Europeans in Wollongong, as well as its reliance on 'Chinamen', and it would appear that the situation changed little in the years that followed.

Several Chinese gardeners usually worked on each garden. 1901 census data offers some insight into their numbers. George Sang was listed with four other Chinese men in the Wollongong town centre; Ah Moon was also listed with one other Chinese man there. George Young was listed at Fairy Meadow with two other Chinese men; Sam Lee was similarly listed. According to court transcripts, Charlie Ching Won, Tommy Ah Moy, Tommy Quan Lock, Jimmy Mann Hong and Jimmy Chong all worked together on a garden at Bulli in the early 1900s and on different gardens with other men at various times. Thomas Dion said in court: 'in 1916 I had

82 Testimonies of Charlie Ching Won, Tommy Ah Moy, Tommy Quan Lock and Jimmy Mann Hong, Charlie Ching Won and Jimmy Mann Hong Bankruptcy File.
three men working for me, sometimes four’. 83 These were in addition to the people in his 14-member family. 84 Jack Devitt recalled around 11 or so Chinese men working for George and Sam Wong at Bulli in the 1920s. 85 Of course, there were solitary gardeners in Wollongong, like Harry Hong, but most gardens seem to have been worked by between three and 14 people. This is quite similar to the figure cited by Michael Williams for Sydney; he estimated that there were between five and 10 men working on each garden. 86 Given the number of simultaneous garden leaseholds in the Wollongong area in the early 1900s, perhaps 20, there should have been at least 60 Chinese market gardeners living locally at this time: not an insubstantial number, but few compared to the 2,000 in Sydney at the turn of the century. 87

The number of Chinese dairy farms—and farmers—around Wollongong between 1901 and 1939 was comparatively small. Three indentured labourers from Xiamen seem to have become independent operators after working for Henry Osborne: John Chi, John Tanzi and Thomas Gam. 88 By 1901, only John Chi still ran his dairy farm locally. As already noted, two sons of John Chi, James and David Chie, also ran dairy farms locally after 1901, as did at least one son of John Tanzi, George Tansey. That makes a total of four local Chinese dairy farms at peak in the early 1900s. Moreover, dairy farming was labour-intensive in this period, but there is no evidence that any of these farms had extra Chinese labourers. For the Chies, dairying was a family affair; indeed, five other sons of John Chi, as well as James

83 Testimony of Thomas Dion, Di On v. Council of Municipality of North Illawarra in the Supreme Court of NSW, p. 304.
86 Williams, Chinese Settlement in NSW, p. 42.
87 Williams, 'Destination Qiaoxiang', pp. 144-5.
and David, worked on the family farms.\textsuperscript{89} The Tanseys used the same family approach: they worked together on dairy farms right up through the 1930s.\textsuperscript{90} Overall, perhaps 10 to 20 Chinese people on four farms were involved in Wollongong dairying. Compared to the total number of farms and people involved in the local area, though, Chinese involvement was slight. In 1909, for instance, over 700 farms operated locally and employed more than a thousand people.\textsuperscript{91}

The plots of land used for Chinese market gardens in the Wollongong area were modest. Council assessment rolls show they ranged from half an acre to 10 acres in size. Charlie Ching Won had the smallest one on record: a half-acre plot on Northfields Lane.\textsuperscript{92} Sam Lee, and Thomas Dion after him, had the largest garden: a 10-acre plot at Fairy Meadow.\textsuperscript{93} It seems there was a preference for plots of about three or four acres. Ah Moon had a three-acre garden and Wong Gee had a four-acre garden in Wollongong Municipality.\textsuperscript{94} Charlie Sang Ho and Jimmy Chong likewise ran 'Chinese gardens' of three acres and 3½ acres respectively in North Illawarra Municipality.\textsuperscript{95} State government records also indicate that War Hop had a three-acre garden opposite Bulli Hospital.\textsuperscript{96} All these Chinese gardens were small relative to those in metropolitan centres: Sandra Pullman had Chinese gardeners in Melbourne on plots of between 10 and 30 acres in the early 1900s.\textsuperscript{97} Non-Chinese gardeners in Wollongong had plots of much the same size. Walter Buckle, for example, had a

\begin{footnotes}
\item[89] 'Dapto Agricultural Show', \textit{Sydney Morning Herald}, 22 January 1885; 19 January 1925; 'Wollongong Agricultural Show', \textit{Sydney Morning Herald}, 29 January 1885; 4 February 1886; 3 February 1887; 12 February 1887.
\item[90] 'Accidents', \textit{Illawarra Mercury}, 23 April 1937.
\item[91] NSW \textit{Statistical Register}, 1909, cited in Hagan and Wells (eds.), \textit{A History of Wollongong}, p. 266.
\item[92] WMC Assessment Rolls, 1902-3, North Ward, p. 36.
\item[93] NIMC Rate Books, 1902-3, p. 16.
\item[94] WMC Assessment Rolls, 1900-1, North Ward, p. 93, 95.
\item[95] NIMC Rate Books, 1900-1, p. 12, 17.
\item[96] Bulli Hospital Claim of War Hop.
\item[97] Pullman, 'Along Melbourne's Rivers and Creeks', p. 9.
\end{footnotes}
four-acre market garden not far from Sam Lee in the late 19th century. Only a single Chinese garden ever exceeded 10 acres in Wollongong: Wong Gee's at 42 acres in 1895, though it operated outside the period in question. Charlie Sang Ho was the only gardener to own the plot of land on which he worked: all the others leased. This tendency to lease rather than own land was common for Chinese market gardeners in Australia due both to the kind of agriculture they practised and the restrictions placed on non-naturalised people purchasing land.

Local Chinese dairy farms, on the other hand, were large. In 1908, John Chi, James Chie and George Tansey had their cows grazing on 90 acres, 200 acres and 130 acres respectively, as shown by Central Illawarra Council assessment rolls. Cumulatively, this is 420 acres, which is close to the 500 acres of land used by the lucrative Chinese banana industry in northern New South Wales in 1919. Local Chinese farms were comparable in size to non-Chinese farms: Joseph Crombie occupied 90 acres, Edward Gibson 150 acres and Charles Cook 164 acres at Dapto in 1908. George Tansey was apparently the only Chinese farmer to own his farm in 1908. James Chie, however, soon owned his own farm and at least five other properties throughout the Wollongong area by 1937. Farm ownership was permitted because all these farmers, except John Chi, were Australia-born and thus eligible to purchase land. Overall, compared to Chinese market gardeners, dairy farmers used more land, both individually and cumulatively, and also committed to a...
more permanent form of land usage.

The monetary value of Chinese gardening operations around Wollongong was often high, but inconsistently so. Based on the amount of rates paid, which is one indication of their financial position, the most valuable was Sun Hung Wah's. At the turn of the century, his operation took in four gardens at different locations, and he paid £54 in rates annually.\textsuperscript{106} Most shops near Sun Hung Wah's main Crown Street garden, in the Wollongong town centre, paid only half that amount in rates, and his landlord Arthur Robinson paid £52 annually.\textsuperscript{107} Other Chinese market gardeners paid from £10 to £40.\textsuperscript{108} Although the rate payments of gardeners Chew Hoan (翰) and Duck Lee are unclear, their expense book reveals that they spent around £1,400 in 1907 and 1908, which is indicative of a substantial annual turnover.\textsuperscript{109} However, they went bankrupt in 1909, apparently due to mismanagement.\textsuperscript{110} Similarly, whilst the specifics of Thomas Dion's annual turnover are unavailable, court records show that his personal income was £300 in 1915.\textsuperscript{111} By comparison, local coal miners earned £127 per year in 1909, so Dion's garden must have placed him within the middle-class income bracket.\textsuperscript{112} These earnings also enabled him to mechanise his garden to a certain extent: he had a pump engine around this time.\textsuperscript{113} Still, by 1918, Dion did not have any other personal assets.\textsuperscript{114}

There is some evidence of how much produce was grown on local Chinese

\textsuperscript{106} WMC Municipal Lists, 1896-7, p. 4; WMC Assessment Rolls, North Ward, 1898-9, p. 18; 1901-2, West Ward, p. 34.
\textsuperscript{107} WMC Assessment Rolls, 1901-2, p. 17.
\textsuperscript{108} WMC Assessment Rolls, Municipal Rolls and Municipal Lists, 1901-7.
\textsuperscript{109} Chew Hoan's Expense Book, Chew Hoan Bankruptcy File, NSWSA 18157/10/23585, p. 31.
\textsuperscript{110} Various documents, Chew Hoan Bankruptcy File.
\textsuperscript{111} Testimony of Thomas Dion, Di On v. Council of Municipality of North Illawarra in the Supreme Court of NSW, p. 321.
\textsuperscript{112} See NSW Statistical Register, 1909, cited in Hagan and Wells (eds.), A History of Wollongong, p. 265.
\textsuperscript{113} 'North Illawarra', Illawarra Mercury, 26 April 1918.
\textsuperscript{114} 'North Illawarra', Illawarra Mercury, 26 April 1918.
market gardens, as well as the prices of fruit and vegetables. In 1911, gardeners at Bellambi—possibly associated with Chew Hoan and Duck Lee, who gardened there in 1909—harvested 800 boxes of tomatoes.115 In 1918, Thomas Dion discussed in court the amounts of produce lost in a flood and their prices. He lost 60 bushels of peas at 8/6 a bushel, 85 bushels of beans at 4/- a bushel, five tons of pumpkins at £10 a ton, 80 dozen cucumbers at 1/- a dozen, 15 dozen watermelons at 14/- a dozen, 300 boxes of tomatoes at 4/6 a box and 300 dozen cabbages at 5/- a dozen.116 Jack Devitt recalled his mother buying a week’s worth of vegetables for a family of six from George and Sam Wong for less than 10/- in the 1920s. Watermelons and rockmelons cost 6/- each.117 Quantities were large and prices cheap on local Chinese gardens, though comparable information regarding other places in Australia is lacking.

The monetary value of Chinese dairy operations around Wollongong was higher than that of Chinese market gardens, and it was consistently high. In 1908, John Chi’s farm was regarded by Central Illawarra Council rates assessors to be worth £68/8/- in rates annually, and James Chie’s £90.118 Similarly, George Tansey’s operation was considered to be worth £65 annually.119 By comparison, Edward Gibson’s farm at Dapto was worth £126 in rates to Council, and those of Charles Cook and Joseph Crombie £63 and £45 respectively.120 By 1933, James Chie’s main farm had an unimproved capital value of £1470: more than that of most neighbouring farms.121 The monetary value of Chinese dairy operations met, and even exceeded,
that of non-Chinese operations. Further, George Tansey sold 18-month-old heifers for £3/9/- each in 1909.\textsuperscript{122}

Chinese agriculturalists in Wollongong comprised links in longer supply chains, particularly with regard to Sydney’s fresh produce. Chew Hoan and Duck Lee had connections with what they called 'clansmen' gardeners at Waterloo.\textsuperscript{123} They also dealt with major Sydney merchants Wing Sang and Co., War Loong and Co., Kwong Wing Chong, On Lee Sang and Co., On Chong and Co., Yee Sang Sing and Co., as well as produce agent Eliza Howarth of Belmore Markets, dealers Koon Lee Sing, Jong Yet, In Chung and seed supplier Sam See.\textsuperscript{124} Thomas Dion often sent surplus produce to the Sydney markets, but it is unclear who his contacts in Sydney were.\textsuperscript{125} Chinese gardeners in the northern Wollongong suburbs of Otford and Helensburgh were ideally placed to send produce to the Sydney markets as well. There is no direct evidence of them ever having done so, but freight would have been much cheaper for them, and consumers in these suburbs were almost certainly too few to completely sustain their operations.

\textit{Labour Organisation}

Chinese agriculture in Australia has been seen as exploitative of labour, but it was often highly egalitarian in this regard. The former view stems from the involvement of Chinese indentured labourers in European agriculture during the 19th century, which seems to have spilled over into 20th-century perceptions. In the early 1900s,

\textsuperscript{122} 'Successful Cattle Sale', \textit{Illawarra Mercury}, 12 March 1909.
\textsuperscript{123} Testimony of Duck Lee, Chew Hoan Bankruptcy File, p. 61.
\textsuperscript{124} Chew Hoan Bankruptcy File, pp. 64-5, p. 68, 73, 77, 81, 86, 92, pp. 116-9, 134-5, p. 148, 166.
\textsuperscript{125} Testimony of Thomas Dion, Di On v. Council of Municipality of North Illawarra in the Supreme Court of NSW, p. 304.
for example, one member of the Fraser family at Parramatta, Sydney, observed 'an enormous garden, with many coolie Chinese' near the family home. According to Barry McGowan, historians including Bill Gammage and Geoffrey Buxton have cast Chinese agriculturalists in south-western New South Wales as little more than downtrodden 'serfs'. By contrast, Cathie May and others have illustrated that Chinese agricultural operations were relatively free from centralised control, structured on collectivist principles and geared towards the protection of workers.

At the height of the White Australia policy, between 1901 and 1939, Chinese agriculturalists in Wollongong apparently never served 'white masters'. Chinese market gardeners had non-Chinese landlords, but they always seem to have been self-contained, autonomous leaseholders. They grew produce themselves. In most cases, they either distributed it door-to-door themselves, sold it through local Chinese grocers or sent it to Chinese produce agents in Sydney. Often, non-Chinese grocers around Wollongong, such as William Draper, bought fruit and vegetables from local Chinese gardens (see Image 2.2). Rents on garden plots were cheap, meaning landlords had little opportunity to enslave Chinese tenants with debt, as happened with indentured labourers in the 1800s. Chew Hoan and Duck Lee's expense book shows that their rent at Bellambi was £8/15/- every three months in 1907 and 1908: five percent of their average monthly expenditure. Jean Robertson recalled her grandmother leasing plots to Chinese gardeners on Smith Street, in the Wollongong

127 Bill Gammage and Geoffrey Buxton, cited in McGowan, 'Ringbarkers and Market Gardeners', p. 44.
town centre, at just 2/- per week. The only evidence of Chinese agriculturalists working for 'whites' concerns the Tansey family: they worked together on the dairy farms of their neighbours. Robert Tansey was gored by a bull on the farm of E. T. Evans in 1937 and was saved by his uncle and cousin.

Several Chinese gardening operations in Wollongong were partnerships, which minimised Chinese-Chinese labour exploitation. Charlie Ching Won, Tommy Ah Moy, Tommy Quan Lock, Jimmy Mann Hong and Jimmy Chong were all partners in a garden at Bulli during the early 1900s. Mau Lee, George Say Ying and George Young Song were also listed as partners in a garden in the Wollongong

131 Robertson, 'An Octogenarian Remembers', p. 45.
132 'Accidents', Illawarra Mercury, 23 April 1937.
133 William Draper, circa 1920, WCL Image Collection P15547.
134 Testimonies of Charlie Ching Won, Tommy Ah Moy, Tommy Quan Lock and Jimmy Mann Hong, Charlie Ching Won and Jimmy Mann Hong Bankruptcy File, p. 66, 67, 68, 73.
town centre in 1906. Additionally, Ah Chew told New South Wales Customs officers in 1903 that he was a 'hawker' with a 'share in a garden at Dapto', but it is uncertain who his partners were. In the 1920s, workers on George and Sam Wong's garden at Bulli also grew produce collectively. The precise details of labour organisation on this garden are unavailable, but the men lived, ate meals and celebrated Chinese festivals together, according to Jack Devitt. This suggests they were all partners, or at least that there was little distinction between workers and bosses on this garden. Similar egalitarianism among market gardeners has been observed elsewhere in Australia, particularly in Cairns, over the same period. Research at the local level is indeed vital in challenging the more general assumption of Chinese ‘serfs’ in Australian agriculture.

Other Chinese agricultural operations were family-based. Chew Hoan worked with his nephew Duck Lee. Hoan claimed in court to have managed the market garden for this nephew, who was his 'boss'. Similarly, on Thomas Dion's garden, whilst he did employ up to four men at a time, some work was done by his wife and children who Jack Ryan remembered for their 'coolie style hats'. It would have probably been hard work for them; indeed, Minnie Loo Sick recalled the difficulty of assisting her parents on their garden in the New South Wales town of Wellington. On the Chie dairy farms, family was of paramount importance as well. Most of the work was almost certainly done by John Chi and his seven sons and, when required, local labourers. It is also likely that a few of the garden partnerships just mentioned,

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135 WMC Assessment Rolls, 1905-6, West Ward, p. 71.
136 Ah Chew Immigration File.
138 Williams, Chinese Settlement in NSW, p. 42; Wilton, Golden Threads, p. 27; Stanin, 'From Li Chun to Yong Kit', p. 28; Morris, 'Chinese Market Gardens in Sydney', p. 7.
139 Testimony of Chew Hoan, Chew Hoan Bankruptcy File, p. 52.
140 Ryan, My Fairy Meadow, p. 33.
141 Wilton, Golden Threads, p. 29.
and others, were held together by family ties.

With Chinese market gardens, Chinese workers received wages comparable to those of 'whites' in similar roles. In 1909, Chew Hoan said of his labourers: 'I pay (Joe) Yuen 24 shillings a week and Sah Sam 25 shillings a week.'

This was £62/8/- and £65 annually. Hoan also said that he paid 'old man wages' of £1 per week, or up to £52 annually, to old workers. By comparison, according to the New South Wales Statistical Register, the average pay for dairy workers in the Wollongong area in 1909 was £45/16/- annually, which was lower than all of Chew Hoan's rates. Still, Hoan's rates were lower again than those paid on Chinese gardens in Sydney at this time, that is, about £1/10/- per week, or up to £78 per year. Thomas Dion paid much better than both Chew Hoan and the Sydney garden operators in 1916: he said he gave two of his 'countrymen' £2/15/- weekly, or up to £143 a year, but it is unlikely that they worked for the whole year. Even so, working only 40 weeks each year would have made his Chinese employees' wages approach the £127 average wage earned by local coal miners in 1909. Another of Dion's workers, whom he referred to as the 'white man named Stanton', got £3 weekly, or as much as £156 annually.

Chew Hoan's expense book also refers to 'Englishman's wages'. The possibility that 'whites' working on Chinese gardens earned more money than Chinese suggests that Chinese labour was exploited to some extent, though apparently never to the extent that gardeners gathered together to improve their

142 Testimony of Chew Hoan, Chew Hoan Bankruptcy File, p. 148.
143 Chew Hoan's Expense Book, Chew Hoan Bankruptcy File, p. 135.
145 'Worker Needed' (請工告白), Tung Wah Times, 20 September 1913.
146 Testimony of Thomas Dion, Di On v. Council of Municipality of North Illawarra in the Supreme Court of NSW, p. 305.
149 Chew Hoan's Expense Book, Chew Hoan Bankruptcy File, p. 23.
working conditions, as they did in Sydney when they attempted to form a union (采園工人亦欲加入夭仁例耶) in 1914.\textsuperscript{150} There was just one case of wages being withheld on a local Chinese market garden in this period: that of Gee Gong at Bulli in 1902.\textsuperscript{151}

\textit{Longevity of Chinese Agriculture}

Chinese agriculture in Australia between 1901 and 1939 was generally short-lived. Pullman noted of Chinese market gardeners that 'they were in Australia to make money and then go home'.\textsuperscript{152} Whilst this might seem like an unfair characterisation of Chinese people, a perpetuation of the 'sojourner' stereotype, most Chinese market gardens in Australia can be classified as temporary moneymaking operations set up to allow men to support their families in China and then rejoin them there in retirement.\textsuperscript{153} In addition to this short-term focus of market gardening and other Chinese activities like land clearing, Chinese agriculture in Australia underwent long-term decline overall in the first half of the 20th century. The implementation of the \textit{Immigration Restriction Act} in 1901 made recruiting fresh Chinese workers, who were necessary in maintaining agricultural operations, complicated. Without new blood, ageing operators usually had nobody to replace them and Chinese agriculture petered out.\textsuperscript{154}

Chinese market gardens in Wollongong tended to be short-term operations. Gardeners often held leases on plots for just a few years before relinquishing them,

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150 'Gardeners Want to Form a Union' (菜園工人亦欲加入夭仁例耶), \textit{Tung Wah Times}, 20 June 1914.
151 Wollongong Gaol Entrance Records, 13 August 1902, no. 77.
153 See Jones, 'The View from the Edge', pp. 46-7 for the sojourner stereotype; see Williams, 'Destination Qiaoxiang', pp. 209-10 for the transience of market gardeners.
154 Frost, 'Migrants and Technological Transfer', p. 122.
\end{flushright}
which was also common practice in 19th-century Wollongong. Yup Sun, Mau Lee, Charlie Sang Ho and War Hop were recorded by local bureaucrats as garden leaseholders for only two or three years each between 1901 and 1939. Other gardeners like Harry Hong, George Say Ying, Mr. Sue, Charlie Ching Won, and Wong Gee were recorded by rates assessors in the area for longer periods but not on the same plot for more than five years. Similarly, most Chinese gardens listed in the Sands Business Directory appear for short periods: those of Gee War, Tom King, Kum Yee and George Sang are listed for between two and six years each. Frequently, old garden sites were just abandoned, rather than being taken over by other Chinese gardeners. Some gardeners remained locally and started afresh on new plots in line with their emphasis on annual over perennial crops, or they opened grocery shops. Others moved around Australia or back to China, both periodically and ultimately. As such, few market gardens—save for a handful of permanent ones like Thomas Dion’s, which was maintained by his children after his passing in 1920—were features of the Wollongong landscape for long, even at the peak of local Chinese agriculture in the early 1900s.

Chinese market gardening in Wollongong declined between 1908 and 1939. Prior to 1908, there was a sharp increase in the number of Chinese market gardens. In Wollongong Municipality, there were six garden leaseholders in 1900, 10 in 1905,

nine in 1906 and 13 in 1907. Comprehensive local government records are unavailable after 1907. Still, the fact that no people with Chinese names won prizes in the fresh produce sections of local agricultural competitions after 1912 suggests that this year was the start of the decline. Before this, Chinese gardeners won prizes in the shows regularly; yet, in 1912, the last fruit and vegetable grower with a Chinese name—Wong Gee—competed and won, though Australia-born Andrew Tansey was still winning prizes in the 1930s. Further, the Mercury reported in 1932 that a Chinese market garden at Bellambi, which was there for over 30 years, had just been abandoned. As the size of the local China-born community decreased, so too must have Chinese market gardening decreased in significance. 1901 census data shows 33 China-born people in the Wollongong area, 1921 data shows 22 and 1933 data shows 17. Police ‘alien’ surveys from 1939 also reveal five China-born people living locally, that is, only five potential Chinese market gardeners from China. Chinese market gardening declined Australia-wide over the period in question, due largely to the unavailability of new workers brought on by the Immigration Restriction Act.

Wollongong's Chinese dairy farms, though, were long-lived operations. John Chi ran a dairy farm locally from the 1870s right up until 1908. James Chie also operated his own farm from at least 1908 until 1954. David Chie did the same

158 WMC Assessment Rolls, 1899-1900; 1904-5; 1905-6; 1906-7.
159 'Wollongong Agricultural Show', Sydney Morning Herald, 2 February 1912; 'Wollongong Show', Illawarra Mercury, 22 January 1932; 3 February 1933; 25 August 1938.
160 'Gardens Abandoned', Illawarra Mercury, 4 March 1932.
161 Census of NSW, 1901; Census of the Commonwealth of Australia, 1921; 1933.
162 NSW Alien Returns, 1939, NAA SP11/25.
163 Frost, 'Migrants and Technological Transfer', p. 122.
164 NSW Electoral Roll, 1876-7, p. 794; St. Luke's Anglican Church, Register of Burials, 12 June 1908.
from at least 1920 until 1941.\textsuperscript{166} George Tansey also appears to have been a dairy farmer between 1908 and 1933.\textsuperscript{167} Unlike market gardens, Chinese dairy farms varied little in terms of location. John Chie moved from one part of Dapto to another part in 1891; David Chie also moved once from Dapto to West Wollongong after 1928.\textsuperscript{168} James Chie never moved from his farm on Kanahooka Road, Dapto, between 1908 and 1954.\textsuperscript{169} George Tansey appears to have been similarly committed to his parcel of land at Dapto.\textsuperscript{170} The weak physical connection between Chinese dairy farms and China is apparent; all these farmers except John Chi were born in Australia, and even he never returned to Xiamen.

\textit{Conclusion}

Chinese agriculture in Wollongong in the period from 1901 to 1939 had a few key characteristics: local distinctions not often seen in the more general picture of Chinese agriculture in Australia. There were Chinese market gardens in Wollongong, all of which grew produce for European consumers, as in Sydney, and emphasised growing annuals over perennials. There were also Chinese dairy farms, which rarely feature in studies of Chinese agriculture. None of these Chinese operations was peripheral to ‘white’ settlement. They were situated strategically near population centres and key sites, with the majority being less than a few kilometres away from

\\textsuperscript{166} Sands Business Directory, 1920, p. 58A; St. Luke's Anglican Church, Register of Burials, 29 September 1941.
\textsuperscript{167} CIMC Ward Books, 1907-8, p. T; George Tansey Deceased Estate File, NSWSA Probate Packet 4/194264.
\textsuperscript{169} CIMC Ward Books, 1907-8, p. C; St. Luke's Anglican Church, Register of Burials, 24 November 1954.
\textsuperscript{170} CIMC Ward Books, 1907-8, p. T; George Tansey Deceased Estate File.
the Wollongong Town Hall. In terms of scale, Chinese gardens were significant in number, situated on small plots, lucrative and they regularly outstripped local demand for produce. Chinese dairy farms were few in number, on large acreages and even more lucrative than Chinese market gardens. Additionally, labour organisation was generally non-exploitative, being based on free enterprise, partnerships and family, as in places like Cairns. Finally, local Chinese gardens were short-term operations and they followed the Australia-wide decline of Chinese agriculture after 1901; however, Chinese dairy farms were different, due largely to their weak physical connections with China and immunity from the Chinese labour shortages of the White Australia policy.
Chapter Three
Chinese Business, 1901-39

Private enterprise was an important means by which Chinese people subsisted and prospered in early 20th-century Australia. Unlike agricultural operations, Chinese businesses flourished during the years of the White Australia policy. A key factor in their success was their broad-based appeal. Cathie May observed that Chinese merchants in Cairns 'provided for the needs of their countrymen', as well as those of the wider population. ¹ Similarly, Janis Wilton drew attention to the fact that Chinese merchants in regional New South Wales supplied the 'white population' with basic necessities, usually sourced from Australian rather than Chinese suppliers. ² Chinese shops also sold fresh produce grown by Chinese agriculturalists, as well as silk and exotic trinkets, to the general public. ³ Shops played an important role in Chinese communities as well. They were where letters and money could be sent back to China, where banking could be done and where assistance could be sought. ⁴

⁴ Fitzgerald, Red Tape Gold Scissors, p. 47; Williams, Chinese Settlement in NSW, pp. 21-3.
Most towns in Australia had an early Chinese business that lingers in popular memory. One 19th-century Chinese shop in Grenfell, New South Wales, for instance, was immortalised in the writings of Henry Lawson, who visited it as a boy and was mesmerised by the 'strange, delicious sweets that melted in our mouths, and rum toys and Chinese dolls for the children'. Chinese businesses in other places have also been preserved in reminiscences—whether written or spoken—and only relatively recently brought to light by local historians. Janis Wilton and Joanna Boileau, to take two examples, discussed a series of well-remembered early Chinese businesses in different parts of regional New South Wales. The business premises of several of these are still standing. Robyn Florance also cited recollections of Chinese shops on the New South Wales South Coast, describing mostly grocery shops and general stores which have an important place in the histories of the small towns there.

In this chapter, I look at Chinese business in Wollongong between 1901 and 1939. I discuss the best-remembered local Chinese business of the period. I then go on to consider other Chinese ventures, exploring their variety, distribution and scale. I also examine how Chinese traders advertised and the longevity of their operations.

**Dion's Bus Service**

The best-remembered Chinese business in Wollongong, probably because it still thrives to this day, is Dion's Bus Service. The Dions helped sustain this memory by

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publishing a history of the bus service in 1997.\(^8\) The company was founded in 1923 by the Australia-born sons of Chinese market gardener and hawker Thomas Dion (黃帝安). The Dion brothers were part of an ambitious new generation of Australian Chinese who refused to be consigned to traditional Chinese roles such as market gardening. They saw the limitations of the market garden left to them by their father when he died in 1920. As such, they used its profits to successfully launch a modern commercial venture.\(^9\)

Dion's Bus Service was a local success story. Thomas Dion Jnr.'s first application to operate a bus was approved by North Illawarra Municipal Council in November 1923.\(^10\) He started out driving a single, battered Model T Ford.\(^11\) In 1926 and 1929, his brothers Ted and Barney had applications approved by the three other local councils of the Wollongong area and two other local councils—Shellharbour and Kiama—to the south of Wollongong.\(^12\) The Dions soon had a number of routes; they also ran a Port Kembla to Sydney service from 1927 to 1931.\(^13\) By 1948, they had expanded their business to take in multiple routes and a fleet of eight buses, including the crowning achievement of local public transport: the Leyland Titan.\(^14\) Dion's Bus Service was lucrative, enabling Dion matriarch Annie Dion to have a real estate portfolio worth £25,000 in 1950.\(^15\) Even in 1930, the company was being referred to as the 'Dion Syndicate' in local government circles because of its


\(^9\) Birchmeir and Dion, *The Dion—Bus Pioneers of Wollongong*, p. 10.


\(^11\) Birchmeir and Dion, *The Dion—Bus Pioneers of Wollongong*, p. 10.

\(^12\) Birchmeir and Dion, *The Dion—Bus Pioneers of Wollongong*.

\(^13\) Birchmeir and Dion, *The Dion—Bus Pioneers of Wollongong*, pp. 35–42.

\(^14\) Personal correspondence with Les Dion (proprietor of Dion's Bus Service), August 2012.

\(^15\) 'Real Estate Holdings', Annie Dion Deceased Estate File, NSWSA Probate Packet 4/364406.
dominance of the local bus industry.\footnote{16}{Birchmeir and Dion, \textit{The Dions—Bus Pioneers of Wollongong}, pp. 39-41.}

Memories of the Dion brothers and their buses are plentiful. Thelma Dorma, for instance, a local schoolgirl in the 1920s, recalled telling her mother on her first day at school: 'There is a Chinese man outside ready to drive us to school in a hearse'.\footnote{17}{Thelam Dormer, cited in Frank Ryan, \textit{My Fairy Meadow}, Self-published, Wollongong, 1986, p. 31.} Frank Ryan, another local youngster in the 1920s, remembered the Dion brothers always being 'cheerful and courteous'.\footnote{18}{Ryan, \textit{My Fairy Meadow}, p. 58.} Doris Burnett, a young woman in the 1930s, remembered an alarming incident where one of the brothers had a fit while driving.\footnote{19}{Wayne Davis (ed.), \textit{Our Memories—Your History: An Oral History of Port Kembla}, Wollongong City Council, Wollongong, 1985, pp. 104-5.} Additionally, James Wallace Gibson, a local boy in the 1930s, remembered the endearing names given to the Dion buses: one bus was dubbed the 'Shanghai Express' and another the 'China Clipper'.\footnote{20}{Personal correspondence with James Wallace Gibson (Wollongong boy in the 1930s), January-May 2013.} Indeed, at an Illawarra Historical Society meeting in 1999, at which Les Dion spoke, apparently everyone 'had a tale to relate of their experiences with either the blue buses or the family'.\footnote{21}{'Meeting Reports, Les Dion and the Dion Family, September', \textit{Illawarra Historical Society Bulletin}, 11, 1999, p. 74.}

\textit{Variety of Chinese Business}

While memories of Dion's Bus Service stand out in the public heritage of Wollongong, few people would realise the extent and diversity of Chinese businesses; indeed, a number of them sold fresh produce. There were grocers, one of whom was Yun Hop (元合).\footnote{22}{Yun Hop Immigration File, National Archives of Australia (NAA) SP42/1 1923/4176.} According to Wollongong Council rates assessors, he
started his business in 1898. He was also listed as a 'greengrocer' in the Sands Business Directory from 1902. Others were C. Ying, Hop Kee and Co., Yee War and Co., Wing Hing and Co., Tommy King, Tommy Tinn, Muey Sing, Tommy Gunn, Arthur Kee Chong (其章) and John Loo. Gardeners and businessmen Charlie Ching Won (青云), Jimmy Mann Hong (洪晚) and Choy War, proprietors of Yee War and Co., sold fresh produce and confectionery from Australian suppliers Ennever and Appleton. Wollongong also had produce hawkers. Tommy King was one, listed in the Sands Business Directory from 1904, but it is unclear if he was the same one who ran the grocery, or the same Tommy King (梁景) who ran a garden in the suburb of Helensburgh. Other fruit and vegetable hawkers were Ah Wing, Ah Chew, Mar Li and Gee Get. There were those who might be called 'gardener-hawkers' as well. Thomas Dion and Ah Chew were two such gardener-hawkers: they grew produce and sold it door-to-door.

A few Chinese in Wollongong ran mixed businesses, or 'general stores', selling everyday necessities. Bow On had a shop in 1901 and he sold, according to an

26 Cameron and McFayden and Ennever and Appleton invoices, Charlie Ching Won and Jimmy Mann Hong Bankruptcy File.
27 Sands Business Directory, 1904, p. 62A.
28 [Ah Wing] Sands Business Directory, 1911, p. 74A; [Ah Chew] Ah Chew Immigration File, NAA ST84/1 13/217; [Mar Li, Gee Get] 'Debts Due to the Estate', Charlie Ching Won and Jimmy Mann Hong Bankruptcy File, no. 26, 27.
29 Testimony of Thomas Dion, Di On v. Council of Municipality of North Illawarra in the Supreme Court of NSW, Justice Sly Transcripts, NSWSA Causes March-April 1918 6/3004, p. 303; Ah Chew Immigration File.
advertisement, 'drapery, groceries, fruit, and boots and shoes'. Joe Wah Gow (周華久) registered another business of this kind in 1914 under the New South Wales Registration of Firms Act, but he was already operating in 1913, probably with a hawker's licence. He sold foodstuffs, including fruit and vegetables, plus other daily necessities like men's and women's clothing, underwear and linen. When he sold the business to Henry and Stanley Young in 1929, these new Chinese proprietors sold similar items, most of which were Australian brands: Bushell's tea, Kraft cheese and Bond's underwear. As well as the bus company, Thomas Dion Jnr. started a mixed business with his siblings in 1923. The Dion family sold produce from their garden in the shop and also supplied Wollongong residents with items sourced from reputable Australian brand Anderson's Smallgoods. In 1950, according to Annie Dion's deceased estate file, the shop sold Lifesavers, Minties, Jaffas and Iced Vo Vo biscuits: all iconic items of Australian confectionery. Another merchant of Chinese ancestry, Arthur Bow, who operated in 1933, can also be put in this mixed business category. Overall, the lack of 'Chinese' products in these general stores is clear. Chinese customers, or 'white' customers with exotic preferences, do not seem to have been taken into account in Wollongong, as they were in Sydney.

30 'Bo On', Illawarra Mercury, 21 December 1901; 'To The Council Clerk', WMC Correspondence, WCLA, 25 May 1901.
31 NSW Register of Firms 1903-22, no. 24406.
32 'New Premises', Illawarra Mercury, 30 March 1917; 'Joe Wah Gow and Co.', South Coast Times, 4 January 1918.
33 Assorted invoices, Henry Percy and Stanley Herbert Young (trading as Jow Wah Gow and Co.) Bankruptcy File A, NAA SP219/1 1285.
34 'Public Notice', Illawarra Mercury, 23 February 1923.
35 'Stock in Trade Contained in the Premises Keira Street Wollongong', Annie Dion Deceased Estate File.
36 'Counterfeit Coins', Sydney Morning Herald, 24 June 1933; 'Police Court', Illawarra Mercury, 30 June 1933; 'Quarter Sessions', Illawarra Mercury, 27 October 1933.
There were also Chinese drapers in the local area between 1901 and 1939. Ah War ran a drapery in 1904.\(^{38}\) George Hong did likewise in 1912.\(^{39}\) Goon Jack also opened a drapery shop in 1913.\(^{40}\) In 1923, Harry Young and his brothers—who were no relation to Henry and Stanley Young—opened a drapery shop as well. They sold uncut silk and fine silk clothing, some of which was of the Japanese Fuji variety. The brothers also stocked crepe-de-Chine.\(^{41}\) Joe Wah Gow also stocked fabric, particularly silk, but he did not specialise in it as these other traders did. Unfortunately, the specifics of Ah War’s, George Hong’s and Goon Jack’s merchandise are unknown. It is likely, however, that they sold mostly Chinese silk because they operated in the early 1900s and Japanese silk only became popular in Western countries after 1920.\(^{42}\) Whatever the case, drapers offered people a taste of the Orient in a place of near-total European cultural homogeneity.

Wollongong was home to other kinds of Chinese businesses as well. Charlie Ah Woy was a cabinetmaker. As mentioned in Chapter One, he began as a market gardener in Wollongong in 1893 then opened a workshop in 1895 from which he made furniture well into the 20th century.\(^{43}\) He also seems to have dabbled in photography because photographic equipment was lost when his workshop burned down in 1914, but details of this sideline are sketchy.\(^{44}\) Further, Chinese ‘refreshment rooms’ were opened in 1908 by Choy War after he moved on from selling fruit and

\(^{38}\) Sands Business Directory, 1904, p. 145A.
\(^{39}\) Sands Business Directory, 1912, p. 246A.
\(^{40}\) Sands Business Directory, 1913, p. 220A; Goon Jack Immigration File, NAA SP244/2 N1950/2/7800, p. 53.
\(^{41}\) ‘New Cash Drapery Shop’, Illawarra Mercury, 2 March 1923.
\(^{42}\) See Alison Bronowski, The Yellow Lady: Australian Impressions of Asia, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1992, pp. 27-8, for the preference in western countries for Japanese items over Chinese ones after 1920.
\(^{43}\) WMC Assessment Rolls, 1893-4, p. 27; 1895-6, p. 44; ‘New Locally Manufactured Furniture’, Illawarra Mercury, 24 January 1919; ‘High-Class Furniture’, Illawarra Mercury, 7 February 1919.
\(^{44}\) ‘The Searchlight’, Illawarra Mercury, 16 January 1914.
vegetables as a partner in Yee War and Co.\textsuperscript{45} Sadly, no inventory lists or menus from this establishment have survived, but Choy War might have served tea like Sydney's Quong Tart. Choy War also had gambling facilities and loaned money to people, according to court testimony.\textsuperscript{46} There was a local Chinese leather dealer as well: George Tansey, son of Xiamen labourer John Tanzi. From his dairy farm, Tansey supplied local leather workers with materials after 1910.\textsuperscript{47} Rose Loo, wife of grocer John Loo, also opened a dressmaking shop in 1927. Apparently, she made 'pretty frocks, all cut along latest lines' for local women.\textsuperscript{48}

**Wollongong Chinatown?**

Wherever there were several Chinese shops in Australia, these often constituted the basis of what Yong Chingfatt described as 'tight communities called Chinatown'.\textsuperscript{49} Eric Rolls offered one description of Chinatown in Darwin: 'a busy shopping place with restaurants, big galvanised iron stores and a variety of shops'.\textsuperscript{50} Similar descriptions of close-knit Chinese business places in Sydney, Melbourne and Cairns have been offered by other historians.\textsuperscript{51} Cathie May and Sandi Robb even noted that shops in Cairns Chinatown were situated according to different regions in China,

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\textsuperscript{45} Sands Business Directory, 1908, p. 198A.  \\
\textsuperscript{46} 'Wollongong Police Court', *South Coast Times*, 5 September 1908; 'Quarter Sessions', *South Coast Times*, 3 July 1909.  \\
\textsuperscript{47} Wayne Davis (ed.), *Talking History: Memories from Dapto*, Wollongong TAFE, Wollongong, 1990, p. 157; George Tansey Deceased Estate File, NSWSA Probate Packet 4/194264.  \\
\textsuperscript{48} 'Dressmaking', *Illawarra Mercury*, 25 February 1927.  \\
\textsuperscript{49} Yong, *The New Gold Mountain*, p. 4.  \\
\textsuperscript{50} Rolls, *Citizens*, p. 126.  \\
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which amounted to a kind of grouping within a group. Yet, while these tightly-packed centres of commerce may be the dominant image of early Chinese business distribution in Australia, there were also widely-spaced and isolated Chinese shops around the country. As with Chinese agriculture, there has been a tendency to imagine Chinese businesses on the fringes of ‘white’ settlement.

In Wollongong, a number of Chinese shops were situated near each other on western Crown Street in the town centre. Council assessment rolls reveal that grocers Yun Hop, Tommy King, Yee War and Co., Tommy Tinn and Wing Hing and Co. all operated there in the period from 1898 to 1907, close to several of the market gardens discussed in the previous chapter. According to the Sands Business Directory, T. Y. Lee, C. Ying and George Young were grocers in the Wollongong town centre, probably in the same location. Chinese mixed businesses, or general stores, also operated in this location. Bow On and Joe Wah Gow, and Henry and Stanley Young, had shops on western Crown Street. Charlie Ah Woy the cabinetmaker had a workshop on western Crown Street as well, near the Wollongong train station, the grocers and the gardeners. This was also the location of Choy

53 Michael Williams noted that San Francisco Chinatown has been taken as a standard measure of Chinese settlement in the United States, see Williams, 'Destination Qiaoxiang', pp. 199-202.
War’s refreshment rooms. Given its concentration of Chinese agriculture and business, this area was Wollongong’s version of a Chinatown, but it was unlike Chinatowns in other Australian locales due to its small size and the fact that there were more ‘white’ shops there than Chinese ones.

Other Chinese traders operated elsewhere within the Wollongong town centre, but in no discernible order. The Dion family ran their mixed business on northern Keira Street, some distance away from Bow On, Joe Wah Gow, Gow’s successors Henry and Stanley Young and the market gardeners. The drapery shop run by the other Young brothers was next to the Dion family’s mixed business. George Hong and Goon Jack also operated drapery shops in the Wollongong town centre, yet away from each other and the other Chinese shops. Chinese hawkers operated in the town centre as well. In 1901, for instance, one hawker crashed his cart on Campbell Street and spilled fruit and vegetables all over the road. Imaginably, the location of business premises was determined by a range of factors including rent prices and proximity to customers. There was no apparent relegation of Chinese businesspeople to the fringes.

58 ‘Week by Week’, The South Coast Times, 29 August 1908; ‘Wollongong Police Court’, The South Coast Times, 5 September 1908; Sands Business Directory, 1908, p. 198A; 1909, p. 219A.
61 ‘Fall in Fruit’, Illawarra Mercury, 7 December 1901.
Chinese businesses, in addition to being in the town centre, were scattered across greater Wollongong. Sam Sing and War Hop, the latter of whom at least was a former market gardener, were grocers at Bellambi, 5 km north of the Wollongong Town Hall. Arthur Kee Chong ran a grocery shop at Woonona and John Loo ran one at Port Kembla; these were 10 km north and south of the Town Hall respectively. T. Lee, Pan Jay and Sing Lee also kept grocery shops at Dapto, around

62 Map of Wollongong, circa 1920, WCLA Small Map File.
63 Sands Business Directory, 1925, p. 27A.
15 km southwest of Wollongong’s centre. Tommy Gunn, Chin Quong, Sam Hop—who was also a former gardener—and Wong Yong operated grocery shops at Helensburgh, 25 km north of the Town Hall. Most of these were near the Chinese market gardens mentioned in Chapter Two and the result was a series of small, widely-distributed Chinese produce hubs across the Wollongong area. This pattern was reinforced by hawkers and gardener-hawkers, including Tommy King and Ah Wing, who would have done business within walking distance of Chinese gardens.

The other Chinese businesses were widely-distributed as well. Ah War opened his drapery shop in the tiny and remote village of Otford, 30 km away from the Wollongong Town Hall. George Tansey sold leather from Dapto. Rose Loo made dresses next to her husband John’s grocery shop in Port Kembla. Arthur Bow had a mixed business, or general store, at Port Kembla. Again, strategic proximity to customers and factors other than physical relegation seem to have governed the location of these Chinese operations.

Map 3.2: Chinese business in the Wollongong area, 1901-39.\textsuperscript{72}

Chinese business ventures in Australia varied in terms of their size, how they advertised and how long they lasted. Charles Price stated that Chinese merchants in Australia operated 'small country stores or petty shops in Sydney Chinatown' after the gold rushes. Cathie May also argued that Chinese traders in Cairns lacked 'the ability to organise on a large scale'. John Fitzgerald, though, pointed out that there were indeed large-scale Chinese ventures in Australia, including the ill-fated China-Australia Mail Steamship Line. Chinese businesses also apparently avoided advertising overtly as Chinese under the White Australia policy. Real estate tycoon L. J. Hooker, for example, is said by his granddaughter to have 'disowned all traces of his Asian ancestry to meld into mainstream white Australian culture'. There were cases where Chinese merchants made little effort to hide, and even capitalised on their perceived exoticism, but they showed a tendency toward what Henry Chan termed 'invisibility and silence' in this period. Even so, they often flourished long-term, immune from many obstacles associated with the White Australia policy. Whilst a common stereotype is of the Chinese 'sojourner' merchant who returned to China after a short period, more recent research has revealed a much less transitory

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74 May, *Topsawyers*, p. 120.
Chinese business population than is often supposed.\textsuperscript{78}

Grocery Shops

Chinese produce operations in Wollongong between 1901 and 1939 were not insubstantial in number. There is evidence of 23 grocery shops and 10 hawking operations at different times, and there were probably more, particularly of the latter.\textsuperscript{79} Of the 23 grocery shops, four or five normally operated at the same time. At their peak of six in 1905, they made up roughly 10 percent of the total number in the Wollongong area, based on \textit{Sands Business Directory} listings.\textsuperscript{80} This is a significant percentage, but it was not a majority as was the case with Chinese grocery shops in Cairns around the same time.\textsuperscript{81} These six also made up about three percent of the total number of Chinese produce dealerships in regional New South Wales in 1905.\textsuperscript{82}

Whilst there is evidence of 10 hawking operations in Wollongong, this is unlikely to be a reliable indication of their number. As noted in the previous chapter, about 20 Chinese market gardens grew produce together in Wollongong in the early 1900s.


\textsuperscript{80} [2 grocers, 2 hawkers] \textit{Business Directory}, 1901–32.

\textsuperscript{81} May, \textit{Topsawyers}, p. 118.

\textsuperscript{82} [T. Y. Lee] Census of NSW, 1901, District 38, Sub-district T21, p. 8; \textit{Sands Business Directory}, 1901, p. 870; [Yun Hop] Census of NSW, 1901, District 38, Sub-district U20, p. 6; WMC Assessment Rolls, 1901-2, West Ward, p. 34; see Yong, \textit{The New Gold Mountain}, p. 264, for 1901 Census figures of around 200 produce dealers in regional NSW.
Consequently, there were probably more hawkers and gardener-hawkers around.

Yun Hop opened a grocery shop in Wollongong in 1898.\(^83\) 1901 census data shows that he had three partners and/or employees assisting him, the identities of whom are unknown.\(^84\) Yun Hop's premises on Crown Street appear to have been modest and this line of work does not seem to have been especially profitable for him. As recorded by Wollongong Council assessors, he was required to pay just £13 in rates annually: much less than most shops on Crown Street, which were more impressive and thus worth more in rates.\(^85\) Yun Hop leased his premises from Mrs. Sommerville and lived on the site in a cottage attached to the shop.\(^86\) He was listed in the *Sands Business Directory* as a 'greengrocer' between 1902 and 1909.\(^87\) His immigration file reveals that he was in Wollongong for 15 years from 1892 to 1907.\(^88\) On a journey back to China in 1907, Yun Hop was accused of stabbing someone at sea and was gaoled for a time in Singapore, which hardly suggests he was a well-to-do merchant.\(^89\) After he came back to Australia in 1910, he went into market gardening in the Sydney suburbs of Alexandria, Mascot and Botany.\(^90\)

Yee War and Co., another local produce outfit, began trading in 1902. There were three partners registered under the New South Wales *Registration of Firms Act*: Charlie Ching Won, Jimmy Mann Hong and Choy War.\(^91\) Compared to Yun Hop's, the shop used by Yee War and Co. was quite respectable. There is no photographic

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\(^83\) WMC Assessment Rolls, 1898-9, p. 33.
\(^84\) Census of NSW, 1901, District 38, Sub-district U20, p. 6.
\(^85\) [Yun Hop] WMC Assessment Rolls, 1898-9, p. 33; 1899-1900, p. 57; 1900-1, p. 125; 1901-2, p. 34; 1902-3, p. 63; 1903-4, p. 66; 1904-5, p. 66; 1905-6, p. 70; [Tommy King] 1903-4, p. 45; 1905-6, p. 48; 1906-7, p. 51.
\(^86\) WMC Assessment Rolls, 1899-1900, p. 57.
\(^88\) Yun Hop Immigration File.
\(^89\) 'The Searchlight', Illawarra Mercury, 19 April 1907.
\(^90\) Yun Hop Immigration File.
\(^91\) NSW Register of Firms 1903-22, no. 12665.
record of it, but £52 in rates annually had to be paid for it: more than the amount paid by all but a few operations on Crown Street. The shop also cost £12 monthly or £144 annually in rent: no small sum. Additionally, the company's expense book shows that £926/16/1 was spent over a two-year period from 1902 to 1904, which is suggestive of a significant annual turnover, but somewhat less than that of gardeners Chew Hoan (翰) and Duck Lee who spent £1,400 over two years. Yee War and Co. had ties to Chinese firms in Sydney, including Tiy Sang and Co., Wing On and Co., Hop War and Co., Yee Sang Shing and Co., San Suey Wah and Co. and Hung Wah Ti. Tiy Sang and Co. were leading See Yup, or Siyi, merchants and the others were mostly Zhongshan/Xiangshan district firms. The local Yee War and Co. firm was a node in a much larger produce network. As happened to Chew Hoan in 1909, however, these grocers went bankrupt in 1904, apparently due to mismanagement.

Tommy King and Tommy Tinn were two other grocers in Wollongong. King opened his shop in 1903; Tinn opened his in 1906. As far as evidence shows, Tommy King, even though his business appears to have been the smaller of the two, was more successful than Tommy Tinn. Council assessment rolls show that King had to pay just £13 in rates, like Yun Hop, meaning his shop on Crown Street was modest. Still, it was the site of at least one Chinese community event in 1907—a
Chinese-language Bible talk—so it was large enough to host a number of people.\textsuperscript{100} Tommy King was listed in Council records from 1903 to 1907 and the \textit{Sands Business Directory} from 1906 to 1909: he was in business for at least six years.\textsuperscript{101} Tommy Tinn, on the other hand, needed to pay £39 in rates annually: the shop he occupied was more valuable.\textsuperscript{102} Even so, Tinn was listed in Council records and the \textit{Sands Business Directory} in 1906 and 1907, which suggests a short-lived business venture.\textsuperscript{103} He opened beyond legal hours in 1906, possibly in an effort to stay afloat.\textsuperscript{104} Tommy Tinn also appears to have sold opium. There was a raid on his premises by police and Customs officers in 1908, during which opium was found hidden in vegetable boxes, and this seems to have ended his business.\textsuperscript{105} Neither of these grocers advertised outside the Directory.

Three particularly long-lived produce concerns were those run by George Young (養門), Arthur Kee Chong and John Loo. George Young began life in Wollongong as a market gardener, tending a garden in the suburb of Fairy Meadow from 1898.\textsuperscript{106} In 1911, he opened a grocery shop in the Wollongong town centre and was recorded there continuously until 1925.\textsuperscript{107} George Young operated locally for 12 years. Arthur Kee Chong did similar. He first appeared in the northern Wollongong suburb of Woonona in 1921 and was listed there most years after that until 1933.\textsuperscript{108}

\textsuperscript{100} 'Personal', \textit{Illawarra Mercury}, 23 April 1907.
\textsuperscript{102} WMC Assessment Rolls, 1906-7, East Ward, p. 53.
\textsuperscript{103} WMC Assessment Rolls, 1906-7, East Ward, p. 53; \textit{Sands Business Directory}, 1907, p. 183A.
\textsuperscript{104} 'The Searchlight', \textit{Illawarra Mercury}, 18 May 1906.
\textsuperscript{105} 'Week by Week', \textit{South Coast Times}, 21 March 1908.
\textsuperscript{106} NIMC Rate Books, WCLA N14/3, 1898-9.
He did business locally for at least 11 years, but he appears to have struggled initially, being implicated in receiving stolen goods in 1922.109 John Loo opened a shop in Port Kembla in 1920.110 Until 1945, when he relocated to Sydney, he ran it without intermission.111 Sadly, more information on these businesses is unavailable, except for the facts that John Loo died with only £244 in 1951 and none of these grocers ever seem to have advertised in newspapers.112

Only scattered evidence of the remaining Chinese produce operations in Wollongong can be found. Wing Hing and Co., with its single registered owner George Quinn, or Ching, began trading in 1903.113 After 1904, the company occupied the same premises occupied by Yee War and Co.114 Local woman Violet Duncan also recalled Chinese a grocer, Sing Lee, keeping a small shop by himself in Dapto when she was a girl in the 1920s.115 Sing Lee was listed in the Directory in 1926 and 1927.116 Grocers T. Y. Lee, C. Ying, Chin Quong and War Hop had grocery shops in the Wollongong area for less than five years, but little else is known about them.117 Similarly, whilst little is known about Hop Kee and Co. and Sam Sing, it is known that they kept shops locally for under 10 years.118 There is brief note of

109 'Quarter Sessions', Sydney Morning Herald, 16 May 1922.
110 Florance, Tracing Chinese Footsteps on the South Coast of NSW, p. 40.
113 NSW Register of Firms 1903-22, no. 13790.
114 WMC Assessment Rolls, 1905-6, East Ward, p. 50.
116 Sands Business Directory, 1926, p. 100A; 1927, p. 107A;
hawkers and gardener-hawkers like Ah Wing, Ah Chew, Mar Li and Gee Get in various places as well, but little else is known about their operations.  

An important feature of Chinese produce concerns in Wollongong was that they barely advertised. There were *Sands Business Directory* listings, which were voluntary, but apparently no newspaper advertisements for any of these traders. This seems odd given the number of Chinese produce dealers locally: 33 can be confirmed in Wollongong between 1901 and 1939. By contrast, non-Chinese produce dealers, of which there were at least 11 in the town centre in 1901 alone, were often in the local newspapers.

**General Stores**

There were as many as five Chinese mixed businesses, or general stores, in Wollongong between 1901 and 1939. Two had opened by 1913. Another two had opened by 1933 and one of the others—Joe Wah Gow and Co.—changed hands in 1929. For the most part, two such shops operated at the same time, but they often operated alone, and, at peak in 1933, three traded in the area together. The total of five is small relative to the number of ‘white’ general stores in Wollongong. In 1901,

246A; [Sam Sing] 1925, p. 27A; 1926, p. 29A; 1927, p. 30A; 1928, p. 32A; 1929, p. 31A; 1930, p. 20A; 1932, p. 27A.
there were 10 listed in the *Sands Business Directory* for the Wollongong town centre. The Chinese total is also small when compared to certain other regional New South Wales locales. Tingha in northern New South Wales, for instance, had five Chinese general stores listed in the *Sands Business Directory* in 1901. Although Tingha was a former tin-mining centre with a sizeable Chinese population, Wollongong was a larger town with many more consumers and a far bigger market. The few Chinese in mixed business could be explained by its small Chinese population, and thus less support from other Chinese, as well as more competition from ‘whites’.

Joe Wah Gow and Co. was one mixed business in Wollongong from 1913. Primary stakeholder Joe Wah Gow had five partners: Charles Ung Quay (劉衍慶), Joe Kue (周橋), Joe Hoon Leong, Peter Ung Quay (劉衍苗) and Low Cor. Their shop was on western Crown Street, near the Wollongong train station. It was 40 feet wide and 150 feet deep (12 m x 46 m) and was owned by the firm. According to Low Cor’s application for his cousin to enter Australia to work, Joe Wah Gow and Co. had an annual turnover of £25,000 in 1929: a substantial amount at the time. Low Cor also had assets worth £4,495 when he died in 1955, which is further evidence of the firm’s high value. Joe Wah Gow and Co. had connections with the Kwong War Chong company, Australia’s foremost Zhongshan district firm during the

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126 NSW Register of Firms 1903-22, no. 24406.
127 Henry Percy and Stanley Herbert Young (trading as Jow Wah Gow and Co.) Bankruptcy File A; WMC Lists of Electors 1925-39, 1925a, no. 2277, 2441; 1925b, p. 30, 32; 1928, p. 65.
128 Gum Chong (application by Low Cor for admission of his cousin, Gum Chong, into the Commonwealth), NAA SP42/1 C1929/8020.
129 ‘Stamp Office Affidavit’, Low Cor Deceased Estate File, NSWSA Probate Packet 4/476785.
1920s. Gow's advertising efforts were significant. He placed advertisements in both key local newspapers, the Illawarra Mercury and the South Coast Times, weekly from opening in 1913 up through the 1920s. The business was run by Gow and his partners from 1913 until 1929, when Gow returned to China. After 1929, two of his partners Low Cor and Charles Ung Quay remained in the area for some time. In 1955, Cor died in Wollongong, while Charles Ung Quay died in Sydney that same year.

Henry and Stanley Young took over Joe Wah Gow and Co. in 1929. The brothers occupied the same shop and retained the firm's name. They ran the business with at least three other people of Chinese descent: their wives and another brother, Roger. There were a further five Chinese shareholders and nine 'white' employees associated with the firm. When they took over, its annual turnover remained high: it was £28,702 in 1938. 492 people also had credit accounts at Joe Wah Gow and Co. in 1939. Still, the firm went bankrupt that year. Accountants Parsons, Anderson and Co. determined that Joe Wah Gow and Co. should have been a sound business, and 'at least paid its way' with a minimum of effort, but that the

130 Peter Ung Quay Immigration File, NAA SP244/2 N1950/2/10175; Williams, Chinese Settlement in NSW, p. 67.
134 Henry Percy and Stanley Herbert Young (trading as Jow Wah Gow and Co.) Bankruptcy File A.
135 Henry Percy and Stanley Herbert Young (trading as Jow Wah Gow and Co.) Bankruptcy File B, NAA SP219/1 1284.
136 Henry Percy and Stanley Herbert Young (trading as Jow Wah Gow and Co.) Bankruptcy File C, NAA SP219/1 1140.
137 Henry Percy and Stanley Herbert Young (trading as Jow Wah Gow and Co.) Bankruptcy File B.
Youngs had extended too much credit to their customers over too long a period, particularly during the Great Depression.\textsuperscript{138} Henry and Stanley Young were the sons of Percy Young (Kwan Hong Kee), who owned and operated the successful Kwong Sing and Co. chain of stores in northwest New South Wales.\textsuperscript{139} Unlike Joe Wah Gow and his partners, the Young brothers do not appear to have advertised in local newspapers.

Another mixed business which opened in 1923 was run by the Dion family. They started this business the same year as Dion's Bus Service. Apparently, the whole family of 14 people helped run it.\textsuperscript{140} This general store and the Youngs' drapery were in a long, double-fronted shop together, with each side having a shop-length counter and a narrow, door-width space where customers stood to be served, as local man James Wallace Gibson recalled.\textsuperscript{141} The Dions' shop was profitable and free from financial strife. It cannot be separated from the bus company along financial lines without detailed records, which are unavailable, but it clearly helped family matriarch Annie Dion to acquire her £25,000 real estate portfolio.\textsuperscript{142} The Dion family advertised their mixed business. Its 1923 opening was announced in the \textit{Mercury}, though the notice was small, short-lived and the name 'Dion' seems to mask their Chinese ancestry to a degree, at least more than 'Di On' or 'Da On', the names used by the family just a few years earlier.\textsuperscript{143} The Dions' mixed business was open from 1923 to at least 1950: 27 years in total and 16 years between 1901 and 1939.\textsuperscript{144}

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{138 Henry Percy and Stanley Herbert Young (trading as Jow Wah Gow and Co.) Bankruptcy File C.}
\footnote{139 Wilton, \textit{Golden Threads}, p. 23, 74.}
\footnote{140 Birchmeir and Dion, \textit{The Dions—Bus Pioneers of Wollongong}, p. 11.}
\footnote{141 Personal correspondence with James Wallace Gibson (Wollongong boy in the 1930s), January-May 2013.}
\footnote{142 'Real Estate Holdings', Annie Dion Deceased Estate File.}
\footnote{143 'Tom Dion', \textit{Illawarra Mercury}, 23 February 1923.}
\footnote{144 'Public Notice', \textit{Illawarra Mercury}, 23 February 1923; Annie Dion Deceased Estate File; \textit{Sands Business Directory}, 1924, p. 330A; 1925, p. 341A; 1927, p. 394A; 1928, p. 410A; 1929, p. 421A;}
\end{footnotes}
Less is known about the two other Chinese general stores in Wollongong. In 1901, one was operated by Bow On. The size of his shop in Crown Street is evident because he sought Wollongong Municipal Council’s permission to add an awning to it in 1905. The shop was respectable: double-fronted and just as large as others on Crown Street (see Image 3.1). Bow On never featured on Wollongong Municipal Council assessment rolls. A much later general store was that of Arthur Bow, who operated in the suburb of Port Kembla in the 1930s. Little is known about his operation, apart from the fact that he was charged with uttering counterfeit coins to a customer in 1933. Neither of these businesses advertised, not even in the Sands Business Directory.

Image 3.1: Bow On's shop, Crown Street, 1905.

1930, p. 396A; 1931, p. 394A; 1932, p. 383A.
145 Memorandum from Henry Stumbles, Council Clerk, to J. P. Galvin, Mayor, re Bow On, WCLA, 1901.
146 ‘Proposed Awning for Bow On’, WMC Correspondence, 1905.
148 ‘Proposed Awning for Bow On’, WMC Correspondence, 1905.
In 1912, there were 862 Chinese cabinetmakers in New South Wales, and apparently just one of these—Charlie Ah Woy—worked in Wollongong. Charlie Ah Woy first appeared as the proprietor of a Crown Street workshop on Council assessment rolls in 1895. He began life in Wollongong as a market gardener in 1893 and had interests in market gardens and his Crown Street workshop for several years after that. According to the 1901 census, he worked alone as a cabinetmaker. Charlie Ah Woy's operation was not worth much money. In 1907, he needed to pay just £13

149 WCL Image Collection P14385.
151 WMC Assessment Rolls, 1893-4, p. 27; 1895-6, p. 44.
152 WMC Assessment Rolls, 1895-6, p. 44; see also 'Donations', *Illawarra Mercury*, 24 January 1911.
153 Census of NSW, 1901, District 38, Sub-district U20, p. 8.
in rates annually, meaning it was modest.\textsuperscript{154} In 1914, when his workshop was levelled by fire, his uninsured loss in tools and photographic equipment was just £100.\textsuperscript{155} Charlie Ah Woy had £60 to his name when he died in 1945.\textsuperscript{156} Even so, his output was prolific and ranged from glass-doored cabinets, kitchen tables and wardrobes to tiled washstands, stepladders and photo frames.\textsuperscript{157} He made furniture in Wollongong from 1895 to 1945: 50 years, the majority of his life.\textsuperscript{158}

Choy War was a local Chinese refreshment rooms proprietor. Formerly a partner in failed produce outfit Yee War and Co., he opened this beverage establishment in 1908, probably with two or three partners.\textsuperscript{159} His premises were substantial. According to court testimony by Thomas Marshall in 1908, the shop had two front rooms for customers, with a counter and space for tables and chairs, as well as a back room behind a curtain where gambling took place.\textsuperscript{160} Choy War also loaned money to people, which suggests his financial position was strong, though nothing else about his finances is known.\textsuperscript{161} He never advertised his refreshment rooms in local newspapers, but two of his competitors—Mrs. H. A. Inch and Messrs. Cook and Cornforth—did, which suggests he kept a low profile.\textsuperscript{162} Choy War appears to

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{154} WMC Assessment Rolls, 1906-7, East Ward, p. 51.
\item \textsuperscript{155} 'The Searchlight', \textit{Illawarra Mercury}, 16 January 1914; 'Week by Week', \textit{South Coast Times}, 16 January 1914; 'Country News', \textit{Sydney Morning Herald}, 16 January 1914.
\item \textsuperscript{156} 'Stamp Office Affidavit', Charlie Ah Woy Deceased Estate File, NSWSA Probate Packet 4/30244.
\item \textsuperscript{159} 'Wollongong Police Court', \textit{South Coast Times}, 5 September 1908.
\item \textsuperscript{160} 'Wollongong Police Court', \textit{South Coast Times}, 5 September 1908.
\item \textsuperscript{161} 'Quarter Sessions', \textit{South Coast Times}, 3 July 1909.
\item \textsuperscript{162} [Inch] 'Mrs. H. A. Inch', \textit{South Coast Times}, 1 May 1909; [Cook and Cornforth] 'Ices! Ices! Ices!', \textit{Illawarra Mercury}, 5 July 1913.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
have operated for just two years.\textsuperscript{163}

Chinese drapers may have been in Wollongong as early as the 1880s, but the first one to operate over the period in question—Ah War—opened his shop in 1904. Ah War operated for around five years in the remote village of Otford where he must have depended on the loyal patronage of a handful of customers.\textsuperscript{164} George Hong also opened a drapery shop in 1912 in the Wollongong town centre, but it only seems to have remained open for three years.\textsuperscript{165} Directory entries aside, not much is known about these drapers. More is known about draper Goon Jack. He arrived in Wollongong at some point around the turn of the century, according to his immigration file. However, he does not appear to have opened his drapery until 1913. He worked as a grocer and shop assistant prior to that.\textsuperscript{166} Shortly after the shop opened, a fire burnt it down and he was paid a tidy sum of £400 in insurance.\textsuperscript{167} Immigration files show he had connections with Sydney merchants Wing Sang and Co.\textsuperscript{168} Goon Jack left the local area for Sydney in 1913.\textsuperscript{169} Harry Young and his brothers—no relation to Henry and Stanley Young—also opened a drapery shop in Wollongong, in 1923. As already noted, they shared a double-fronted shop with the Dions’ mixed business. They advertised their opening in 1923, detailing their range of silk products, but they only appear to have been in business for three years.\textsuperscript{170}

Dressmaker Rose Loo had a shop next to her husband John's grocery shop in Port Kembla in the 1920s and 1930s. As far as evidence shows, she was the only

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\textsuperscript{163} [Choy War] Sands Business Directory, 1908, p. 198A; 1909, p. 219A.
\textsuperscript{164} Sands Business Directory, 1904, p. 145A; 1905, p. 154A; 1906, p. 134C; 1907, p. 139A; 1908, p. 152A.
\textsuperscript{165} Sands Business Directory, 1912, p. 246A; 1913, p. 220A; 1914, p. 210A.
\textsuperscript{166} Goon Jack Immigration File; Sands Business Directory, 1913, p. 220A.
\textsuperscript{167} 'Fire', Illawarra Mercury, 1 April 1913; 'Shops Destroyed', Sydney Morning Herald, 2 April 1913.
\textsuperscript{168} Goon Jack Immigration File.
\textsuperscript{169} Goon Jack Immigration File.
\textsuperscript{170} 'New Cash Drapery Shop', Illawarra Mercury, 2 March 1923; Sands Business Directory, 1924, p. 331A; 1925, p. 342A; 1926, p. 352A.
\end{footnotesize}
Chinese dressmaker in town and the only Chinese woman to run her own business. She advertised its opening in the *Illawarra Mercury* in 1927, meaning she hardly kept a low profile. 171 A man allegedly stole a 35/- kimono from her shop in 1932, which is evidence that her stock was expensive, and perhaps the value of her operation was relatively high. 172 Rose Loo made dresses at Port Kembla until she died in 1937. 173

**Conclusion**

Chinese business in Wollongong was not unlike that elsewhere in Australia between 1901 and 1939, with a few exceptions made clear by fine-grained local research. Dion's Bus Service is the best-remembered, but there were several other kinds of Chinese businesses. Chinese shops in Wollongong tended not to be concentrated in one place. On the contrary, they were spread out, but often in close proximity to market gardens. The local version of Chinatown, on western Crown Street, could not compare to Chinatowns in Sydney, Cairns and Darwin in size. In terms of scale, produce ventures in Wollongong were numerous. Regarding the size of their premises and their monetary value, there was considerable difference between them. Mixed businesses were few. The premises they occupied, though, were large and these businesses had high monetary values. Joe Wah Gow and Co. had a large annual turnover which placed it in the same league as some of the most successful Chinese firms in Sydney. The scale of the other Chinese businesses in Wollongong varied, though the Dions’ general store in conjunction with their bus company enabled

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family matriarch Annie Dion to amass a considerable fortune. Local Chinese traders tended not to advertise perhaps out of fear of attracting unwanted attention within 'White Australia'; this was a phenomenon seen elsewhere. Chinese commercial operations were sometimes long-term ventures, as in other Australian locales, but the majority, particularly grocery shops, operated for less than 10 years.
Chapter Four

Chinese Community Life, 1901-39

Community life was an important aspect of Chinese experiences within ‘White Australia’. A strong community often helped mitigate potential difficulties brought about by legislative, cultural and linguistic barriers. All over Australia, Chinese people came together for reasons of family, politics and the celebration of traditional festivals.¹ Links with their home villages in China were also a central part of life for most Chinese people in Australia, with the vast majority sending money back to their families, visiting them on occasion and eventually returning home to retire and die among their ancestors.² Chinese people were regularly involved in the wider community as well. In particular, connections were formed through intermarriage, church involvement and other social activities including sport.³

This chapter addresses Chinese community life in Wollongong over the period from 1901 to 1939. I consider Chinese families, political groups, religious worship, festive occasions and friendly competitions like sporting matches. I also

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explore the links that local Chinese people maintained with their home villages in China.

**Building Families**

Lonely Chinese bachelors were common in Australia. Kathryn Cronin wrote of the thousands of Chinese miners 'bereft of female or family companionship' on the Victorian goldfields, almost as if there were no other kind of Chinese person in Australia.\(^4\) Yong Chingfatt expressed a similar idea, that is, that 'the most appalling feature of Chinese communities was a lack of family life'.\(^5\) Kate Bagnall noted that this is one of the most persistent stereotypes in Australian history.\(^6\) While a lack of Chinese females in Australia made Chinese-Chinese unions rare, Chinese men did partner with 'white' and Aboriginal women and start families, as recent studies, particularly by Bagnall in regional New South Wales, have revealed.\(^7\) There have also been several studies of the lives of Chinese women, of which family was usually a large part.\(^8\) As more family histories are brought to light, it is becoming clear that

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Chinese people in Australia were not necessarily 'bereft' of family life; rather, family life was often central to Chinese experiences.

Yet, most of Wollongong's Chinese, who were nearly all males, were single between 1901 and 1939. Market gardener Jimmy Mann Hong (洪晚) said in court in 1904: 'I am a single man'. Most other Chinese market gardeners, even prosperous ones such as Sun Hung Wah, were also bachelors: they left no records of either marrying or having children. Cabinetmaker Charlie Ah Woy, who lived in Wollongong from 1894 until his death in 1945, seems never to have married or had children either, at least not in Australia. He had no beneficiaries in his will. Likewise, gardener Zhang Yun (張允) was apparently single when he committed suicide in 1930. Still, it is important to recognise that some Chinese men had wives and children in China, whom they occasionally returned to visit. Businessman Joe Kue (周橋) had a wife in China, as shown by his immigration file. Nevertheless, this is the only record of a local man having such a wife; other wives can only be guessed at based on the tendency of Chinese men overseas to marry in China and return there periodically. At any rate, local men with wives in China were effectively single in Wollongong.

A number of Chinese men partnered with 'white' women in Wollongong. Gardener Chew Hoan (翰) married Anna Carr at Nowra, on the New South Wales

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9 Testimony of Jimmy Mann Hong, Charlie Ching Won and Jimmy Mann Hong Bankruptcy File, NSW State Archives (NSWSA) 13655/10/23453, p. 68.
10 Bagnall observed that the NSW Registers of Births, Deaths and Marriages (NSW BDM) regularly missed Chinese people (Bagnall, 'Golden Shadows on a White Land', p. 98-9).
12 'Old Chinese Swallows a Pistol (老華人吞槍自盡)', Tung Wah Times, 23 August 1930.
13 Correspondence between Onyik Lee and Co. and Geo. F. A. Mitchell, Collector of Customs NSW, 20 June 1931 – 26 September 1933, Joe Kue Immigration File, National Archives of Australia (NAA) SP42/1 C1933/6938.
14 Williams, 'Destination Qiaoxiang', pp. 106-34.
South Coast, in 1899 before moving to Wollongong. Gardener and grocer Charlie Ching Won (青云) married Catherine Henness in 1900 and market gardener Harry Gon Kee married Jane Anderson in 1901. Gardener Sam Lee partnered with a 'white' woman, Sarah, during the early 1900s. Late 19th-century gardener Bung Foon married such a woman, Grace Stephenson in 1896, though it is unclear whether they stayed in the local area after 1901. Men of the Chie and Tansey families were also in relationships with 'white' women over the period in question. Significantly, there is no evidence of any obstacles to these relationships locally, such as anti-Chinese magistrates who forbade them, or fathers who 'would rather see their daughters dead' than with Chinese, as was seen elsewhere during the period of the White Australia policy. Charlie Ching Won's father-in-law was a coal miner—a role associated with early anti-Chinese agitation in Wollongong—but left no evidence of hostility towards his son-in-law. On the contrary, he had an interest in his market gardening operation. Charlie admitted of a produce cart at his 1904 bankruptcy hearing: 'it belongs to my father-in-law'.

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15 NSW Register of Marriages 3999/1899.
16 NSW Register of Marriages 7396/1900; 2461/1901; [Kate Chong Won] Register of Deaths 3947/1908.
18 NSW Register of Marriages 4414/1896.
19 NSW Register of Marriages 1416/1908; 1971/1924; 19638/1928; 5251/1934; 7690/1890; 7464/1894; 1842/1911; Tansey Divorce Proceedings, NSWSA 13/13255 1206/1924.
21 Testimony of Charlie Ching Won, Charlie Ching Won and Jimmy Mann Hong Bankruptcy File, p. 73.
Chinese men in Wollongong probably met their 'white' partners in work-related situations. There were opportunities for them to cross paths in what Kate Bagnall termed 'white domestic spaces'. Chinese men would have sold produce door-to-door, which involved them talking to women, exchanging pleasantries and giving gifts such as Chinese ginger. Women also entered 'Chinese spaces'. They bought produce from Chinese gardens and grocery shops. Jack Devitt's mother and sisters were local women who did so. Jack Devitt remembered his sisters eating

22 Photo courtesy of Olga Green (formerly Chie), 25 April 2013.
23 Bagnall, 'Golden Shadows on a White Land', p. 70, 126.
meals with George and Sam Wong at their garden in the 1920s. There was also at
least one South Coast Times notice warning 'silly' girls to stop frequenting Chinese
gardens alone in 1912. Other evidence is scarce, but serendipitous meetings of this
kind—related to Chinese work activities—are the most plausible source of these
Chinese-European romantic encounters.

A number of relationships between Chinese men and 'white' women resulted
in children. Charlie and Catherine Ching Won had a girl, Amelia, in 1900 and raised
her in a market garden. Charlie stated in 1904: 'my wife and child live in the gardens
with me'. Sam Lee also had children with wife Sarah and raised them in his garden
before 1907, which was when Thomas Dion (黃帝安) took it over. Official records
of their births are unavailable, but the Illawarra Mercury reported Sam Lee returning
to China with his family in 1907. James Chie, son of John Chi from Xiamen, had
eight children with his wife Ada around the turn of the century and raised them with
her on their Dapto dairy farm. Matthew Tansey, son of John Tanzi from Xiamen,
similarly had a daughter, Margaret, with his wife Bridget in 1896. Harry and Jane
Gon Kee and Bung and Grace Foon, however, appear not to have had children. There
is no record of Chew and Anna Hoan having children, either. Still, as with many
Chinese-European couples in Australia, the Kees, Foons and Hoans may have had
children and registered them under non-Chinese names. This was the case with

27 'Corrimal', South Coast Times, 6 June 1912.
28 There is no evidence that Chinese men married prostitutes, see Charles Price, The Great White
Walls Are Built: Restrictive Immigration to North America and Australasia, 1836-1888, Australian
29 NSW BDM 28021/1900; Testimony of Charlie Ching Won, Charlie Ching Won and Jimmy Mann
Hong Bankruptcy File, p. 74.
30 The Searchlight, Illawarra Mercury, 9 April 1907.
31 [Maletta] NSW Register of Births 38891/1892; [Carlton] 39220/1893; [Ivy] 37941/1894; [Rupert]
19192/1905.
32 NSW Register of Births 27187/1896.
Sydney's James and Rose Tingyou, relatives of L. J. Hooker, among others.33

Chinese women in the Wollongong area also partnered with 'white' men and had children. Mary Jui Dan, daughter of John Jui Dan from Xiamen, was married to Alfred Harvey in 1889 and had a son, Frank, in 1895. The couple raised him locally over the early part of the period in question.34 Maggie Anne Tansey, daughter of John Tanzi, was married to John Killeen in 1892, though in Sydney, where they had two children.35 Similarly, in 1918, Evelyn Yen, daughter of Redfern shopkeeper William Yen, was married to Charles Crump and raised at least one child in Wollongong.36 In 1922, Amelia Ching Won was married to Frederick Cooper, but it is unclear whether they had children locally or not.37 It is important to note that there is no record of any controversy surrounding these families, unlike that surrounding Sydney's Gwenda Yee and Ernie Golding in 1946. Gwenda's father forbade her from marrying a 'white man' and drew widespread media condemnation as a consequence.38

There were Chinese-Chinese relationships in the Wollongong area as well. Market gardener George Say Ying married Jane Sue, a woman of Chinese descent, in 1892.39 The couple lived locally for at least 10 years.40 Thomas Dion and Annie Hong Yea were also married in 1898 and lived together in Wollongong after 1907.41 Further, Joe Wah Gow (周華九) and Ida Ko were married in the early 1900s, as were

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34 [Alfred Harvey and Mary Jui Dan] NSW BDM 5245/1889; [Frank Harvey] 28532/1895.
36 St. Francis Xavier's Catholic Cathedral Wollongong, *Register of Marriages; Register of Baptisms*, Wollongong City Library Archives (WCLA), 25 May 1918; 29 December 1919.
37 NSW BDM 16131/1922.
39 NSW BDM 7820/1892; Robertson, 'An Octogenarian Remembers', p. 45.
Pak Chung (伯祥) and Ah Yin.⁴² In the 1920s, local businessmen and brothers Henry and Stanley Young also married Chinese women, Ruby Kee and Grace Mew Long respectively, with the latter couple getting married in 1927 in Shekki, or Shiqi, Zhongshan/Xiangshan county, Guangdong.⁴³ There were other Chinese-Chinese relationships in Wollongong over the period in question, including that of Tommy and Luoy Tinn.⁴⁴ Significantly, more Chinese businessmen than agriculturalists married Chinese women: there was a clear preference for Chinese wives among Chinese men with greater financial resources. This conforms to Sydney gardener and grocer Albert Leong's recollection that 'most of us ('bloody poor' Chinese men) ended up with Australian girls.'⁴⁵

Chinese seem to have found each other through more deliberate efforts than was the case with Chinese-European couples. Thomas and Annie Dion were married via an arrangement between Thomas and Paul Kee Chong, Annie's father and Thomas's long-time business associate.⁴⁶ Similarly, Stanley Young married China-born woman Grace Mew Long, which meant talks between families and the payment of a 'bride price' were necessary. As Stanley recalled, 'the bride's parents (in China) wanted, through a go-between, so many hundred cakes, so many catties of dried foods like mushrooms, abalones, shark fins, sweets, wines etc.'⁴⁷ Arranged marriages

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⁴² [Joe Wah Gow] Robyn Florance, Thomas Dion and Joe Wah Gow Manuscript, WCLA MSS1240; [Pak Chung and Ah Yin] Pak Chung Immigration File, NAA SP42/1 C1928/12447.
⁴⁵ Fitzgerald, Red Tape Gold Scissors, p. 152.
⁴⁷ Young, 'The Engagement and Wedding of Stanley and Grace Young'.

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were customary in Guangdong’s Pearl River Delta counties, and these traditions were often retained even among Australia-born Chinese.  

Chinese-Chinese relationships resulted in a second generation of Australia-born, ethnically Chinese children. George and Jane Say Ying had a daughter and son, Emily and William, and raised them locally during the early 20th century. Thomas and Annie Dion had five children when they arrived in Wollongong in 1907, and then had another eight there before Thomas’s death in 1920. Joe and Ida Wah Gow had five children—Arthur, David, Victor, Joan and Canberra (see Image 4.3)—who they raised in the local area until 1929, when the whole family went to live in China. Pak Chung and Ah Yin, Henry, Ruby, Stanley and Grace Young also had children, a number of whom grew up in Wollongong as well. Most Chinese-Chinese families were much larger than Chinese-European families. This was probably due to the greater financial resources available to Chinese businessmen, who seem to have preferred Chinese wives over ‘white’ ones.

49 St. Michael’s Anglican Church, Register of Baptisms, WCLA, 19 November 1882, 8 November 1885; it is also important to note that Chinese women usually retained their family names after marriage and that they only used their husbands’ surname in the Australian setting.
50 Birchmeir and Dion, The Dions—Bus Pioneers of Wollongong, pp. 7-9.
51 Australian National Maritime Museum Welcome Wall, <welcomewall.anmm.gov.au>; Williams, ‘Destination Qiaoxiang’, p. 188.
52 Young, ‘The Engagement and Wedding of Stanley and Grace Young’.
53 Florance, *Tracing Chinese Footsteps on the South Coast of NSW*, p. 52.
54 Photo courtesy of Victor Gow and Michael Williams, 4 October 2013.
There is evidence of at least one Chinese-Aboriginal couple in Wollongong. In 1927, there was a 'Back to Wollongong' event, held to celebrate local history, in which a so-called 'Aboriginese' girl took part.\(^{55}\) Event programs have not survived, and newspaper reports are not particularly informative, so her identity remains a mystery. Chinese-Aboriginal intimate encounters could have occurred as early as the 1850s on Henry Osborne's dairy farm where indentured labourers from Xiamen were in contact with local Aboriginal tribes.\(^{56}\) However, the treatment of this 'Aboriginese' girl as something of an oddity by Mercury reporters in 1927 suggests Chinese-Aboriginal families were not very common. Indeed, Australia's anti-miscegenation laws made Chinese-Aboriginal marriages difficult.\(^{57}\)

**Politics, Religion and Festivities**

Politics and religion were key parts of Chinese community life in Australia. In metropolitan centres such as Sydney and Melbourne, and in regional centres with large Chinese populations like Cairns and Darwin, merchants came to together through the Chinese Empire Reform Association, then later the Chinese Nationalist Party, or Kuomintang (KMT).\(^{58}\) As noted by John Fitzgerald and Shirley Fitzgerald, among others, these political groups organised social events, including dances and concerts, which strengthened Chinese community ties.\(^{59}\) Chinese people in Australia

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55 'Back to Wollongong', *South Coast Times*, 11 February 1927.
58 See, for instance, Kuo, 'Making Chinese Australia', pp. 214-382.
went to temples as well, also known as 'joss houses'. Temples built to honour Guandi or Guanyu (關羽) at Alexandria and Glebe are two Sydney examples. These were places for people to celebrate traditional festivals and to socialise. Church attendance was also a feature of Chinese community life. Chinese people in most Australian locales attended church with 'whites', which is noteworthy for the fact that it encouraged cultural exchange. There were Chinese churches too which offered Chinese-language services and acted as social rallying points for Chinese people.

Throughout the 1920s, the Chinese Nationalist Party, or Kuomintang (KMT), was active in Wollongong. The local branch was moderately-sized: there were 13 members in total. Joe Wah Gow appears to have been the founder. He was also the branch president before he went back to China in 1929. Most other Wollongong KMT members shared their Chinese surname with him, that is, 'Zhou' (周), pronounced like the English given name 'Joe'. This meant that they were from the same clan, possibly even the same family. At least one KMT member also had the

60 Refer to Hu Jin Kok, Chinese Temples in Australia, Golden Dragon Museum, Bendigo, 2008.
64 Donation Book for KMT Headquarters (Wollongong, Yoe Wah-Gow) [澳洲國民黨建築雪梨支部所捐一冊，民國九年(封面寫有烏龍岡阜周華九兄)], Kuomintang Australasia Archives (KMTA) A191, 1920.
65 Membership records of Wanganui, Wollongong (阜外檔人名冊), KMTA A109; Donation Record for Workers' Strike in China (Wollongong Branch) (華僑樂助罷工人員救國記-烏龍江區分布), KMTA A118; Donation book for KMT Headquarters (Wollongong, Yoe Wah-Gow).
same Chinese surname—‘Liu’ (劉)—as Peter and Charles Ung Quay (劉衍苗，劉衍慶), who were Joe Wah Gow's business partners and from the same place in China, that is, Longdu, Zhongshan, Guangdong (香山，隆都). Therefore, in Wollongong, the KMT appears to have functioned as a kind of fraternal organisation for members of the Zhou and related clans from this region. Branch members donated money to the building of the KMT's Sydney headquarters and may have taken part in social events there, that is, given the close proximity of Wollongong to Sydney and the links between Chinese businesspeople in these places, as discussed in the previous chapter. There is no evidence of KMT events in Wollongong itself. Members probably just met in each other's homes or at Joe Wah Gow's shop. The local KMT seems to have lacked its own social circuit, unlike the main KMT branches in Australia. This may have been due to Sydney's close proximity to Wollongong and the small size of the local Chinese population.

Strikingly, other political organisations were not represented at all by Wollongong's Chinese, at least not in Wollongong. There is no evidence of a local Chinese Empire Reform Association branch. Likewise, there is no evidence of a local 'Chinese Masonic Society', or 'Yee Hing', branch. The Chinese Chamber of Commerce launched a massive campaign to raise money for the victims of a Mount Kembla coal mine accident in 1902, but this was concentrated in Sydney, with little overt indication of local Chinese involvement. Moreover, the Chinese Youth League and the Chinese Seamen's Union seem to have been silent in the Wollongong

66 Donation book for KMT Headquarters (Wollongong, Yoe Wah-Gow).
67 Donation book for KMT Headquarters (Wollongong, Yoe Wah-Gow).
69 Kuo, 'Making Chinese Australia', pp. 274-327.
70 'Coal Mine Accident Donations' (賑恤礦災), Tung Wah Times, 23 August 1902; 'Newspaper Contributions' (賑助媒工), Tung Wah Times, 30 August 1902.
area. Chinese people do not appear to have been involved in more general political organisations either. Records for the local South Coast Labour Council and a number of other political groups feature no Chinese-sounding names.\textsuperscript{71} Again, Wollongong's close proximity to Sydney, combined with its small Chinese population, may have limited Chinese political activity there.

Chinese participation in church was evident in at least three local churches, where special accommodation was made for Chinese people.\textsuperscript{72} St. Michael's Anglican Church in the Wollongong town centre organised Chinese-language services. In 1907, Reverend Godson returned from missionary work in China and delivered the area's first Chinese-language sermon in the home of Chinese grocer Tommy King.\textsuperscript{73} Whilst it is unknown how much interest there was in such services, Godson lobbied to have a Chinese preacher brought over from China that year, meaning interest must have been significant.\textsuperscript{74} In 1907, Reverend Hunter of St. Michael's conducted a graveside funeral service for Ah Sow in Wollongong General Cemetery, which was translated by King for the 25 or so Chinese mourners present. Traditional offerings of fruit and paper money were included in the service: an important fusion of Eastern and Western religious practice which can only be seen through detailed, local-level research.\textsuperscript{75} The Wesleyan Church on Crown Street

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\textsuperscript{71} South Coast Labour Council, Organiser's Handbook, University of Wollongong Archives (UOWA) D169/15/1, 1928-9; Australian Meat Industry Employees' Union—NSW Branch, Minutes, UOWA D1/1/1-12, 1922-39; Clothing and Allied Trades' Union of Australia—NSW Branch, Minutes, UOWA D46/1-4, 1875-1939; Illawarra Teachers' Association, Minutes, UOWA D99/1/1, 1933-9; South Coast and Southern Tablelands Agricultural Union, Minutes, UOWA D220/1/1-2, 1908-39; Miners' Federation—Bulli Lodge, Minutes, Correspondence, Members' Register, Ledgers and Journals, UOWA D114/1-4, 1920-39; Miners' Federation—Southern District, Letter Books, Minutes, Members' Register, Earnings Books, UOWA D12/1-26, 1901-39; South Coast Labour Council, Miscellaneous Items, UOWA D169/1-15, 1928-39.

\textsuperscript{72} Fitzgerald, \textit{Red Tape Gold Scissors}, pp. 128-36.

\textsuperscript{73} 'The Searchlight', \textit{Illawarra Mercury}, 2 April 1907.

\textsuperscript{74} 'The Yellow Peril', \textit{Brisbane Courier}, 13 April 1907; 'Coloured Aliens', \textit{Morning Post}, 22 April 1907.

\textsuperscript{75} 'Death of a Chinese', \textit{Illawarra Mercury}, 19 September 1907; Wilton, \textit{Golden Threads}, p. 103.
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arranged for Chinese-language services as well. Reverend Tear Tack visited in 1900 to minister and sing hymns in Chinese. Wollongong Presbyterian Church ran a Sunday afternoon English class for local Chinese people in 1901. However, participation was slight: only three attended the first class. This stands in contrast to the popular English classes held by churches in other regional New South Wales locations such as Bathurst and Newcastle. Indeed, the degree to which Wollongong churches targeted Chinese residents was also slight relative to churches in other Australian locales. More effort seems to have been directed at missionary work in China, particularly by Wollongong’s Congregational and Wesleyan churches.

Chinese were also involved in mainstream church activities. Most of the marriages just noted were performed in Wollongong churches. Children were also often baptised there. Eight children of the Dion family, for instance, were baptised at St. Michael's Anglican Church between 1908 and 1920. As far as evidence indicates, all these services were in English. Additionally, Australia-born Edward Churchin, son of Joseph Chuchin from Xiamen, was a member of Wollongong's Catholic Hibernian Society, charged with the protection of Catholicism (see Image 4.4). A number of deceased Chinese were buried by local churches. Ah Sow's burial

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76 'Wesleyan Church', Illawarra Mercury, 19 June 1900; 'The Rev. Tear Tack', Illawarra Mercury, 23 June 1900.
77 'Presbyterian', Illawarra Mercury, 24 December 1901; 'South Coast News', Shoalhaven Telegraph, 25 December 1901.
79 'Chinese Customs and People', Illawarra Mercury, 14 June 1900; 'A Hero of the Chinese Atrocities in Wollongong', Illawarra Mercury, 22 January 1901; 'Rev. Howard Smith', Illawarra Mercury, 26 January 1901; 'Chinese Inland Mission', Illawarra Mercury, 16 June 1908; 'Lecture on China', Illawarra Mercury, 23 November 1917; 'China', Illawarra Mercury, 1 August 1919; Wollongong churches do not seem to have bothered with Chinese gardeners working on Sundays either, see 'Notice to Sunday Labourers' (禮拜日作工者注意), Tung Wah Times, 12 October 1907.
80 Significantly, there is no mention of Chinese people in the key work on local church history, that is, Stuart Piggin and Phyllis Tibbs, Faith of Steel: A History of the Christian Churches in Illawarra, Australia, University of Wollongong Press, Wollongong, 1984.
81 St. Michael's Anglican Church, Register of Baptisms, 1908-20.
82 Wollongong Hibernian Society, 1920s, WCL Image Collection, P20/P20130; also note the
was in the traditional Chinese style, fused with Christianity, but others were conducted under seemingly unremarkable circumstances. There were two such burials in the Roman Catholic section of Wollongong General Cemetery and seven in the Anglican section between 1901 and 1939.\textsuperscript{83} Seven Chinese were also buried in regular services within the grounds of St. Luke's Anglican Church at Dapto.\textsuperscript{84} It may have been that 'white' wives had a large role in Chinese church participation, as Michael Williams and others have suggested.\textsuperscript{85} Still, their influence was not the only factor. Neither Thomas Dion nor George Say Ying had such wives, yet both still chose to have their children baptised at St. Michael's Anglican Church.\textsuperscript{86}
There were links between Chinese people in Wollongong and Chinese churches in Sydney. Grocer Yun Hop's (元合) immigration file contains a letter written by Anglican minister Soo Hoo Ten of 286 Elizabeth Street, Sydney. Ten wrote in 1907: 'I have known Mr. Yun Hop for over 10 years'. While not definitive proof of Yun Hop's attendance at Ten's Chinese church, this note suggests it was likely: such a long association would have been unlikely otherwise. Significantly, a number of other local Chinese were recorded as Anglicans, but they left no record of having attended church in Wollongong. Gardener and cabinetmaker Charlie Ah Woy was buried an Anglican, but there are no other traces of him in local church records. Gee Gong, Sun Lee Chong, Young Kong War, George Kee Chong and Wong Gee were also listed as Anglicans gaol entrance records but again without corresponding evidence of church attendance in Wollongong. There is a strong chance that they, much like Yun Hop, had links to Chinese churches in Sydney.

According to Gordon Grimwade, there is evidence of more than 100 Chinese temples in different parts of Australia, yet there is no evidence of a temple in Wollongong. A few local Chinese 'pagans' and Buddhists were listed in the 1921 census, meaning there may have been shrines to Chinese deities in homes and business premises, but this is purely speculative. Once more, Wollongong's small Chinese population and close proximity to Sydney—with Guandi temples at Alexandria and Glebe—probably minimised both the need and demand for local Chinese temples. Christianity, Anglicanism in particular, seems to have held sway.

88 Letter from George Soo Hoo Ten, 4 March 1907, Yun Hop Immigration File, NAA SP42/1 C1923/4176.
89 Booth and Nunan, Wollongong General Cemetery, p. 395.
90 Wollongong Gaol Entrance Records, 1899-1915, WCLA R994.46 ARC Reel 2379.
92 Census of the Commonwealth of Australia, 1921, Bulli Shire, p. 627.
over local Chinese people. This was seldom the case in places with larger Chinese populations, where Christian churchgoing was limited to successful elites and worshipping at temples was the domain of the lower classes.\textsuperscript{93}

Wollongong's Chinese often celebrated traditional festivals. Martin Quilty remembered fireworks being let off for Chinese New Year at the Chinese market gardens on western Crown Street near the Wollongong town centre at the turn of the 20th century.\textsuperscript{94} Jack Devitt also recalled the gardeners on George and Sam Wong's market garden at Bulli organising parties for Chinese New Year, complete with Chinese-style stir-fried duck and Australian 'grog' supplied by a Chinese cook at Bulli pub.\textsuperscript{95} Furthermore, there were regular Chinese fireworks displays held at the Wollongong Show Ground for Chinese New Year during the 1930s.\textsuperscript{96} There is no clear evidence of Chinese celebrating other festivals locally, such as the Qingming (清明节) festival to honour the dead.

\textit{Friendly Competition}

Competition was another way Chinese people came together—and interacted with the wider community—in early 20th-century Australia. Chinese gambling houses were perhaps the most obvious places where Chinese competed, socialised and

\textsuperscript{94} Martin Quilty in Organ and Doyle (eds.), \textit{Old Pioneers' Reminiscences of Illawarra, 1830s-1920s}, p. 123.
\textsuperscript{95} Devitt, 'Reminiscences of Jack Devitt', pp. 118-9.
enjoyed themselves and interacted with non-Chinese people.\textsuperscript{97} Sport was also a means by which Chinese people interacted with each other and with non-Chinese. Rob Hess and Julia Martínez, to take two examples, quite recently examined unexplored Chinese participation in Australian Rules football in Victoria and Darwin.\textsuperscript{98} Sophie Couchman similarly looked at Chinese involvement in cycling and Gary Osmond looked at Chinese swimmer Kwok Chun Hang.\textsuperscript{99} Also worthy of attention is the participation of Chinese people in agricultural shows and business competitions around Australia, but this has barely been examined. Such contests involved interaction between Chinese people yet were primarily forums for interaction between Chinese and 'whites'.

Some Chinese people in the Wollongong area gambled. When questioned about his gambling habits at Chew Hoan's bankruptcy hearing in 1910, market gardener Duck Lee confessed: 'I did gamble sometimes'. Judging by his evasiveness in court on the subject, his weakness for gambling was considerable.\textsuperscript{100} However, details of the local gambling scene are sketchy. Choy War for one organised gambling in a back room of his refreshment rooms. According to testimony by Thomas Marshall in 1908, the games played there were small. Three or four Chinese people played at a time, though it is unknown which games were on offer.\textsuperscript{101} Fan tan

\textsuperscript{98} Rob Hess, "'A Death Blow to the White Australia Policy': Australian Rules Football and Chinese Communities in Victoria, 1892-1908", in Couchman, Fitzgerald and Macgregor (eds.), \textit{After the Rush}, pp. 89-106; Martínez, 'Separatism and Solidarity'.
\textsuperscript{100} Testimony of Duck Lee, Chew Hoan Bankruptcy File, p. 62.
\textsuperscript{101} 'Wollongong Police Court', \textit{South Coast Times}, 5 September 1908.
may have been one, if a 1904 claim by gardener Tommy Ah Moy (亞梅) is any indication. He said: 'I never gamble or play fan tan'.102 Perhaps he never played, but his words suggest he knew others who did. Chinese gambling—'with cards and chips'—also took place on Chinese gardens on western Crown Street, as Martin Quilty remembered.103 Chinese gambling took place at Wollongong hotels in the 1920s as well. The Commercial Hotel, for example, boasted of having one of the only authentic set of Mah Jong rules in Australia, but it is unknown to what extent Chinese people were involved in the games.104 Chinese cooks worked in local hotels, so there may have been Chinese involvement.105

Chinese in Wollongong also took part in agricultural contests. During the 19th century, Chinese entrants in these contests were few to none. In 1887, there was 'not a Chinaman exhibitor in the crowd' of entrants at the Wollongong Agricultural Show.106 Thereafter, however, Chinese people became regular entrants. Members of the Chie family were active in both the Wollongong and Dapto Agricultural Shows. James Chie and his daughter Mellitta were even members of the organising committee for the Dapto Agricultural Show.107 At least four Chinese market gardeners were agricultural show competitors as well. Charlie Ching Won, Sam Lee, Wong Gee, Joe War and Yee War often entered their produce in the relevant sections of the Wollongong Agricultural Show. Charlie Ching Won won prizes for three years, as did Sam Lee for seven years, Wong Gee for seven years and Joe War and Yee War

102 Testimony of Tommy Ah Moy, Charlie Ching Won and Jimmy Mann Hong Bankruptcy File, p. 67.
103 Quilty in Organ and Doyle (eds.), Old Pioneers' Reminiscences of Illawarra, 1830s-1920s, p. 123.
104 'Mah-Johng', Illawarra Mercury, 25 July 1924.
107 'Dapto Show', Illawarra Mercury, 20 January 1939.
for a year each, all prior to 1912. After 1912, only Andrew Tansey, son of John Tanzi from Xiamen, won prizes. Moreover, given that up to 50 Chinese market gardens operated locally between 1901 and 1939, the number of gardeners who won prizes there—just four—seems small.

Memories of sport in the suburbs of Port Kembla, Balgownie, Fairy Meadow, Dapto, Berkeley, Bulli and the Wollongong town centre itself make no mention of Chinese people. Further, in all the local sporting results published in the *Sydney Morning Herald* from 1901 to 1939, taken from local newspapers, only two Chinese featured: David Chie and Andrew Tansey. Chie was involved in coursing, or dog racing, and a member of the sport's local governing body; Tansey was a champion shooter. Three grandsons of John Chi from Xiamen—the sons of dairy farmer James Chie—played Rugby League in the 1920s. However, it is important to recognise their disconnection from Chinese culture: they had a 'white' mother and grandmother and were born and raised in the local area. It appears that Chinese people in Wollongong abstained from sport, or at least ostensibly so, perhaps by virtue of a traditional Chinese emphasis on scholar or *wen* masculinity, even though

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108 'Wollongong Agricultural Show', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1897-1912.
111 Sporting Competition Results, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 01 January 1850 – 01 January 1940.
113 Dapto Rugby League Football Club, 1920s, WCL Image Collection P14/P14903.
the KMT actively encouraged participation in sport.114

Nevertheless, the Chinese national soccer team came to Wollongong in the 1920s. This was the first team modern China had ever sent to an English-speaking country and it played locally for the first time in September 1923 against a local team. 10,000 spectators came to the Wollongong Showground to see the match, including what was almost certainly the majority of Wollongong's Chinese population. Also present was a party of Chinese businessmen from Sydney, who arrived by plane, and a party of Chinese dignitaries. The Illawarra Mercury praised the Chinese players 'clean methods' of play.115 The Tung Wah Times reported that the Chinese players wore black armbands to commemorate the victims of a local coalmining accident and that the match was positive for race relations in Wollongong.116 The match ended in a draw.117 The Chinese team returned in November 1923 for another match, and then again in 1927.118 Nick Guoth argued that the Chinese soccer tour of 1923 challenged racist dogma wherever it went in ‘White Australia’; this seems to have been the case in Wollongong.119 One Chinese player said in 1928, though, after playing soccer in Australia: 'they think we are all opium users...our rank in their society is very low'.120

115 'Soccer', Illawarra Mercury, 7 September 1923.
116 'Chinese Soccer Team' (中國足球隊之將至), Tung Wah Times, 4 August 1923; 'Soccer Team' (賽球兩記), Tung Wah Times, 8 September 1923.
117 'Country Matches', Sydney Morning Herald, 3 September 1923; 'Soccer', The Illawarra Mercury, 7 September 1923.
118 'Soccer', Illawarra Mercury, 2 November 1923; 'Chinese Beaten at Wollongong', Sydney Morning Herald, 1 August 1927.
Another key part of Chinese community life in Australia was the maintenance of ties with home villages in China and ultimate return there after retirement. Whilst efforts have been made to cast overseas Chinese as settled and contributing citizens of ‘white’ settler countries, particularly in the United States, most overseas Chinese were highly mobile and seldom committed themselves to their host countries in the long term. Their families expected them to make money overseas, send it back and then finally 'return home with glory'. This notion of ultimate return to China is illustrated by a Chinese saying, that is, that a successful individual away from their home village is 'like a finely-dressed person walking in the dark'. Of course, many Chinese people did stay in Australia, by design or as a consequence of their 'sojourn' having gone awry. In some cases, they even severed ties with their old homes in China and made new homes in Australia.

Chinese people in Wollongong occasionally visited their home villages in China. About 25 of them made at least one return trip there between 1901 and 1939, as shown by immigration files. Businessmen Joe Kue, Low Cor and Goon Jack appear to have visited China five times each over this period, staying two or three years each time before returning to Wollongong. Grocer Yun Hop made four return trips back to China, gardener Gee Sin made three, gardener Tommy Quan Lock

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121 Williams, 'Destination Qiaoxiang', pp. 8-9.
122 Williams, 'Destination Qiaoxiang', p. 147.
123 John Francis Davis, cited in Valerie Lovejoy, 'Chinese in Late Nineteenth-Century Bendigo: Their Local and Translocal Lives in ”This Stranger's Country”', *Australian Historical Studies*, 42:1, 2011, p. 54.
124 Williams, 'Destination Qiaoxiang', pp. 165-90.
125 Joe Kue Immigration File; Low Cor Immigration Files, NAA ST84/1 1915/168/31-40; 1930/475/61-70; 1934/510/71-80; 1941/563/71-80; SP42/2 C1933/2307; Goon Jack Immigration Files, NAA ST84/1 1929/454/71-80; SP244/2 N1950/2/7800.
These men also remained in China for a few years each time they went. Other Chinese in Wollongong for whom immigration files exist, including George Young Song (應生), Pak Chung, Tommy King (梁景) and Tommy Tinn, seem to have made just a single return trip to their home villages, also each staying for periods of a few years.127

A handful of Chinese people stayed in Wollongong without intermission, only going back to China after retirement. Gardener Charlie Ching Won was one such person. He said in court in 1904: 'I have not been in China for about 20 years.'128 At some point after his wife Catherine died, however, he probably returned there permanently: there is no record of him in Wollongong or anywhere else after 1908 and, as already noted, his daughter Amelia was married locally in 1922. Gardener Sam Lee went back to China in 1907 as well, after at least 10 uninterrupted years in Wollongong, and he took his 'white' wife Sarah with him. Successful and apparently single gardeners like Sun Hung Wah and Sam Lee also returned to China in retirement, but they left no evidence of having returned there periodically prior to their ultimate return. Additionally, Joe Wah Gow, while he did visit China at least once around 1920, eventually retired with his family to Long Tou Wan, Longdu, Zhongshan/Xiangshan, Guangdong, in 1929 (see Image 4.7).129

126 Yun Hop Immigration File; Gee Sin Immigration Files, ST84/1 1916/195/91-100; 1930/474/11-20; 1940/557/11-20; Tommy Quan Lock Immigration File, NAA SP42/1 C1930/2401; Charlie Ah Woy Immigration Files, ST84/1 1914/150/51-60; 1919/248/21-30.
127 George Young Song Immigration File, NAA SP42/1 C1903/2995, Ah Yin Pak Chung and Pak Chung Immigration Files, ST84/1 1919/251/1-10; SP42/1 C1928/12477; Tommy King Immigration File, NAA SP42/1 C1913/2885; Tommy Tinn Immigration File, NAA ST84/1 1911/73/1-10.
128 Testimony by Charlie Ching Won, Charlie Ching Won and Jimmy Mann Hong Bankruptcy File, p. 73.
129 Immigration files are lacking, but Joe Wah Gow returned from China in 1921, see 'The Searchlight', Illawarra Mercury, 1 July 1921; see also Joe and Ida Wah Gow Immigration Files, NAA ST84/1 1929/470/91-100.
After returning to China 'with glory', some Chinese people subsequently left and came back to Wollongong again. Joe Wah Gow said that he 'foresaw no future for the boys in the village'. As such, he planned to send them back to Australia, but was unsuccessful because of the Japanese invasion of China in the 1930s. Victor and Arthur Gow made their way back to Wollongong during World War Two. Draper Goon Jack also returned to China in 1940, but the foundation of the People's Republic of China in 1950 brought him back to Wollongong again. Similarly, Sydney's James Ung Quay returned to China with his family in 1902; however, his Australia-born sons Peter and Charles Ung Quay came back to Australia and went into business with Joe Wah Gow in Wollongong 10 years later. Sadly, the fate of Sam Lee's Australia-born family in China is unknown. It is probable, though, that his

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130 Williams, 'Destination Qiaoxiang', p. 105.
131 Williams, 'Destination Qiaoxiang', p. 188
132 Williams, 'Destination Qiaoxiang', p. 188; letter from Garry Gow, 13 March 1990.
133 Goon Jack Immigration File, NAA SP244/2 N1950/2/7800.
134 Peter Ung Quay Immigration File, SP244/2 N1950/2/10175.
wife Sarah experienced hardship in her husband's village. As with other wives of Chinese men, perhaps this was enough to drive her back to Australia, either with or without her children.\textsuperscript{135}

Few Chinese people in Wollongong simply severed links with their home villages in China. Farmer John Chi died locally in 1908 without ever having returned to Xiamen.\textsuperscript{136} After arriving in Wollongong in 1907, Thomas Dion never returned to his home village of Shatou, Zengcheng, Guangdong (沙頭，增邑), either.\textsuperscript{137} His Australia-born children lost touch with their relatives and the Dion family has no contact with relatives in China today.\textsuperscript{138} However, apart from these exceptions, most Chinese people in Wollongong kept in touch, with the idea of 'going home' usually central to their experiences in Australia.

\textit{Conclusion}

Chinese community life in Wollongong between 1901 and 1939 was significant for its local nuances. Certain Chinese men built families with non-Chinese women, but those with more financial resources preferred Chinese women. At least four Chinese women also married 'white' men. Still, as in other locales under the White Australia policy, most Chinese were single men in Australia. The Chinese Nationalist Party was active locally during the 1920s, but it appears to have been too small to function as anything more than a kind of fraternal organisation for members of the Zhou, Liu

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135 Kate Bagnall, 'Crossing Oceans and Cultures', in David Walker and Agnieszka Sobocinska (eds.), \textit{Australia's Asia: From Yellow Peril to Asian Century}, University of Western Australia Publishing, Crawley, 2012, pp. 121-44; Williams, 'Destination Qiaoxiang', pp. 166-7.
138 Personal correspondence with Les Dion, November 2012.
\end{flushright}
and related clans from Longdu, Zhongshan, Guangdong. KMT members probably spent much of their political lives in nearby Sydney. Chinese churches did not operate in Wollongong, yet local Chinese people were active in local churches and involved in Sydney's Chinese churches. There were no Chinese temples in the Wollongong area. In terms of friendly competition, local Chinese people gambled and participated in agricultural shows, but all except two of them avoided sport, despite several visits of the Chinese soccer team in the 1920s. As with overseas Chinese elsewhere, maintaining ties with home villages in China was also deemed important by local Chinese and a few returned to China 'with glory'.
Chinese have often been seen as victims of official racism, or as what Kathryn Cronin called 'casualties' of Australian governments. Chinese people have also been regarded as passive in their dealings with officials, 'minding their own business', like Sydney cabinetmaker Lee Toy. These views, as Jennifer Cushman argued, have arisen from a traditional focus on the White Australia policy to the neglect of Chinese people in Australia 'on their own terms'. In recent years, however, a greater degree of Chinese agency in relation to government and the law has been observed. John Fitzgerald in particular showed that the historical portrayal of Chinese people as little more than victims of government policy is a product of Eurocentric historical perspectives: part of Australian history's so-called 'big white lie'.

This chapter explores Chinese engagement with government and the law in Wollongong between 1901 and 1939. I consider how local Chinese people dealt with the Commonwealth and New South Wales State governments, as well as the four local governments of the Wollongong area. I also look at Chinese experiences of the criminal justice system locally.

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Meeting Federal Requirements

All overseas and Australia-born Chinese in early 20th-century Australia needed to meet requirements associated with the White Australia policy. Made up of various pieces of Federal legislation designed to encourage ‘white’ racial homogeneity, the policy was in full force from 1901 to 1958. Its key constituent element was the *Immigration Restriction Act* of 1901, which made it practically impossible for most Chinese and other non-‘whites’ to come to Australia. The 50-word Dictation Test, a test administered in any European language, was its cornerstone. The Act was not a blanket ban on non-‘whites’: exceptions were sometimes made for merchants, tourists, students, wives and even workers. There were other pieces of legislation which placed excessive demands on Chinese people and other perceived undesirables. For example, they were denied the right to receive newborn baby payments and old age pensions. Chinese in Darwin also had to contend with restrictions regarding employment in certain industries. Negotiating all these legislative obstacles often proved frustrating and embarrassing, like wearing a ‘double yoke of national ignominy and dishonour’, according to Reverend Cheong Cheok Hong.

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9 Yong Chingfatt, *The New Gold Mountain: The Chinese in Australia, 1901-1921*, Raphael Arts,
If the Chinese residents of Wollongong wanted to go overseas and return, they needed to comply with Commonwealth travel restrictions, namely by having 'Certificates Exempting from Dictation Test' (CEDTs, or Certificates of Domicile before 1905). Without these, they would have almost certainly been denied re-entry to Australia. Over the period in question, at least 25 local Chinese were issued with CEDTs by New South Wales Customs, though more would have been issued which did not survive or which cannot be linked to Wollongong. To get an exemption certificate, each person needed to satisfy the time-consuming and demeaning requirements of providing character references, photographs and palm prints. CEDTs were not necessarily granted. Local market gardener Paul Jack Long, for example, was denied in 1921 because police alleged he was 'a scoundrel in the highest degree'. Aware of the prospect of not being able to return without one, local gardener Pak Chung (伯祥) twice applied for extensions of his CEDT from China in 1927 and 1928 after a longer-than-expected stay. Wollongong mixed businessman Joe Kue (周橋) also experienced difficulty. Kue was forced to wait in China for two years for his re-admission application to be processed after he left Australia without a CEDT in 1931 to, in his own words, 'care for my sick wife'. This system, as Sydney merchant Ping Nam declared in 1909, placed Chinese people 'on the level of thieves and common criminals'.

Adelaide, 1977, p. 15.
11 Paul Jack Long Immigration File, National Archives of Australia (NAA) SP42/1 1921/9986.
12 Correspondence between Norman Pak Chung and W. H. Barkley, Collector of Customs NSW, 8 September 1927 – 25 January 1929, Pak Chung Immigration File, NAA SP42/1 C1928/12447.
13 Correspondence between Onyik Lee and Co. and Geo. F. A. Mitchell, Collector of Customs NSW, 20 June 1931 – 26 September 1933, Joe Kue Immigration File, NAA SP42/1 C1933/6938.
Australia-born Chinese in Wollongong also had to comply with Federal travel restrictions. If they left Australia, they had to register their birth certificate details, and then show their birth certificates and passports to Customs officials on re-entry. This was more than the simple showing of passports required of ‘whites’. Wollongong grocer Arthur Kee Chong (其章), born on the New South Wales South Coast and listed as a 'half-caste' on the Customs register of birth certificates, went

15 Pak Chung Immigration File, ST84/1 1919/251/1-10.
through this twice: in 1901 and 1908.\textsuperscript{16} The birth certificates of mixed businessman Joe Wah Gow’s (周華久) five local-born children were similarly registered with New South Wales Customs before they left for China in 1929, which were later needed when several of them decided to return to Australia.\textsuperscript{17} Following procedure was no guarantee of seamless re-entry. Australia-born Charles Ung Quay (劉衍慶), business partner of Joe Wah Gow, was detained in Sydney on his return from Hong Kong in 1924 so his identity could be established to the satisfaction of Customs officers, even though he had his passport, birth certificate \textit{and} had registered his birth certificate details prior to departure.\textsuperscript{18} His detention may have been due to what Andrew Markus called ‘the tyrannies of petty officialdom’, or arbitrary persecution, often experienced by Chinese people at the hands of New South Wales Customs officers in Sydney.\textsuperscript{19} Given the often esteemed place of all these Chinese people in Wollongong, the potential for a marked contrast between lived experiences of the White Australia policy at the local and national levels is apparent.

Having family members or colleagues join them from China seems to have been impossible for most Chinese people in Wollongong. In theory, the \textit{Immigration Restriction Act} allowed for temporary and substitute workers to enter Australia. However, all applications of this kind made by Wollongong’s Chinese were rejected. In 1921, ailing Helensburgh gardener and grocer Sam Hop (叄合) sought approval for his son to enter Australia. He wrote: ‘I am growing old, and need my boy, Young Sam, to be with me to assist me…and later, when I am unable to work any longer, to

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  \item \textsuperscript{16} Miscellaneous documents, featuring Arthur Kee Chong, NAA SP11/28 B1924/3564; Customs NSW Register of Birth Certificates, 1902-62, NAA SP726/2, p. 40.
  \item \textsuperscript{17} Customs NSW Register of Birth Certificates, 1902-62, p. 245.
  \item \textsuperscript{18} Peter Ung Quay Immigration File, NAA SP244/2 N1950/2/10175.
  \item \textsuperscript{19} Andrew Markus, ‘Reflections on the Administration of the "White Australia" Immigration Policy’, in Couchman, Fitzgerald and Macgregor (eds.), \textit{After the Rush}, p. 54.
\end{itemize}
take over the management of the business himself.\textsuperscript{20} Hop was refused, despite assistance from a local schoolmaster and an alderman in compiling his application.\textsuperscript{21} He even had to sell his operation to George Sang in 1927 when he finally became too old to continue.\textsuperscript{22} Similarly, businessman Low Cor was denied permission to bring his cousin, Gum Chong, over from China in 1929. The purpose of his visit, said Cor, was for him to 'gain a practical Western business knowledge' with Joe Wah Gow and Co., but this reason was also deemed unsatisfactory by officials.\textsuperscript{23} Meanwhile, several hundred similar applications for temporary or substitute workers were lodged and approved around Australia.\textsuperscript{24}

The threat of deportation was quite real for any unauthorised Chinese people in Wollongong. In 1908, what the \textit{Sydney Morning Herald} described as a 'cunning Celestial' deserted from a ship anchored just off Port Kembla. After nine days and the promise of a £10 reward from the ship's captain, who faced a potential £100 fine, the deserter was apprehended and deported.\textsuperscript{25} Wollongong's Chinese faced harassment from police in the effort to catch this ‘cunning Celestial’: police scoured the area's Chinese market gardens before he was found in a garden at Dapto.\textsuperscript{26} In 1916, another Chinese man, Lan Fook, was arrested in Wollongong, alleged to have been a deserter from a ship in Sydney, and was likewise deported.\textsuperscript{27} In 1919, Customs officials went

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{20} Correspondence between Sam Hop and W. H. Barkley, Collector of Customs NSW, 28 November 1921 – 14 March 1922, Sam Hop Immigration File, NAA SP42/1 C1922/1836.
\item \textsuperscript{21} Sam Hop Immigration File.
\item \textsuperscript{22} \textit{Sands Business Directory}, 1928, p. 181A.
\item \textsuperscript{23} Correspondence between Low Cor and F. J. Quinlan, Department of Home Affairs, 4 September 1929 – 28 October 1929, Low Cor Immigration File, NAA SP42/1 C1929/8020.
\item \textsuperscript{25} 'Cunning Celestial', \textit{Sydney Morning Herald}, 16 January 1908.
\item \textsuperscript{26} 'Week by Week', \textit{South Coast Times}, 25 January 1908.
\item \textsuperscript{27} 'The Searchlight', \textit{Illawarra Mercury}, 9 June 1916; 'Wollongong Court', \textit{South Coast Times}, 16 June 1916.
\end{itemize}
to extreme lengths to ensure 81 Chinese on a ship berthed at Port Kembla were transferred onto another ship back to China. The other ship was waiting in Sydney, so a special train was organised to take them there but not before each man’s fingerprints and other details were taken in what became a large-scale, tightly-controlled local deportation exercise.  

After 1938, local Chinese people were also subject to Commonwealth wartime security regulations and, like all ‘aliens’ in Australia regardless of nationality, had to complete registration forms. Grocer John Loo, who had originally arrived in Australia in 1894, had to register as an ‘alien’ in 1939, which required that he have his fingerprints and photograph taken in a process not unlike a CEDT application. When he wished to relocate from Port Kembla to Sydney in 1945, he could not do so freely because of the 1939 wartime restrictions: he had to seek permission from police in both Port Kembla and Sydney before moving. The 81-year-old cabinetmaker Charlie Ah Woy also had to register as an ‘alien’ in 1939, but did not do so until 1942. At the time of his registration, judging by his appearance, he was far too feeble to have constituted any threat to national security (see Image 5.2). Local police did have discretionary powers regarding the enforcement of wartime regulations, though. Whilst they did photograph Charlie Ah Woy, they considered it inappropriate to take his fingerprints because of what they called his ‘frail’ physical condition. Again, the potential for difference between lived experiences of the White Australia policy at different levels is apparent.

29 Alien Registration Form for John Loo, 11 October 1939, John Loo Alien Registration File, NAA SP11/2 CHINESEE/LOO QUINYUEN.
30 Notice of Change of Abode for John Loo, 21 September 1945, John Loo Alien Registration File.
31 Alien Registration Form for Charlie Ahmoy, 5 August 1942, Charlie Ahmoy Alien Registration File, NAA SP1732/4 AHMOY, CHARLIE.
Chinese experiences in meeting Commonwealth requirements in Wollongong do not appear to have improved over time. Chinese people had to contend with travel restrictions and limitations placed on visas for family members and colleagues without letup over the whole period from 1901 and 1939. Even as late as 1948, Low Cor was refused permission to bring his son Bow Chee and daughter-in-law Sook Young over from China to 'assist him in business' during his old age. At the implementation of wartime security regulations in World War Two, the demands placed on local Chinese people by the Commonwealth reached their peak. There seem to have been none of what Paul Jones referred to as 'cracks in the armour' of the White Australia policy in Wollongong.

32 Alien Registration Form for Charlie Ahmoy.
33 Correspondence between Low Cor and T. H. E. Heyes, Department of Immigration, 25 November 1947 – 4 May 1948, Low Cor Immigration File.
In some respects, the experiences of Chinese people in Wollongong were more favourable than experiences elsewhere. In Cairns and surrounding areas, for instance, numerous Chinese agriculturalists were forcibly displaced after World War One as part of the Soldiers’ Resettlement Scheme.\(^\text{35}\) In Darwin as well, which was administered directly by the Federal Government, Chinese people had to abandon certain occupations like stevedoring after 1911.\(^\text{36}\) Nothing like this was seen in Wollongong, not even with local Member of Parliament George Fuller serving as Minister for Home Affairs—responsible for the administration of the *Immigration Restriction Act*—in 1909 and 1910.\(^\text{37}\) It is likely that their small numbers allowed them to escape the notice of the White Australia policy's most vocal proponents.

**Resisting the Commonwealth**

Attempting to resist Commonwealth legislators was difficult for Chinese people living in Australia during the years of the White Australia policy. Official avenues through which they might have pursued grievances regarding the *Immigration Restriction Act* and other discriminatory laws were few. Largely neglected by Chinese governments, letters and petitions to the Australian government were often their only recourse.\(^\text{38}\) Still, these protests amounted to little more than ‘forlorn appeal(s) of the subdued’, as described by Yuan Chungming.\(^\text{39}\) Although the deportation of long-term Chinese residents was illegal, the White Australia policy

was usually regarded as 'gospel' in Federal politics, with the aim of reducing Australia's Chinese population to zero over time.\textsuperscript{40} As such, the prospect of effectively challenging the Commonwealth through appeals and petitions was remote. Indeed, Alison Broinowski noted many cases of Chinese people petitioning governments over racist legislation but that these seldom met with success.\textsuperscript{41}

In the first decades of the 20th century, some of Wollongong's Chinese relied on local Christians to speak out on their behalf against Federal anti-Chinese discrimination. With the visit of the Anglican Archbishop from Sydney in 1906, members of St. Michael's Anglican Church council publicly affirmed their commitment to the 'brotherhood of man', irrespective of skin colour.\textsuperscript{42} Chinese-speaking former missionary Reverend Godson denounced the White Australia policy from the pulpit at St. Michael's in 1907, alleging it was 'not Christian'. The controversy arose after Godson's application to bring in a Chinese minister from China was rejected.\textsuperscript{43} Additionally, in 1912, women from St. Michael's Women's Guild ran an 'All Nations Fair' at the Wollongong Town Hall, where Chinese culture was strongly represented with costumes and decorations.\textsuperscript{44} The local Congregational Church was involved in missionary work in China, which may have generated pro-Chinese, anti-racist feeling among church-goers.\textsuperscript{45} Indeed, churches around Australia

\textsuperscript{40} 'Mr. Hughes', \textit{Sydney Morning Herald}, 24 July 1922; Markus, 'Government Control of Chinese Migration to Australia, 1855-1975', pp. 72-4.
\textsuperscript{42} St. Michael's Anglican Cathedral Minute Book, WCLA, 1906.
\textsuperscript{43} 'The Yellow Peril', \textit{Brisbane Courier}, 13 April 1907; 'Coloured Aliens', \textit{Morning Post}, 22 April 1907.
\textsuperscript{44} 'Church of England All Nations Fair', \textit{Illawarra Mercury}, 30 August 1912.
\textsuperscript{45} 'A Hero of the Chinese Atrocities in Wollongong', \textit{Illawarra Mercury}, 22 January 1901; 'Rev.
often spoke out against the mistreatment of Chinese people.\textsuperscript{46}

In efforts to confound Federal Government attempts to marginalise them, some Chinese in Wollongong championed national causes locally in the early 1900s. In 1908, Liang Xuzhao (梁序昭) backed a proposal to introduce a Commonwealth navy levy. He wrote to the editor of the Chinese-language newspaper Tung Wah Times urging other Chinese residents in Australia to support the levy as well.\textsuperscript{47}

Similarly, Joe Wah Gow got behind the national war loans scheme in 1918, with front-page Illawarra Mercury advertisements dedicated to it.\textsuperscript{48} Gow's expression of patriotism was timed to coincide with the arrival of the 'Southern Cross' army tank in Wollongong which toured the country raising awareness of the scheme.\textsuperscript{49} He ignored advice from the Tung Wah Times newspaper for Chinese in Australia to remain neutral during World War One.\textsuperscript{50} Alfred Tansey, Australia-born son of John Tanzi from Xiamen, even tried to enlist in the defence forces in 1918, but he was rejected.\textsuperscript{51}

Support like this for patriotic causes can be interpreted as an attempt to blur the ideological line drawn between 'whites' and Chinese as part of the White Australia policy. Patriotism of a similar order was seen in other locales, such as Newcastle.\textsuperscript{52}


\textsuperscript{47} 'Navy Levy Advocates (海軍捐二紀)', \textit{Tung Wah Times (東華報)}, 20 June 1908.

\textsuperscript{48} 'Help Your Country', \textit{Illawarra Mercury}, 20 September 1918 – 25 October 1918; Joe Wah Gow also had his shop decorated for Home Day in 1918, see 'The Searchlight', \textit{Illawarra Mercury}, 6 September 1918.

\textsuperscript{49} 'War Loan Tank', \textit{Illawarra Mercury}, 18 October 1918; 'Seventh War Loan', \textit{The Illawarra Mercury}, 23 August 1918.

\textsuperscript{50} 'Chinese Should Remain Neutral (敬告華僑謹守中立之態度)', \textit{Tung Wah Times}, 12 December 1914.

\textsuperscript{51} 'The Call to Arms', \textit{Illawarra Mercury}, 7 June 1918.

\textsuperscript{52} Tseen Khoo and Rodney Noonan, 'Wartime Fundraising by Chinese Australian Communities', \textit{Australian Historical Studies}, 42:1, 2011, pp. 96; Bagnall, 'Paper Trails', p. 15.
From the 1920s, with the rise of the Chinese Nationalist Party, or Kuomintang (KMT), certain Chinese in Wollongong began to align themselves with the local working class against Commonwealth powerbrokers. Joe Wah Gow headed up the small Wollongong branch of the KMT after 1920, as noted in the previous chapter. With the support of the more radical elements in the labour movement, Gow and his associates aided the radicalisation of the Chinese working class by donating money to striking workers in China (罷工人員). This ran counter to the Commonwealth Government's policy of helping the British fight such radicalisation in foreign

54 Donation Book for KMT Headquarters (Wollongong, Yoe Wah-Gow) [澳洲國民黨建築雪梨支部黨所捐一冊，民國九年(封面寫有烏龍岡阜周華九兄)], Kuomintang Australasia Archives (KMTA) A191, 1920.
55 Donation Record for Workers' Strike in China (Wollongong Branch) (華僑樂助罷工人員救國記-烏龍江區分布), KMTA A118.
concession ports such as Shanghai. Chinese people also sided with local coalminers in their 1927 boycott of a royal visit, in spite of distaste expressed for Australian coalminers in the *Tung Wah Times*. This boycott was linked to the 'Hands Off China' campaign which was launched by the New South Wales Labour Council that year in opposition to Australian and British meddling in the Chinese Civil War. Significantly, but perhaps not surprisingly, the White Australia policy was largely ignored by Wollongong's Chinese nationalists. Their approach to discrimination was in line with that of most KMT branches overseas: they worked to build a stronger China which would 'come to their rescue in time of need' rather than spend their time petitioning governments in host countries.

The 1930s saw an even closer alliance between Chinese and the local working class against the Commonwealth. Chinese traders eased the pressure on workers affected by sweeping government-sanctioned wage cuts and lay-offs during the Great Depression. Henry and Stanley Young, proprietors of Joe Wah Gow and Co. from 1929, were so generous in this respect that they went bankrupt in 1939, having extended credit to their customers 'far beyond what the business could stand'. The Dion brothers in running their bus service were also sympathetic to

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56 On British troops putting down a strike in Shanghai, see Jones, 'The View from the Edge', p. 59.
57 See, for example, 'A Strange Case of Divorce' (離婚案之奇聞), *Tung Wah Times*, 13 November 1926 on the 'drunken immorality' of Australian miners.
61 Statement of Affairs by Parsons, Anderson and Co., Accountants, Henry Percy and Stanley Herbert Young (trading as Jow Wah Gow and Co.) Bankruptcy File C, NAA SP219/1 1140; see also 'The Unemployed', *Illawarra Mercury*, 19 September 1930.
members of the local working class. They purportedly allowed none to walk during the Depression, even if they could not afford the fare.\textsuperscript{62} Both the Young and Dion brothers also contributed money to the local branch of the Miners' Federation in 1938.\textsuperscript{63}

The best-remembered local case of collaboration between Chinese people and the working class was a 1938 pro-China strike by Port Kembla waterside workers. In protest against Japanese aggression in China, they refused to load pig iron onto the Japan-bound ship \textit{Dalfram} for fear it would be used to manufacture munitions. When Prime Minister Robert Menzies (dubbed 'Pig Iron Bob' by unionists) orchestrated a lockout of these workers, Chinese in Wollongong and Sydney rallied to support their families with donations of fruit, vegetables and money, organised chiefly by Sydney Communist Fred Wong.\textsuperscript{64} A Chinese fireworks display was held at the Wollongong Showground in support of the strike.\textsuperscript{65} There was a strong anti-racist tone to all this, and the level of cooperation between Chinese and the ‘white’ working class was unprecedented elsewhere in Australia. This local-level example of cooperation disrupts the oft-presumed monolithic nature of ‘White Australia’, particularly in relation to the ‘white’ working class.\textsuperscript{66}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{62} Wayne Davis (ed.), \textit{Our Memories—Your History: An Oral History of Port Kembla}, p. 104.
\item \textsuperscript{63} 'Mines and Miners', \textit{Illawarra Mercury}, 23 September 1938.
\item \textsuperscript{65} 'Huge Chinese Fireworks Display', \textit{Illawarra Mercury}, 2 December 1938.
\item \textsuperscript{66} On the local working class see Ray Markey and Andrew Wells, 'The Labour Movement in Wollongong', in Jim Hagan and Andrew Wells (eds.), \textit{A History of Wollongong}, University of Wollongong Press, Wollongong, 1997, pp. 81-100.
\end{itemize}
Chinese people living in Australia between 1901 and 1939 also had to deal with State governments and various municipal and shire governments. These governments were often just as discriminatory as the Australian Federal Government, particularly if the *Factories and Shops Acts* of the States—intended to limit Chinese competition in industries like furniture-making—are taken into account. Even so, Chinese experiences were normally affected less by these bureaucracies, whose powers were weaker and whose agendas were narrower in scope. Chinese engagement with these low-level governments could be reciprocally congenial, and they frequently involved a high degree of Chinese assertiveness, as was sometimes the case in relation to Sydney municipal councils.\(^\text{67}\) Where State and local authorities may have been unjust, as in Perth where there was strict municipal council regulation of Chinese market gardens, this injustice was often short-lived and more readily resisted by Chinese people than its Commonwealth counterpart.\(^\text{68}\)

In Wollongong, Chinese people dealt with the New South Wales State Government in relation to hospitals and usually to the benefit of both parties. Wollongong Hospital and Bulli Hospital were both close to Chinese market gardens, and Chinese gardeners sold produce to both. Jack Devitt recalled George and Sam


Wong delivering baskets of fruit and vegetables to Bulli Hospital on carrying poles.\textsuperscript{69}

Partly in appreciation for the business, and partly to endear themselves to locals and
the New South Wales Government, Chinese people contributed money to local
hospitals regularly. In 1907, soon after it opened, they contributed £9 to Wollongong
Hospital.\textsuperscript{70} This was a significant sum: the Australian Governor General Lord
Northcote only contributed £5 at the hospital’s opening ceremony.\textsuperscript{71} Subsequent
Chinese fund-raising efforts took place in 1908, 1911, 1918 and 1921.\textsuperscript{72} Positive
relationships between Chinese and the New South Wales Government administrators
of local hospitals date back even earlier. Sydney tea merchant Quong Tart came to
town in 1885 to support a charity concert for the old Wollongong Alfred Memorial
Hospital and local Chinese Ah Uin donated money to this hospital in 1886.\textsuperscript{73}

Engagement between local Chinese and the State Government in relation to
hospitals, however, soured on at least two occasions. Wollongong Hospital's
operating committee resolved in 1912 that a 'white' gardener would be employed to
cultivate vegetables such that those of 'Johnnie Chinaman' could be taken off the
hospital menu. As far as records show, the scheme was adopted and Chinese market
gardeners were disadvantaged, but it is unclear to what extent.\textsuperscript{74} Discrimination of
this order was seen elsewhere: Darwin Municipal Council dismissed the Chinese
gardeners working in the local botanic gardens in 1911 and replaced them with

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{69} 'Wollongong Hospital', \textit{Illawarra Mercury}, 9 August 1912; Jack Devitt, ‘Reminiscences of Jack
\item \textsuperscript{70} A.P. Fleming, \textit{The Albert Memorial Hospital}, Illawarra Historical Society, Wollongong, 1964.
\item \textsuperscript{71} Fleming, \textit{The Albert Memorial Hospital}.
\item \textsuperscript{72} ‘Week by Week’, \textit{South Coast Times}, 18 April 1908; 'Donations', \textit{Illawarra Mercury}, 24 January
1911; ‘Ambulance Saturday’, \textit{Illawarra Mercury}, 25 August 1911; 'Week by Week', \textit{South Coast
Times}, 20 June 1918; 'Hospital Meetings', \textit{Illawarra Mercury}, 22 April 1921.
\item \textsuperscript{73} 'Wollongong', \textit{Australian Town and Country Journal}, 31 January 1885; 'A. M. Hospital', \textit{Illawarra
Mercury}, 15 July 1886; see also 'The Searchlight', \textit{Illawarra Mercury}, 11 May 1906.
\item \textsuperscript{74} 'Wollongong Hospital', \textit{Illawarra Mercury}, 9 August 1912.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
gardeners of majority European descent. In 1920, the State Government also forced market gardener War Hop off his garden opposite Bulli Hospital so that a new septic tank could be built. War Hop said that the first notice he had of the plan was the 'arrival of a gang of men to commence work': the men occupied two out of the three acres of land he leased. This eviction is reminiscent of one which took place a few years earlier, in 1913, under the same New South Wales State Government, when Chinese people in The Rocks were displaced to make room for wharf labourers.

Nevertheless, in the second Wollongong case, there was Chinese resistance: War Hop initiated legal action against the State Government over the Bulli Hospital incident. He hired local solicitors Russell and McLelland to seek compensation for him. After several months of correspondence between the solicitors and the Department of Works, the government offered to settle the matter out of court for £12: a year's rent for the two acres of land taken. By this time, however, War Hop had left the area and was incommunicado, though he eventually returned to Wollongong, possibly even to his £12. Despite this rather abrupt initial departure, his actions indicate that he was not reluctant to challenge State bureaucrats.

Aside from their dealings over hospitals, Wollongong's Chinese and the State Government scarcely crossed paths. There were the anti-Chinese regulations of the Factories and Shops Act, applied rigorously to Chinese cabinetmakers in Sydney.

In Wollongong, though, Charlie Ah Woy was the only Chinese cabinetmaker, so the

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75 'Northern Territory', Worker, 11 March 1911.
76 Correspondence between Messrs. Russell and McLelland and J. B. Cooper, NSW Department of Works, re War Hop, 2 February 1920 – 19 January 1921, Bulli Hospital Claim of War Hop, NSW State Archives (NSWSA), 19/9056 1321/51.
77 'Chinese Evicted', Sydney Morning Herald, 24 September 1913.
78 Correspondence between Messrs. Russell and McLelland and J. B. Cooper, NSW Department of Works, re War Hop, 2 February 1920 – 19 January 1921, Bulli Hospital Claim of War Hop; Sands Business Directory, 1926, p. 26A.
Act had little relevance, apart from perhaps discouraging him from expanding his workshop into a furniture factory. There were also two State Government initiatives launched in support of the White Australia policy which touched the Wollongong area. Premier George Fuller's 'British stock' settlement scheme was announced at the Wollongong Town Hall in 1922 and the 'Great White Train'—which toured New South Wales showcasing Australian products—arrived in 1926 and was greeted by enthusiastic crowds. However, there is no evidence that local Chinese people were affected by either initiative.

At the level of local government, Wollongong's Chinese had to negotiate health regulations, though apparently with little difficulty. These consisted mainly of rules pertaining to cleanliness and to public transport. Draper George Hong, cabinetmaker Charlie Ah Woy and market gardener Yat Kong were cited by the health inspector of Wollongong Municipality in 1912 for keeping dirty premises. George Hong was fined £1, Charlie Ah Woy £2 and Yat Kong £2. An unnamed operator of a Chinese garden in Bellambi, in North Illawarra Municipality, was also warned by a health inspector for having dirty premises in 1924. Further, the Dion bus operators dealt with all local councils, and were often fined by health inspectors for bus timetable violations. It is important to note, however, that non-Chinese people were subject to far more citations: thousands were recorded by local

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82 'North Illawarra Council', *Illawarra Mercury*, 4 April 1924.

83 Birchmeir and Dion, *The Dions—Bus Pioneers of Wollongong.*
government bureaucrats alongside only a handful of Chinese.\textsuperscript{84} Nothing like the health-related citations of Chinese gardeners in Perth and other places was seen in Wollongong. Interaction was benign in this respect, with no indication that Chinese people were considered ‘diseased and dirty’: a common theme in broader histories.\textsuperscript{85}

Infrastructure development was another point of relatively benign interaction between Chinese people and local bureaucrats. 1901, for example, market gardener Tommy King sought permission from Central Illawarra Municipal Council to expand his garden at the expense of the iconic fig tree in the suburb of Figtree. Councillors agreed and ordered the tree cut down. Only public outcry at the loss of such an icon prevented its loss.\textsuperscript{86} Also in 1901, and again in 1905, Bow On obtained permission from Wollongong Municipal Council Works Committee to expand his shop on Crown Street.\textsuperscript{87} Similarly, although not strictly an infrastructure matter, cabinetmaker Charlie Ah Woy was commissioned to carry out carpentry work in the Wollongong Town Hall in 1917.\textsuperscript{88} In contrast, gardener Thomas Dion (黃帝安) was negatively affected by an infrastructure project in North Illawarra Municipality after 1916. Apparently, a drain built by Council caused the creek next to his garden to flood, and councillors ignored his requests for assistance repeatedly.\textsuperscript{89} Still, this is the only example of local governments making life difficult for Chinese people over the entire period under consideration.

\textsuperscript{84} WMC Health Inspectors’ Reports, 1909-46.
\textsuperscript{85} Richards, ‘Chinese Market Gardening’, pp. 19-21; for Darwin local government action against Chinese residents, see Martínez, ‘Separatism and Solidarity’, pp. 103-112; for fears of contamination of whites by Chinese, see Greg Watters, ‘Contaminated by China’, in David Walker and Agnieszka Sobocinska (eds.), Australia’s Asia: From Yellow Peril to Asian Century, University of Western Australia Publishing, Crawley, 2012, p. 41.
\textsuperscript{86} ‘Week by Week’, \textit{South Coast Times}, 5 January 1901.
\textsuperscript{87} Correspondence between Bow On and Wollongong Municipal Council, WCLA, 1905.
\textsuperscript{88} ‘Wollongong Council’, \textit{Illawarra Mercury}, 29 June 1917.
There is evidence of some Chinese people in Wollongong being particularly assertive with local bureaucrats. Shopkeeper Bow On presented at the Wollongong Municipal Council clerk's office in 1901 and demanded that his application to expand his shop be attended to immediately. He even threatened 'to hold Council legally responsible for the consequences' of delay. In 1908, 14 Chinese residents asked Council for a separate Chinese section in Wollongong General Cemetery. Their request was denied because the Chinese population was deemed too small. Thomas Dion even sued North Illawarra Municipal Council in the Supreme Court of New South Wales in 1918. 'None of my vegetables were washed away or destroyed before the new drain was made', he argued in court. He lost the case, with the judge ruling that the flooding was a pre-existing problem. Still, the lawsuit shows Dion's assertiveness. In the 1920s and 1930s, his sons also quarrelled with local health inspectors over the bus company. Barney Dion taunted the Bulli Shire Council health inspector with a loud siren amid efforts to stop his Sydney bus operating within the Shire. According to the inspector, Dion, after having successfully eluded him, 'made the hills echo with the screeching of this siren which no doubt was in registration of another victory'. As was the case with the State Government, Chinese interaction with local governments was vastly different than it was with the Commonwealth. Shirley Fitzgerald noted similar Chinese assertiveness in dealing

90 Memorandum from Henry Stumbles, Council Clerk, to J. P. Galvin, Mayor, re Bow On, WCLA, 1901.
91 'Wollongong Council', Illawarra Mercury, 28 April 1908; 'Local and General News', Kiama Independent, 23 April 1908.
93 Di On v. Council of Municipality of North Illawarra in the Supreme Court of NSW, pp. 539-42.
94 Birchmeir and Dion, The Dions—Bus Pioneers of Wollongong.
with local governments in Sydney.\textsuperscript{96}

Chinese people in the Wollongong area also asked local councillors for help in meeting Federal requirements. In 1913, draper Goon Jack obtained a glowing character reference from Alderman Kirby of Wollongong Municipality for his CEDT application.\textsuperscript{97} In 1919, market gardener and grocer George Young (養門) received a similar reference from Alderman Beatson.\textsuperscript{98} Other local Chinese to receive references from councillors were George Young Song (應生), Pak Chung and Sam Hop.\textsuperscript{99} Indeed, local politicians could be useful allies in negotiating the red tape of the \textit{Immigration Restriction Act}.

\textit{Election Time}

Chinese people in early Australia had a minor role in democratic governance. The 1902 Commonwealth \textit{Franchise Act} and the 1903 \textit{Naturalisation Act} both actively discriminated against Chinese people and limited their political voice.\textsuperscript{100} According to the \textit{Franchise Act}, 'no aboriginal native of Australia, Asia, Africa or the Islands of the Pacific except New Zealand' could appear on Commonwealth or State electoral rolls.\textsuperscript{101} Federal laws on voting did not extend as far as Australia-born Chinese. Shirley Fitzgerald noted that Chinese people in Sydney were electorally active at the municipal level of government in the late 1800s.\textsuperscript{102} Additionally, John Fitzgerald

\begin{footnotes}
\item[97] Goon Jack Immigration File, NAA SP244/2 N1950/2/7800.
\item[98] George Young Immigration File, NAA SP42/1 1927/1152.
\item[99] George Young Song Immigration File, NAA SP42/1 C1903/2995; Pak Chung Immigration File; Sam Hop Immigration File.
\item[102] Fitzgerald, \textit{Red Tape Gold Scissors}, p. 98.
\end{footnotes}
observed the activism of Australian members of the KMT regarding Chinese democracy, which suggests common idealism and thus more Chinese interest in Australian democracy than might be supposed.  

In the first decade following Australian Federation, few Chinese people in Wollongong participated in Commonwealth or New South Wales State elections. The electoral roll for 1903—which served both Commonwealth and State electoral purposes—shows four Chinese-descended electors, all of whom were born and raised locally: farmers David and James Chie and William and Andrew Tansey.  

The 1908 roll shows three more such electors: Mary, John and Harry Pow. There were at least seven in total, which was unchanged in 1909. Compared to the overall number of Chinese people in Wollongong around this time, the number of electors was small. Indeed, there were perhaps 100 Chinese in the local area. The number of Chinese electors was also insignificant compared to the total number of electors living locally. In 1903, there were 9,005 eligible voters and 11,490 in 1909.  

During the 1910s and 1920s, the contribution of Wollongong's Chinese to Federal and State democracy was similarly limited. In 1913 and 1917, the electoral roll was unchanged from 1909. The 1922 roll shows one more relevant elector: labourer Ernest Christie Ching (or ‘Quinn’). On the 1925 roll, there were a few new additions, including Arthur Kee Chong, but also the disappearance of others like...
Mary Pow. Overall, there were at least 10 Chinese electors in 1925.\textsuperscript{110} The number of Chinese people in Wollongong declined over this period, which means their relative electoral presence rose.\textsuperscript{111} Nevertheless, as Wollongong's overall population grew, those Chinese eligible to vote were even further outnumbered by non-Chinese voters. There were 12,364 eligible voters in total in 1913 and 19,297 in 1925.\textsuperscript{112}

On the other hand, a sizeable portion of Wollongong's Chinese were able to vote in local government elections in the early 1900s. Electors were not limited to Australia-born Chinese, either, as voting depended on ratepayer status. In 1907, going by names, there were 18 Chinese people on the Wollongong Municipality electoral roll, three on the North Illawarra Municipality roll, eight on the Central Illawarra Municipality roll and, whilst electoral rolls for Bulli Shire have perished, there is evidence of at least two Chinese ratepayers there.\textsuperscript{113} At least 32 Chinese people were thus eligible to vote in Wollongong local government elections in 1907, which was perhaps one third of all Chinese people living locally at this time. Chinese electors were fewer than non-Chinese (there were 6,000 electors in total); still, proportionally, more Chinese were eligible to vote than ‘whites’.

Chinese had substantial individual power in early local government elections as well. As votes were allocated according to the value of rates paid, they often had several votes. Most Chinese market gardeners, like Wong Gee, Ah Moon and George Say Ying, had one vote.\textsuperscript{114} Other gardeners worked plots valuable enough in rates to

\textsuperscript{110} NSW Electoral Roll, 1925.
\textsuperscript{111} Census of the Commonwealth of Australia, 1921, NSW—Birthplaces.
\textsuperscript{112} NSW Electoral Roll, 1913, 1925.
\textsuperscript{113} WMC Municipal List, WCLA SLR352 WOL, 1907; North Illawarra Municipal Council (NIMC) Municipal List, WCLA N8/1-5, 1902-5; Central Illawarra Municipal Council (CIMC) Ward Book, WCLA C15/1-3, 1907-8; Census of NSW, 1901, District 38, Sub-district R18, p. 27 and District 40, Sub-district A, p. 6.
be allocated two votes: Sun Hung Wah had operations valued at £39 annually, which entitled him to two votes.\textsuperscript{115} Businesspeople such as Yun Hop, Tommy Tinn and Tommy King normally had two votes in local government elections.\textsuperscript{116} Dairy farmers John Chie and George Tansey also had two votes, and James Chie's dairy farm—valued at £90 annually—entitled him to three votes in Central Illawarra Municipality elections.\textsuperscript{117} Most voters in Wollongong had one vote, assuming they were even ratepayers, and usually only the landed gentry had three votes. Chinese numbers were smaller, certainly, but the individual clout of Chinese in local democracy was greater than that of non-Chinese. This has parallels to at least one Sydney case. As Shirley Fitzgerald noted, Lee Toy of Castlereagh Street had high individual voting power, with three votes in municipal elections towards the end of the 19th century.\textsuperscript{118}

Local electoral rolls from 1907 to 1924 are missing, but those for Wollongong Municipality after 1925 show much less potential for Chinese electoral participation. The 1925 roll has just three Chinese electors: Annie Dion, Joe Wah Gow and Harry Young.\textsuperscript{119} There were 18 Chinese electors in Wollongong Municipality in 1907, meaning there was a dramatic decline. The electoral rolls for 1928 and 1937 reveal a similar picture, that is, the involvement of no more than five Chinese in the local democratic system.\textsuperscript{120} The voting power of individual Chinese electors had also decreased by 1925. Electoral rolls for this and subsequent years show that there was an overhaul of the voting system, whereby more rates paid did not translate into more

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[115] WMC Municipal List, 1904-5, West Ward, p. 3.
\item[116] [Yun Hop] WMC Municipal List, 1904-5, West Ward, p. 3; [Tommy Tinn] 1905-6, North Ward, p. 14; [Tommy King] 1905-6, East Ward, p. 6.
\item[117] CIMC Ward Book, 1907-8 p. C.
\item[119] WMC List of Electors, WCLA SLR352 WOL, 1925.
\item[120] WMC List of Electors, 1928-37.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
votes. As such, while Joe Wah Gow was a significant ratepayer, he had no more electoral clout than anybody else. Further, Annie Dion had an impressive real estate portfolio in 1939, but she had no more power in local democracy than her poor ‘white’ neighbours.

By 1939, more Chinese in Wollongong were eligible to vote for Commonwealth and State representatives, though the number remained small. James Chie, David Chie, Andrew Tansey and William Tansey were all still enrolled in 1939. Six members of the Dion family, all of whom were born in Australia, were also added to the roll in 1939. Likewise, Australia-born Henry and Stanley Young—proprietors of Joe Wah Gow and Co. after 1929—were added to the 1939 roll. Consequently, there were at least 12 people of Chinese descent in the Wollongong area who were eligible to vote in Commonwealth and State elections. The proportion of local Chinese electors to Chinese residents was probably quite high but again related to a decline in the total Chinese population of Wollongong. Taken together with all the other electors, these 12 were powerless: there were 34,080 people in total on the electoral roll in Wollongong in 1939.

Federal legislation on voting eligibility can account for the meagre Chinese showing on Commonwealth and State rolls to a certain extent, but there was also voluntary non-participation. As per the aforementioned Acts, not only were most Chinese prevented from voting, but at least one local voter—dairy farmer John Chie

121 WMC List of Electors, 1928-37; NIMC Rate Books, WCLA N14/1-46, 1908-9 and onwards stop listing occupiers.
122 WMC List of Electors, 1925; Report of Joe Wah Gow's annual turnover by Sergeant M. Cahill, Wollongong Police, Low Cor Immigration File.
123 Annie Dion Deceased Estate File, NSWSA Probate Packet 4/364406.
124 NSW Electoral Roll, 1939.
125 NSW Electoral Roll, 1939.
126 Census of the Commonwealth of Australia, 1933, NSW—Birthplaces; NSW Alien Returns, 1939, NAA SP11/25.
127 NSW Electoral Roll, 1939.
from Xiamen, who was naturalised—was even taken off the roll in 1903. Formerly, he was on it continuously from 1876.128 All Australia-born Chinese were permitted to enrol, but several in Wollongong simply did not. Among these were businessmen Peter and Charles Ung Quay (劉衍苗，劉衍慶), who were never on electoral rolls, despite the fact that they were prominent citizens and had embraced Western culture, at least judging by Peter's appearance (see Image 5.4). Similarly, members of the Dion family did not enrol prior to 1939, even though some family members would have been eligible to do so in the 1920s. George Kee Chong did not enrol either, unlike his brother Arthur Kee Chong.129 There are indications here of what Arthur Huck called 'political detachment', observed among Melbourne's Chinese in the 1950s.130 Similar detachment among Australia-born Chinese in Wollongong before 1939 could have been possible. The electoral marginalisation of so many Chinese-born locals may have constrained their enthusiasm for Australian democracy.

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128 NSW Electoral Roll, 1876-1899.
129 NSW Register of Births, 19156/1885; NSW Register of Marriages, 3514/1915.
As was seen with Federal and State elections, some local Chinese, whilst they were entitled to do so, did not enrol to vote in local elections. In the early 1900s, because voting eligibility was dependent on paying rates, ratepayers were automatically listed on electoral rolls when they paid. As such, Chinese were always there. Thereafter, this was not the case. Electoral enrolment did not automatically follow on from paying rates: it required voters to enrol actively. Joe Wah Gow was on the Wollongong Municipality electoral roll in 1925, but he did not enrol in 1928, even though he was still in town until 1929. Cabinetmaker Charlie Ah Woy was always a Wollongong Municipality elector before 1907 but never one after 1925,

131 Peter Ung Quay Immigration File.
132 WMC List of Electors, 1925, 1928.
despite the fact that he lived and worked locally until his death in 1945. This lack of Chinese involvement in local democracy in later years might indicate that Chinese people were too fearful, detached, apathetic or busy to vote. Given the apparent lack of anything sinister in relation to Chinese dealings with local governments, though, they are less likely to have been disillusioned with local democracy than with democracy at the Commonwealth level.

No Chinese people in Wollongong were ever elected to Federal or New South Wales State Parliament, nor were there any local Chinese aldermen or bureaucrats. Although they may have been electors, they did not stand for election and did not govern directly. This is hardly surprising. Even Sydney's flamboyant entrepreneur Quong Tart, despite his influence, affluence and important role as a Chinese cultural ambassador and representative of China's Qing government in Australia, never stood for political office.134

**Criminal Justice**

Chinese people often experienced hardship within the Australian criminal justice system. When they found themselves on the wrong side of the law, whether through genuine wrongdoing or police capriciousness, they were forced to comply with legal practices that were thoroughly alien to them. Trouble understanding questions posed by prosecutors, despite interpreters, and unfamiliarity with the concept of 'swearing

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133 WMC Municipal List, 1895-6, East Ward, p. 1; WMC List of Electors 1925-37; NSW Register of Deaths, 6647/1946, 22 December 1945.
in’—among other issues—usually made fair trials for Chinese people unrealisable.\textsuperscript{135} Sentences imposed on them were often excessive.\textsuperscript{136} In the event that they wanted to have others prosecuted for crimes, especially so-called 'larrikins', racial bias within the courts could hamper their efforts.\textsuperscript{137}

In Wollongong, a handful of Chinese people found themselves on the wrong side of criminal law between 1901 and 1939. Wollongong Gaol entrance records show there were six admissions of prisoners with Chinese names over the period from 1901 to 1915, subsequent to which the gaol closed down.\textsuperscript{138} In the period from 1916 to 1939, four local residents with Chinese names were listed in the New South Wales Criminal Deposition Registers: a record of all those committed to custodial sentences in New South Wales.\textsuperscript{139} At least another seven local Chinese people were arrested under criminal law, as revealed by local newspapers.\textsuperscript{140} There must have been more, but registers and transcripts of petty court proceedings for the Wollongong area have not survived, meaning reliable figures are lacking. Even so, relative to the total number of local Chinese people, perhaps 100 at peak with more coming and going at different times, the number of criminals was clearly small. Moreover, thousands of 'white' residents broke criminal laws between 1901 and

\textsuperscript{135} See, for instance, Jan Ryan, \textit{Ancestors: Chinese in Colonial Australia}, Freemantle Arts Centre Press, Freemantle, 1995, pp. 98-121.
\textsuperscript{137} Rolls, \textit{Citizens}, pp. 208-23; see May, \textit{Top sawyers}, pp. 101-6 for Chinese eagerness to use the courts in Cairns.
\textsuperscript{138} Wollongong Gaol Entrance Records, 1899-1915, WCLA R994.46 ARC Reel 2379.
\textsuperscript{139} NSW Registers of Criminal Depositions Received, 1916-49, NSWSA NRS 849 19/13124-30.
1939. Quong Tart claimed Chinese people were always under-represented in Australian courts and gaols: this was certainly the case in Wollongong. As Cathie May suggested, the potential for disgrace brought to the family by crime may have acted as a strong deterrent.

Criminal offences varied considerably. Several Chinese were implicated in opium-related crimes, conforming to stereotypes of Chinese 'opium fiends'. In early 1908, grocer Tommy Tinn's shop was raided by police and opium was discovered hidden in vegetable boxes. Gardener Ah Hee had a similar experience in 1908, then again in 1910, as did gardeners Ah Gut and Yet Wah in late 1908, Charlie Pong in 1910, Ah Lut in 1911 and Jack Chen Sen and Kum Yee in 1912. Customs officers were implicated in opium smuggling in Wollongong in 1909. Other Chinese were linked to a rather disparate array of crimes. Gardener Gee Gong was accused of not paying wages due in 1902 and Sun Lee Chong of vagrancy in 1903. Gardener Young Kong War was implicated in burglary in 1905, clerk George Kee Chong in not paying child maintenance in 1909, grocer Arthur Kee Chong in receiving stolen goods in 1922 and shopkeeper Arthur Bow in uttering counterfeit coins in 1933. Gardeners Wong Gee and Loo Wah were said to have

144 'Week by Week', *South Coast Times*, 21 March 1908.
146 'Central Criminal Court', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 December 1909.
committed sex offences in 1918 and 1929 respectively. These can also be seen as stereotypical crimes, linked to the notion that lonely Chinese bachelors were a threat to ‘white’ females. In defiance of another stereotype, however, no Chinese people were apparently ever linked to gambling offences in Wollongong. As mentioned in Chapter Three, grocer Yun Hop (元合) was implicated in a stabbing at sea in 1907 and gaol in Singapore.

The sentences imposed on local Chinese appear to have been light. Tommy Tinn just had his opium confiscated in early 1908, as per Commonwealth law at that time. Ah Hee also had his opium confiscated in mid 1908, with no further

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149 [Wong Gee] ‘Wollongong Court’, South Coast Times, 25 January 1918; NSW Registers of Criminal Depositions Received, 19/13124, p. 80; [Loo Wah] 19/13128, p. 190.
150 On Chinese gambling see Eric Rolls, Sojourners: The Epic Story of China’s Centuries-Old Relationship with Australia, University of Queensland, St. Lucia, 1992, pp. 347-419.
151 ‘The Searchlight’, Illawarra Mercury, 19 April 1907; Yun Hop Immigration File, NAA SP42/1 C1923/4176.
152 Long Bay Gaol Entrance and Description Book, 1918, NSWSA 3/6097 16030, no. 16030.
153 ‘Week by Week’, South Coast Times, 21 March 1908.
In late 1908, the New South Wales *Poisons Act* of 1902 was amended, criminalising opium misuse to a greater degree than was seen previously. Even so, the later local opium users only received fines for their offences. Ah Hee was also gaol for just six months in 1910 for a long string of offences involving opium distribution. Light punishment extended to other crimes. Gee Gong had to pay a fine of £2/5/- in lieu of two weeks' gaol, Sun Lee Chong was gaol for a month and George Kee Chong was held in Wollongong Gaol until his acquittal. Alleged burglar Young Kong War was sentenced to six months' gaol, as were alleged sex offenders Wong Gee and Loo Wah. The maximum sentence imposed on a Chinese person in Wollongong was 12 months' gaol, on Arthur Kee Chong in 1922.

Chinese people often had ‘larrikins’ prosecuted under criminal law, though sentences imposed on them seem to have been light as well. In 1901, when hawker Lee On Ly claimed to have been attacked by Oscar Favry, he had him prosecuted, though Favry was acquitted in court. Similarly, when gardener Sam Lee was attacked by two cabbage thieves in 1905, he sought justice through the courts. He

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154 'Week by Week', *South Coast Times*, 21 March 1908; *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette*, 64, 30 December 1905, p. 1003; 'Opium Seized at Wollongong', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 August 1908; 'Police Court', *Illawarra Mercury*, 21 August 1908; 'Week by Week', *South Coast Times*, 22 August 1908.
157 Wollongong Gaol Entrance Records, 5 September 1910, no. 53.
161 'Police Court', *South Coast Times*, 5 January 1901.
summoned the police and testified against two men, Robert Townsend and George Beadle Jnr., but they were also acquitted. Additionally, in 1909, refreshment house proprietor Choy War reported to police that Joseph Condon had given him a spurious sixpence. Condon faced court and was made to pay Choy War the correct amount in lieu of gaol. Frederick Rollins also pleaded guilty to assaulting gardener Sue Moy in 1911, but he only had to pay a fine of £3 or face one month in gaol. Later, in 1933, gardener Charlie Fong lodged a complaint against George Dickson for stealing vegetables; as a consequence, Dickson was put on a 12-month good behaviour bond. It would seem that acquittals or soft penalties were handed down to local ‘larrikins’, as Eric Rolls argued was the case in Sydney. However, unlike some Sydney Chinese, Chinese in Wollongong were not prosecuted for defending themselves. Sam Lee fired multiple unsuccessful shots at his attackers from a revolver, as did gardener Charlie Hong some years later, but neither was ever considered a criminal. The law in these cases did not act against Chinese people, as it often did in relation to the *Immigration Restriction Act*.

Given the lack of court transcripts, it is difficult to ascertain the precise details of the criminal cases hitherto mentioned. Newspaper reports exist, certainly, but these are only summaries of court proceedings. There is little in these reports about Chinese interpreters, oaths or matters pertaining to police conduct. Reports of Young Kong War's theft case reveal that Chinese people followed criminal proceedings closely. Over 30 packed Wollongong Courthouse for his trial, which points to some

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162 'Sensational Affray', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 31 October 1905; 'A Stabbing Affray', *South Coast Times*, 4 November 1905; 'District Court', *South Coast Times*, 3 March 1906.
163 'Quarter Sessions', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 30 June 1909.
164 'Police Court', *Illawarra Mercury*, 7 March 1911.
165 'Missing Vegetables', *Illawarra Mercury*, 2 June 1933.
166 Rolls, *Citizens*, p. 74.
degree of investment in the criminal justice system.\textsuperscript{168} A report on an assault case involving Choy War and Thomas Marshall indicates that the fee for Chinese interpreting services was -1/10/6.\textsuperscript{169}

\textit{Conclusion}

Chinese people in Wollongong had a specific set of dealings with government and the law, occasionally but not always seen in more general histories of Chinese people in Australia. Initially, local Chinese did not resist the White Australia policy directly, relying on church groups and displays of Australian patriotism for protection. Gradually, however, with the rise of the KMT, some Chinese in Wollongong aligned themselves with the local working class against the Commonwealth. The New South Wales State Government and the four local governments of the area presented few problems for Chinese people, unlike in metropolitan centres or places like Darwin. Even when problems arose, Chinese people took swift action against these bureaucracies: the opposite of what happened at the Federal level. Participation by Wollongong's Chinese in Federal or State democracy was slight but robust in local democracy in the early 1900s. Finally, local Chinese engagement with the criminal justice system was minimal, and it was characterised nearly as much by Chinese people having others prosecuted under criminal law as by Chinese people being prosecuted themselves. It is in relation to government and the law that local-level research reveals perhaps the most striking differences in Chinese experiences under the White Australia policy.

\textsuperscript{168} 'Police Court', Illawarra Mercury, 1 April 1905; 'Police Court', Illawarra Mercury, 6 April 1905; 'House-Breaking Chinese', Shoalhaven News, 8 April 1905.
\textsuperscript{169} 'Wollongong Police Court', South Coast Times, 5 September 1908.
Conclusion

This thesis has told the story of Chinese people in Wollongong between 1901 and 1939 in order to shed new light on the experiences of Chinese people within 'White Australia'. Whilst a number of histories of Chinese in Australia, both general and specific, have been written, there is a need for more local research in this field. Early histories dealt with Chinese people only in relation to 'whites', though relatively recent years have witnessed histories of Chinese people in Australia 'on their own terms', as Jennifer Cushman put it.¹ Studies at the colonial and national levels have been informative and local-level studies have revealed more of what Andrew Markus called 'precise and curious' details of Australia's Chinese past.² It is in this spirit, through the previously unexamined Chinese presence in Wollongong, that I have undertaken this research.

Chinese people can be confirmed in Wollongong from 1852, which was when a number of indentured labourers arrived from Xiamen to work in the local dairy industry. Wollongong's Chinese population only began to grow significantly as part of a post-rush movement of Chinese people away from the Australian goldfields. Most new arrivals in town were market gardeners, and some were tobacco planters and businesspeople. By the late 19th century, the majority of Chinese came from the counties of Guangdong's Pearl River Delta. 19th-century Chinese in Wollongong had both good fortune and bad, though many found a long-term home in the local area, despite local anti-Chinese agitation by the labour movement in 1878.

Chinese agriculture in Wollongong, especially market gardening, flourished over the period from 1901 and 1939. There were market gardens in the area which grew a wide range of European fruit and vegetables for 'white' consumers, with an emphasis on growing annuals over perennials. Most operations were located near the centre of town; others were usually located close to suburban sub-centres. There were 100 or so Chinese market gardeners working in Wollongong on around 20 small gardens at peak in the early 1900s, and many of these gardens were lucrative, particularly that of Sun Hung Wah on western Crown Street. These gardens were to last several decades until the 1930s.

Dairy farms have seldom featured in historical literature on Chinese people in Australia, yet there were also Chinese dairy farms in the Wollongong area. There were few Chinese dairy farmers and farms—perhaps 10 to 20 farmers on four farms in the early 1900s—but these operations were longer-lived and even more lucrative than market gardens. Overall, Chinese agriculture in Wollongong was cooperative rather than exploitative, with operations being equal partnerships or family-run, perhaps most notably with the Chie and Tansey dairy farms in the latter case.

Chinese business in Wollongong functioned under the White Australia policy and is perhaps most notable for the bus company established by the Chinese Dion family in 1923. Yet, there were a number of other types of Chinese business as well. There were general stores, drapery shops, a cabinetmaking workshop, a refreshment establishment, a leather dealership and a dressmaking shop. Chinese commercial ventures tended not to cluster together, but there was a high proportion on western Crown Street in the Wollongong town centre. It could be said that western Crown Street constituted something of a Wollongong Chinatown, but it cannot be likened to
those in much larger centres of Chinese population. Grocery shops were the most numerous kind of Chinese business in Wollongong, with 23 recorded in the area over the period in question, but these were the least lucrative type of venture. By contrast, mixed businesses, or general stores, were few, usually had larger premises than grocery operations and were highly lucrative. Relatively few Chinese businesspeople advertised in local newspapers. Furthermore, whilst some businesses operated for extended periods, most did so for less than 10 years.

A look at Chinese community life in Wollongong revealed a high degree of intermingling with the general population, perhaps most significantly in the form of Chinese men marrying 'white' women and vice versa. Gardeners Charlie Ching Won, Chew Hoan, Bung Foon, Jimmy Chong and Harry Gon Kee all married women of European ancestry. Chinese women Mary Jui Dan, Maggie Tansey, Evelyn Yen and Amelia Ching Won married 'white' men. There were several Chinese-Chinese marriages as well. Well-to-do Chinese men, particularly businessmen including Joe Wah Gow and Low Cor, seem to have preferred Chinese wives over 'white' ones. Nevertheless, most local Chinese were apparently single men.

The Chinese community was politically organised to some degree by the 1920s; Chinese people also went to church and participated in community events. There was a branch of the Chinese Nationalist Party, or KMT, in Wollongong, but it seems to have acted mainly as a kind of fraternity club for members of the Zhou and Liu clans of Longdu, Zhongshan/Xiangshan, Guangdong. Regarding religion, no evidence was found of Chinese churches or temples in the local area. However, Chinese people attended local Christian churches, which regularly targeted them, and they had links with Chinese churches in Sydney. Participation in community events
was noted in agricultural shows, but it was shown that most Chinese people chose not to be involved in sports, even though the Chinese national soccer team came to town in the 1920s and there is no evidence of racial segregation. Another important part of Chinese community life in Wollongong, as elsewhere in Australia, was the maintenance of ties with home villages in China; some local Chinese people returned there periodically and most returned there ultimately.

Wollongong's Chinese had to contend with governments and the law. As with others around Australia, they had to negotiate the obstacles of the White Australia policy. They needed to deal with immigration restrictions and register as 'aliens', but evidence suggests they did not have to endure the kinds of harsh local rulings specifically targeted at Chinese people in places such as Cairns and Darwin. Wollongong's Chinese initially relied on church groups to speak out against Federal legislation, and they displayed Australian patriotism, but they eventually opposed the Commonwealth directly in an alliance with the local working class. They took swift action against local governments when necessary, with one market gardener even suing a local government in the New South Wales Supreme Court. Few Chinese could vote in Federal and State elections, though a number voted in local elections and with considerable individual voting power. Chinese engagement with the criminal justice system was slight and as many Chinese had 'whites' prosecuted under criminal law as were prosecuted themselves.

The Wollongong case has revealed many new facts about Australia's Chinese past. Previously unavailable details about some of the earliest Chinese in Australia, Chinese agriculture, business, community life, and Chinese interactions with the authorities, are now available. Perhaps the most noteworthy stories uncovered are
those pertaining to local Chinese agriculturalists, particularly Chinese market gardeners, and local Chinese businesspeople, none of whom have been subjected to historical scrutiny before. Local government records and bankruptcy files, as well as the recent digitisation of local newspapers, have made this study possible.

The Wollongong case was an individual one appropriate to be woven into histories of Chinese people in Australia, though it was not necessarily representative of Australia's Chinese past. Wollongong over the period in question had a specific set of characteristics so far unseen in this field of scholarship. It was in Australia's temperate south, just south of Sydney, had thriving mining and steel-manufacturing industries and a majority 'white' working-class population. Even so, possibly by virtue of their small number, Chinese lived, worked and raised families locally; their experiences mirrored the largely positive experiences of Chinese in Australia's cosmopolitan north. This challenges more gloomy perspectives on Chinese life in 'White Australia' as studies situated in Australia's north have done.

Given the richness of the Wollongong case, it becomes clear that 'whitewashing' of the past has occurred. When I started researching, I did not expect to find so much information about Chinese people in Wollongong. All but a handful of Wollongong history publications have overlooked them, whether deliberately or accidentally; even so, they did contribute to the area and were a part of everyday life. In light of the substantial amount of information uncovered in this locale, coupled with the general lack of information available on Chinese people in Australia, it is highly likely that such 'whitewashing' has occurred elsewhere. This could be a residual effect of the White Australia policy, that is, a kind of blindness to non-‘whites’ in the study of local history.
This thesis is part of a new kind of Australian history being written to accommodate Australia's growing engagement with Asia, especially China. Kane Collins recently wrote that 'each Australian generation rediscovers Asia in terms of its location and importance to Australia'.\(^3\) Indeed, history serves as a kind of reference point for the present and the future and, as China becomes closer and more important to Australia, history must change accordingly. Through the past lives of Chinese people, one small part of Australia—Wollongong—now has a new history and I sincerely hope that this rediscovery of the past can act as a useful reference point for the present and the future.

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\(^3\) Kane Collins, 'Imagining the Golden Race', in David Walker and Agnieszka Sobocinska (eds.), *Australia's Asia: From Yellow Peril to Asian Century*, University of Western Australia Publishing, Crawley, 2012, pp. 97-120.
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