

**The Celestial Question: Chinese Communities and the Bayside Area in the Late-Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries.**

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This work looks at the lives and experiences of nineteenth-century Chinese immigrant communities in and around Arncliffe, Botany and Rockdale. There is a particular focus upon market gardening, an occupation at which these newly arrived immigrants excelled. Described by the press of the day as 'Celestials', 'Mongolians' or, more pejoratively, as 'Chow' or 'Johnnie Chinaman' they travelled from their homes and villages to forge new lives in the far-away land of Australia. But this work also looks at the prejudice and hostility of those they came to join. Cultural beliefs in the nineteenth century were far removed from the present day and the Bayside area was far from a welcoming environment. For white Australians the superiority of the European, and corresponding inferiority of other races, was considered a matter not only of common sense but also one of established scientific fact.<sup>1</sup> The Chinese migrants were viewed as 'other', not simply in terms of their culture and language but also due to their different and, it was believed, lower intellectual and moral capabilities. While

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<sup>1</sup> See for example *Essays on the Inequality of Human Races* (1853-5), for example, in which former French diplomat Arthur, Comte de Gobineau (1816-1882), relayed his belief in 'higher' and 'lower' races. The former (unsurprisingly) represented by the white races, he believed to be responsible for all of humanity's great advances and were the only race capable of invention. They were in turn followed by the yellow peoples who lacked their superiors' creativity but were able to copy and even improve their betters' work; and finally the black peoples who possessed a limited intellect, were incapable of differentiating between right and wrong, and had a natural affinity to enslavement. James W. Caeser, *Reconstructing America – The Symbol of America in Modern Thought*, Newhaven, CT, 1997, p. 95. This was not an isolated example. Other works such as *Natural History of Man* (1843), *The Natural History of the Varieties of Man* (1850), *The Races of Men* (1850), and *Types of Mankind; or Ethnological Researches* (1854) all advanced similar theories of racial chauvinism.<sup>1</sup> Darwin's 1859 publication of *On the Origin of Species* aided such speculation by facilitating the possibility of independent and unequal racial origins (polygenesis) rather than previous religious doctrine of a singular and divine creation (monogenesis).<sup>1</sup> Even the highly respected evolutionary biologist T. H. Huxley – like Darwin a critic of slavery – claimed there were more physiological differences between the 'higher' races and their more primitive cousins than between human beings in general and the gorilla. James W. Caeser, *Reconstructing America – The Symbol of America in Modern Thought*, Newhaven, CT, 1997, pp. 95; Brantinger, *Cannibals* pp. 114-116. The pervasive nature of Darwinian ideas was shown by the Swedish scholar who has done most to shed light on Victorian-era circulation figures: Alvar Ellegård, *The Readership of the Periodical Press in Mid-Victorian Britain*, Göteborg: Göteborgs Universitets Årsskrift, 1957.

immigration from England was welcomed, the arrival of these 'Celestials' was viewed as problematical and a threat to the established Australian way of life. Official legislation sought to strictly control numbers of Chinese immigrants, and those in Australia faced day-to-day prejudice from the public. The press, particularly the more populist journals such as the *Illustrated Sydney Times* and the *Bulletin*, simultaneously provided a constant stream of criticism, derision and ill-founded intolerance as editorials discussed the 'Chinese Question', 'Chinese Difficulty' or the 'Chinese Invasion'.<sup>2</sup> Despite this the new arrivals established themselves, not least due to their horticultural skills, and became accepted and indispensable members of Australian society. The State Heritage Inventory now lists the Arncliffe market garden, also known as Rockdale or Banksia Market Gardens, as an area of high significance and historical importance.<sup>3</sup>

On December 21, 1886 the *Sydney Morning Herald* ran an article praising the farming techniques employed by Chinese market gardens in and around the Cooks River and Botany.<sup>4</sup> Though by no means exclusively Chinese run, Chinese immigrants had proved themselves particularly adept at this type of small-scale farming. Market gardeners supplied inner-Sydney with a variety of fresh vegetables such as cauliflowers, broccoli, cabbages, and lettuces as well as more exotic varieties such as bok choy, choy sum, water spinach and herbs. These were sold either through market stalls or by hawkers who transported their wares, often balanced upon traditional carrying poles, to the front doors of Sydney homes. The author particularly applauded the ability of Chinese workers

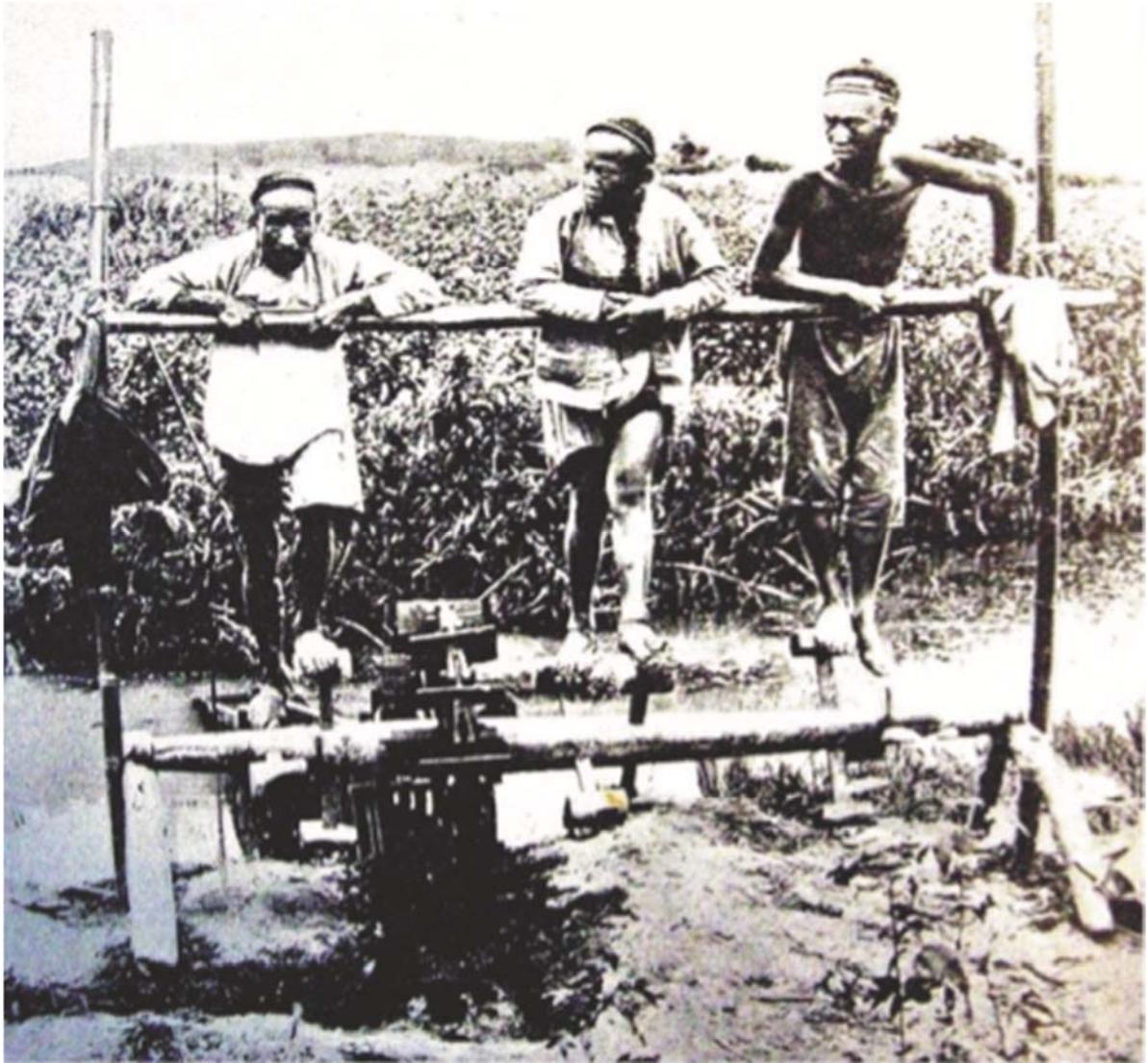
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<sup>2</sup> 'The Chinese Question', *Evening News*, January 17, 1879, p. 2; 'The Chinese Difficulty', *Evening News*, January 2, 1879, p. 2; 'The Chinese Invasion', *Evening News*, June 6, 1877, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> 'Arncliffe Market Gardens', <https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/heritageapp/ViewHeritageItemDetails.aspx?ID=5045744> accessed 7/07/2019.

<sup>4</sup> 'Market Gardens - Chinese Gardeners', *Sydney Morning Herald*, December 21, 1886, p. 11.

to 'cultivate so assiduously that in a short time what was before unsightly scrub, dismal sand hills, or gloomy bog, becomes under their care fertile gardens'.<sup>5</sup> This was not least because of the methods of irrigation, 'probably as old as husbandry itself' that they brought from their homeland.<sup>6</sup>



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An endless chain composed of wooden links, from 15 to 40 feet long, and made to revolve around axles at either end. The chain is provided with flat pieces of wood fixed at convenient intervals, at right angles to the

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<sup>5</sup> 'Market Gardens – Chinese Gardeners', *Sydney Morning Herald*, December 21, 1886, p. 11.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> 'Chain pump in use in Southern China 1909-1910, photographed by Franklin Hiram King, *Farmers of Forty Centuries*, Fig. 46, p. 78.

chain. The chain, when set in motion conducts the water from the creek to a trough, above which it is thence distributed to any part of the garden desired... But many of the Chinese suburban gardeners are also very advanced, and use steam pumps to conduct water from a creek to waterholes or trenches in the gardens.<sup>8</sup>

Similar methods were used to facilitate the drainage of waterlogged areas and enabled the newcomers to utilise areas not considered farmable by European methods. This was employed in the Bayside area. They had, for example, been 'very successful' in converting 'the veteran swamp, Botany'.<sup>9</sup>

Trenches are dug on the sides of the beds, and the water drained off by subterranean drains. If the beds become too dry, then the trenches are temporarily closed until the beds have absorbed a sufficient amount of moisture.<sup>10</sup>

The *Sydney Morning Herald's* 1886 article praised the undoubted skills of the immigrant farmers but it did so grudgingly. Though ideally accessing a stream or other source of clean water, it complained, Chinese farmers were not averse to planting near overflow pipes or other water supplies considered polluted by their European equivalents. Shea's Creek, a tributary of the Cooks River, was given as an example.<sup>11</sup> Noted for its shallow depth and attendant marshes, Shea's Creek also absorbed waste from the nearby tanneries, slaughterhouses and the brickworks, which had been forced out of metropolitan areas by the *Slaughter House Act* of 1849.<sup>12</sup> The Chinese use of night-soil (human excrement) and slaughterhouse offal as fertilizer was also a particular topic of

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<sup>8</sup> 'Market Gardens – Chinese Gardeners', *Sydney Morning Herald*, December 21, 1886, p. 11.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> Ron Ringer, 'From Shea's Creek to Alexandra Canal' *The Dictionary of Sydney*, 2013, [http://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/from\\_sheas\\_creek\\_to\\_alexandra\\_canal](http://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/from_sheas_creek_to_alexandra_canal) accessed 6/6/2019.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

criticism.<sup>13</sup> Visitors to Chinese run gardens, the author warned, 'cannot fail to be shocked and disgusted, and in some cases made ill, by reason of the sights to be seen.' He himself had been seized 'with nausea and vomiting, so horrible was the stench emitted from a pit in Botany Gardens.'<sup>14</sup>

Further criticism was made towards the gardeners for what was considered unfair working practices. This was a common accusation and was levelled at the Chinese in a variety of professions. Many trade unionists perceived newly arrived immigrants, particularly those from China, as a source of cheap labour used by employers to undermine the wages and conditions of their members.<sup>15</sup> Most notably this occurred in 1878 during the Sydney Seaman's strike against the Australian Steam Navigation Company.<sup>16</sup> The ASN had dismissed 180 unionised employees and replaced them with Chinese crewmen, paying them less than unionised labour wages.<sup>17</sup> The Australian union movement thereafter called for harsh reductions in Chinese immigration and the implementation of a heavy poll tax on arrivals.<sup>18</sup> William Lane (1861-1917), for example, a prominent trade unionist, editor of the *Worker* and author of the

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<sup>13</sup> 'North Botany Nuisance', *Globe*, April 22, 1886, p. 3. A Petition containing 123 signatures was collected 'to protest against the deposition of night-soil in the neighborhood'. Of particular concern were the 'Chinese gardeners ... running with buckets and drawing it to their gardens.'

<sup>14</sup> 'Market Gardens - Chinese Gardeners', *Sydney Morning Herald*, December 21, 1886, p. 11.

<sup>15</sup> For example, an editorial 'The Chinese Petition', *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, February 24, 1879, p. 2. 'The money grabbers of the Chamber of Commerce - the Mammon worshippers of Sydney - who only live to add day by day some fresh accumulation to their already superfluous store of gold - the greedy capitalists who, if they can increase their percentages by the aid of Chinese labour, even while their white brethren perish...' This attitude culminated in the 'Great Anti-Chinese Demonstration' of 1888.

<sup>16</sup> Phil Griffiths, *The Heroic Shameful Role of Labour: Mythology in the Making of the White Australia Policy*, Paper Presented to the Legacies 09 Conference, University of Southern Queensland, 2009.

<sup>17</sup> Raymond Markey, 'Race and Organised Labour in Australia, 1850-1901', *The Historian*, Vol. 58, No. 2, pp. 347-8.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

utopian *Working Man's Paradise*, wrote of the need for white solidarity in the face of the newcomers.

We stand together, we whites, shopkeepers and merchants, artisan, labourers and farmers; if one fails the other follow; that is what makes this colour question a race question and what makes it the Anti-Chinese movement so irresistibly strong ... Nothing can weaken that which draws its inspiration from the first instinct of self-preservation.<sup>19</sup>

European market gardeners levelled similar resentment towards their Chinese counterparts. Most Market gardens were leased, rather than purchased, with the major outlays being rent, seeds, gardening tools, fertilizer, and manual labour.<sup>20</sup> European gardeners largely had to make such purchase individually, a considerable expense. Chinese market gardens were usually run on a more co-operative basis. Between five and ten men worked in an informal partnership, their solidarity reinforced by ties of family kinship, village origin and marriage.<sup>21</sup> This co-operative system meant partners would share both the cost of operations, the tools employed and profits (or occasional losses) made whilst ensuring a partner could be easily replaced, either temporarily or permanently, if a return to China was required.<sup>22</sup> Lisa Xia who worked one of the last surviving market gardens in Rockdale reported this spirit of co-operation rather than competition was still in place during the 1950s and 60s.<sup>23</sup> If one garden had run low on stocks to provide a restaurant, they would contact another for assistance in filling the order.<sup>24</sup> For non-Chinese gardeners this co-operation was viewed as unfair competition and such feelings were reinforced by the populist press of the

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<sup>19</sup> William Lane, *Boomerang*, May 26, 1888 cited by Verity Burgmann, 'Racism, Socialism, and the Labour Movement, 1887-1917', *Labour History*, No. 47, 1984, p. 39.

<sup>20</sup> Joanna Boileau, *Chinese Market Gardens in Australia and New Zealand: Gardens of Prosperity*, Auckland, 2017, p. 126.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> Oral History Interview with Lisa Xia, Rockdale Library, LH900XIA, p. 12.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

day. The vehemently anti-Chinese *Bulletin* for example, complained that as the Chinese could not fairly compete with the native born Australian gardener 'The Chinese are obliged to form themselves into a species of national trades-union wherever they settle in foreign lands.'<sup>25</sup>

Further resentment centred on living arrangements. Immigrant gardeners were usually male and either unmarried or had left their wives and children in their home country. This left them free of the economic responsibilities of supporting a family in Australia and able to make do with very basic accommodation. It was not uncommon for market gardeners to avoid the cost of renting altogether by building shanties close to their farms. This certainly occurred in the Bayside area. An 1894 article in the *Evening News* reported that careless handling of matches had caused the Arncliffe market gardener Sim King Wah to lose his 'wood and iron cottage' to a fire.<sup>26</sup> It was also common for the gardeners to rent small, crowded and shared rooms. The 1891 *Royal Commission into Alleged Chinese Gambling and Immorality* reported that in Chinese areas 'six or eight men often occupying apartments which, even if well ventilated, would not afford healthful accommodation for more than one or two persons.'<sup>27</sup> As late as 1910 the remarkably unsympathetic Alderman A. E. Martin (1848-1942), Chairman of the Arncliffe Progress Association, was to complain that 'Many of the Chinamen living in our district inhabit houses that are not fit for human

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<sup>25</sup> 'The Chinese Invasion', *The Bulletin*, Vol. 7, No. 344, September 1886, p. 4.

<sup>26</sup> 'Fire at Arncliffe', *Evening News*, October 25, 1894, p. 4.

<sup>27</sup> 'Visits of Inspection' *Royal Commission into Alleged Chinese Gambling and Immorality*, New South Wales, 1891, p. 26.

habitation... thereby enabling the Chinamen to unfairly compete with the white gardener who has to have a bathroom.'<sup>28</sup>

The article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on the Chinese run gardens in Botany concluded with just such accusations from the European market gardeners of undercutting both prices and wages. S. Scahill, who worked a 15-acre garden in Kingsgrove, complained that 'Chinamen had brought the price of



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<sup>28</sup> 'A Chinese Bath', *St George Call* (Kogarah), August 13, 1910, p. 7.

“bunch stuff’ down to very much lower prices than formerly’.<sup>30</sup> R. Nicoll, a Marrickville gardener, added that ‘though he paid his (colonial) labourers one pound and eighteen shillings a week ... Chinese had offered to do the same work for only 25 shillings per week. He suspected the wages amongst themselves was even less, at between 18s and 20 s per week.’<sup>31</sup> The difference was that ‘they certainly had the advantage in getting their countrymen into this colony, and making them work for nothing for a period of years, whilst they were supposed to be paying off their passage and tax money advanced to them.’ He concluded ‘as the industry stood now-a-days the Chinese are ruining the prospects.’<sup>32</sup> Chinese market gardens had been flourishing in the Bayside area since the 1840s economic downturn had forced many major landowners to subdivide their estates for sale as allotments. Charles Thompson, for example, owner of a property that extended in modern terms from North Bexley, almost to Brighton-le-Sands, encompassing most of Kogarah and Rockdale, was compelled by the threat of bankruptcy to partition and sell off his estates into 134 allotments ranging in size from 2 ½ to 9 ½ acres.<sup>33</sup> Other major landowners followed suit as financial obligations made such extravagant properties unsustainable.

## HANNAN’S CREEK

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<sup>29</sup> ‘Chinese Life in Sydney: Gardening at Botany’, *Illustrated Sydney News*, June 12, 1880, p. 13. The rudimentary housing can clearly be seen in the background. In fact, as late as 1915 the *Sun*, a Sydney based newspaper was reporting robberies occurring on the homes of market gardeners Wing Lee, George Lee and Ah Lee ‘whose shanties in Manly were ransacked’. ‘Chinese Robbed’, *Sun*, March 2, 1915, p. 2.

<sup>30</sup> ‘Market Gardens – Chinese Gardeners’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, December 21, 1886, p. 11.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> ‘Market Gardens – Chinese Gardeners’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, December 21, 1886, p. 11.

<sup>33</sup> Phillip Greeves & James Jervis (revised by R. W. Rathbone), *Rockdale – Its Beginning and Development*, Rockdale, 1986, p. 21. Thompson was father of noted poet Charles Thomson Jnr, the first native born poet to publish a collection of Australian verse.

The land round which is well-known to be most desirable quality for Market Gardeners and Nurserymen, and from its sheltered position, is likewise admirably adapted for orchards or vineries. This portion is accessible by water up Wolli creek, and is merely an agreeable row from the dam.<sup>34</sup>

Arncliffe Hill, then known as Cobbler's Hill, was offered for sale to 'Market Gardeners, Small Capitalists and the Industrious Classes Generally' only two months after its former owner Alexander Brodie Spark's (1792-1856) death.<sup>35</sup> When the railway line came through the area in 1884, many new smallholdings became farms, spreading towards Black Creek or Muddy Creek, which assured pastoralists of a year-round water supply. "

Up until this point Chinese emigration to Australia had remained relatively small. Less than 3,000 Chinese, working as indentured servants, had travelled to Australia between the years 1828-1856.<sup>36</sup> Most notable of these were the 121 passengers of the *Nimrod* in 1848, half of them disembarking in Sydney in October, the remainder continuing on to Queensland.<sup>37</sup> This was to change with Edward Hargreaves' (1816-1891) well-publicised discovery of gold in 1851.<sup>38</sup> Further finds in Victoria, Tasmania and South Australia led to the

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<sup>34</sup> *The Australian*, February 25, 1845.

<sup>35</sup> Greeves & Jervis, *Rockdale*, p. 45; Kieran McConville and Simon Paton, 'Sparkes, Sir Walter Beresford James Gordon (1889-1974)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/sparkes-sir-walter-beresford-james-gordon-11739/txt20989>, published first in hardcopy 2002, accessed online 16 July 2019.

<sup>36</sup> Maxine Darnell, 'Indentured Chinese Labourers and Employers Identified New South Wales 1828-185', p. 1.

<sup>37</sup> Shirley Fitzgerald, *Red Tape, Gold Scissors: The Story of Sydney's Chinese*, 2008, Broadway, Australia, p. 19.

<sup>38</sup> Australia's first gold rush had occurred in May 1851 after Edward Hargreaves (1816-1891), a veteran of the Californian gold-fields, wrote to the *Sydney Morning Herald* declaring he had discovered a viable source of the metal in the Ophir region, near Bathurst.<sup>38</sup> By May of 1851 3,000 prospectors had descended upon the area.<sup>38</sup> Gold was valued at more than three pounds an ounce, while the average wage of a labourer was between twenty and thirty pounds. Moreover, it was possible to discover gold with only the bare minimum of outlay making it one of the few means of becoming rich for those without sufficient funds for outlay.<sup>38</sup> Further discoveries in

country becoming an attractive destination for would be prospectors. Over the next 10 years the population of Australia trebled, with Victoria, the 'New Gold Mountain' absorbing 573,000 seaborne immigrants, at least 42,000 of them from China.<sup>39</sup> Most of these émigrés travelled to Hong Kong, Cumsingmoon or Whampoa via coastal junks before disembarking onto larger British or American sea-going vessels for the remainder of the journey.<sup>40</sup> This would take between 70 to 125 days, a similar length as the journey from England.<sup>41</sup>

There were a number of reasons, in addition to the obvious desire to find gold, to draw these immigrants to the wide spaces of Australia. The majority of emigrants originated from Canton (known at the time as Guangdong or Kwangtung) province.<sup>42</sup> Unlike most of China this area had a long history

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Victoria, Tasmania and South Australia spread the news and led to an influx of immigrants hopeful of making their fortune in the goldfields of Australia. Amongst the most numerous of these were the Irish, impoverished by the outbreak of the *phytophthora Infestans* outbreak that had decimated the staple diet of potatoes and Chinese arriving from the Guangdong region of China. Bruce Mitchell, 'Hargreaves' Edward Hammond, (1816-8191), Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/hargreaves-edward-hammond-3719/text837>, published first in hardcopy 1972, accessed online 31 May 2019.

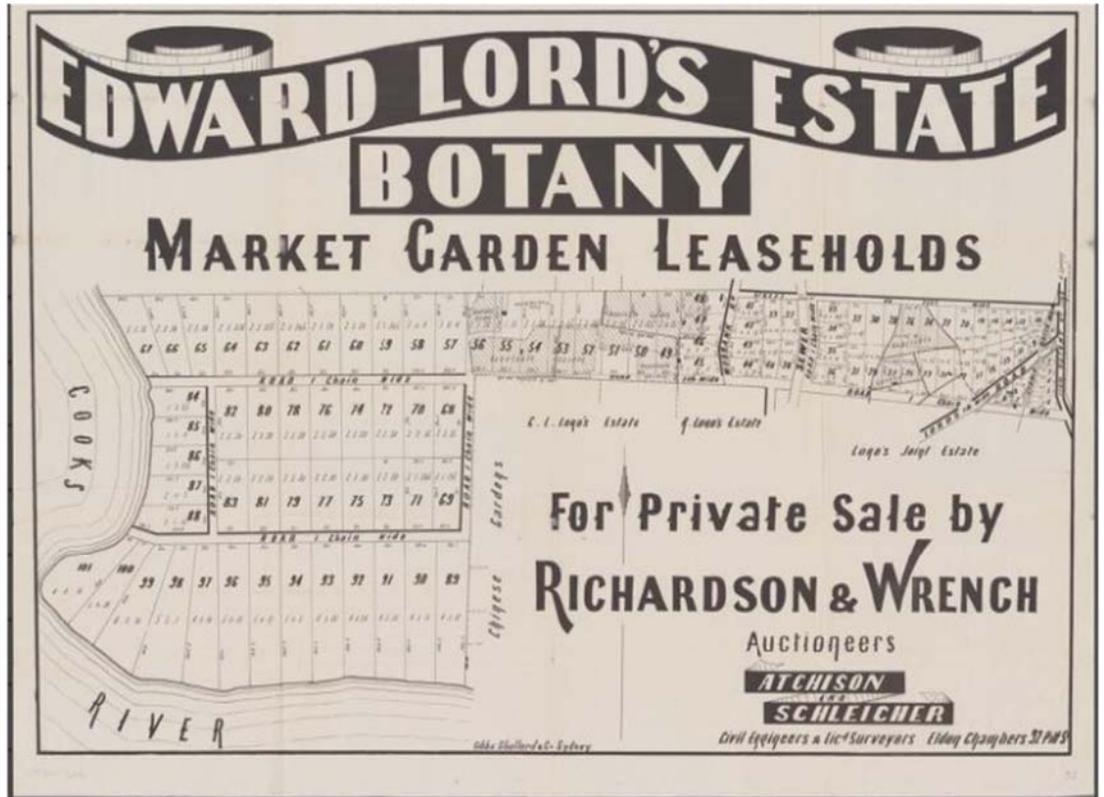
<sup>39</sup> Fei Shing, 'Environmental Experiences of Chinese People in the Mid Nineteenth Century Australian Gold Rushes', *Global Environment*, No. 4, No. 7/8, 99.

<sup>40</sup> David Hill, *The Gold Rush: The Fever that Forever Change Australia*, Sydney, 2011, p. 114.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 115.

<sup>42</sup> *Water from the Well*,

<http://www.migrationheritage.nsw.gov.au/exhibition/waterfromthewells/chinese-market-gardeners/index.html>, p. 1. accessed 10/04/2019.



of economic and cultural exchange with the Western powers.<sup>43</sup> The province, and particularly the Pearl River Delta, was also amongst the most densely populated areas in the world.<sup>44</sup> With such overcrowding came a lack of arable land and, for many, a choice between emigration and poverty.<sup>45</sup> In addition to such monetary factors military action by both the British government during the Second Opium

<sup>43</sup> Three of the eleven ships of the first fleet – the *Charlotte*, *Lady Penryhn* and *Scarborough* – had immediately departed to take on Cantonese tea as cargo for the return voyage.

<https://firstfleetfellowship.org.au/ships/hms-charlotte/> ;

<https://firstfleetfellowship.org.au/ships/hms-lady-penrhyn/>; Shirley Fitzgerald, *Red Tape, Gild Scissors*, pp. 12-14.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14. For Chinese merchants Canton was the nexus of foreign commerce. From 1757 the area had been the only in the China where non-Chinese vessels could legally conduct trade.<sup>43</sup> Contact with Australia was enhanced from the 1790s when ships of the East India Company had used Sydney as a stopping off point en route to the province. Shirley Fitzgerald, *Red Tape, Gild Scissors*, pp. 12-14.

<sup>44</sup> Cai Shaoqing, 'On the Overseas Chinese Secret Societies of Australia', *New Zealand Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 1, 2002, p. 35.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

War (1856-1860) and by the Imperial government against the widespread peasant Taiping Rebellion (1854-1856) had focused upon the province and such disruption Australia an inviting prospect, particularly for those who had sided with the uprising.<sup>46</sup>

These prospectors were able to transfer their traditional horticultural skills to their new, dangerous and often hostile environment, augmenting both their own diets and that of their fellow miners.<sup>47</sup> For some the production of vegetables proved a more lucrative pastime than the unpredictable profession of mining. When enthusiasm for the gold rushes declined, many Chinese migrants moved to urban environments often setting up communities such as that at Arncliffe.<sup>48</sup> As Karl Zhao, Chinese Heritage Officer at the NSW Heritage Office, explained: "Chinese immigrants came to prospect for gold but soon realised not everyone could get rich from the gold fields and so started growing vegetables.

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<sup>46</sup> Shaoqing, 'Secret Societies', p. 31. This had been a large-scale peasant rebellion combining the political goal of overthrowing the ruling Manchu Qing dynasty with a form of messianic Christianity. The movement's initial leader Hong Xiquan (1814-1864) believed he was the second son of God, the brother of Jesus and to have been sent with a divine mission to save China. [?] Despite early victories the movement had floundered when it failed to capture the city of Guangzhou and the subsequent suppression of the movement had, according to Cai Shaoqing of Nanjing University, led to an exodus of former rebels to both the United States and Australia.

<sup>47</sup> Early Chinese miners often faced violent assault from Europeans. Lammington Flats for example. See Connolly, C.N., "Miners' Rights: explaining the 'Lambing Flat' riots of 1860-61" in Curthoys, A & Markus, A (eds) *Who are our Enemies?: racism and the working class in Australia*, Sydney, 1978.

<sup>48</sup> K. Bagnall, *Golden Shadow on a White Land - Imaginings*, <https://ses.library.usyd.edu.au/bitstream/2123/1412/3/03sections1%262.pdf>, p. 35 accessed 12/05/2019; Boileau, *Market Gardens*, p. 100.



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At the end of the 1850s gold rushes, many Chinese came to the Sydney metropolitan area and became involved in market gardening.<sup>50</sup> In 1861 there were around 13,000 Chinese in NSW. By 1891 this had risen to an estimated total of 14,156.<sup>51</sup> Of these 3,841 were employed as market gardeners, meaning that 27% of Chinese Australians were employed in the industry.<sup>52</sup> More

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<sup>49</sup> 'Sketch of the Market Gardens' Houses formerly located in Turella reserve looking South-East towards Arncliffe', *Archaeological Investigations in the Wollie Creek Valley – Updated and Revised Survey April 2015*, p. 28.

<sup>50</sup> <https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/Heritage/aboutheritage/chinesemktgarden.htm> accessed 19/05/2019; Sarah James, *Farming on the Fringe: Peri-Urban Agriculture, Cultural Diversity and Sustainability in Sydney*, (ebook), 2018, p. 113.

<sup>51</sup> Boileau, *Market Gardeners*, p. 100.

<sup>52</sup> Boileau, *Market Gardeners*, p. 100.

significantly some 70.3% of all market gardeners in New South Wales were of Chinese origin.<sup>53</sup>

Areas such as Arncliffe, Rockdale and Botany as well as more central areas such as the Rocks and Haymarket became areas with growing and vibrant Chinese communities. Retreat Street in Alexandria became known as an area in which the gardeners could relax and socialise. The Mayor of North Botany acknowledged that much of the housing employed by the newcomers was substandard but the Chinese gave him little trouble, even providing him with gifts of preserved ginger around Christmas time. Moreover, the 200 market gardeners were also ratepayers and added some £100 to the council coffers.<sup>54</sup> An Australian journalist in 1877 gave an account of his visit to a Chinese district in Sydney in which he described the vibrant nightlife he encountered.<sup>55</sup>

Following our ears we found a concert was being given in the Chinese public house; and elbowing our way through a throng of entranced Chinamen we entered the bar. Of the music all we can say was that there was plenty of it. An energetic looking young Chinaman, dressed in European costume, was playing a sort of kettledrum. Another, a venerable looking sage, with silvery hair and a beautiful pigtail, was striking a cymbal. A solid-looking individual was crashing a pair of the same instruments, while a fourth performer had a kind of flageolet, on which he played with a lofty disregard of the performance of his companions.<sup>56</sup>

Such even handed reporting was the minority however and usually areas that had a high concentration of Chinese immigrants, were portrayed as being possessed of a 'secret life' (much like the slums and rookeries of London were

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<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> Fitzgerald, *Red Tape*, p. 96.

<sup>55</sup> 'Celebration of the Chinese New Year at Cook Town', *Sydney Morning Herald*, March 8, 1877, p. 5.

<sup>56</sup> 'Celebration of the Chinese New Year at Cook Town', *Sydney Morning Herald*, March 8, 1877, p. 5.

being portrayed in the British press).<sup>57</sup> They were depicted as being as worthy a topic of investigation as was the unexplored areas of Africa. Articles related the brave acts of journalists in exploring these alien environments, examples being 'A Woman in Chinatown' from the *Sunday Times* which detailed a visit to 'The Quiet Sydney Slums Where Chinese Games are Played and Opium is Smoked and White Women are Found' or the *Evening News*' foray into 'The Chinese Slums'.<sup>58</sup>

The seduction of European women was a particularly virulent theme running through such articles.<sup>59</sup> The *Australian Star* reported that 'Scarcely a week elapses without police make a raid on the Chinese quarters at Botany, Alexandria and elsewhere and drag women and young girls out of the clutches of the opium-eating Mongol.'<sup>60</sup> What motivated such concerns was the fact that Chinese communities such as Arncliffe were, during this period, almost exclusively male.<sup>61</sup> Between January and August 1858 over 12,000 men had arrived in the colony of New South Wales and the 1861 census shows a similar 12,968 arrivals. Of these only two were women.<sup>62</sup> This trend continued and by 1891 estimated

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<sup>57</sup> Henry Mayhew's famous four volume *London Labour and the London Poor* for example.

<sup>58</sup> 'A Woman in Chinatown: The Quiet Sydney Slums Where Chinese Games are Played and Opium is Smoked and White Women are Found', *Sunday Times*, September 15, 1918; 'The Chinese Slums', *Evening News*, December 19, 1896, p. 4.

<sup>59</sup> Both the *Illustrated Sydney News* and the *Bulletin* printed full-page drawings depicting the perils of visiting the Chinese quarters. 'Chinese Sketches in the Slums' shows two young and clearly respectable women being approached with the caption 'Their Victims'; while the *Bulletin* has two debauched and semi-naked western women being offered an opium pipe by a lascivious Chinese male. .

<sup>60</sup> 'Women in Chinatown - Another Raid', *Australian Star*, January 7, 1889, p. 6.

<sup>61</sup> It was commonly believed that Chinese law prevented women from leaving though it is more likely that that scarcity of female immigrants to NSW was due to Chinese culture, which placed great value on the patriarchal family line and the importance of wives providing care and support for their husband's parents. Moreover, for Chinese workers, often situated in the roughest areas such as mining camps or in areas outside the main township and already the subject of distrust and prejudice the thought of bringing in wives in children who would have been even more vulnerable to such humiliation, was anathema. Added to this was the prohibitive cost of the poll tax, passage and basic living expense.

<sup>62</sup> Chinese Immigration Bill (Arrivals of Chinese Since 1856), *Journal of the NSW Legislative Council*, Vol. 58, 1858, Vol. III, p. 313.

figures for Chinese immigration to NSW stood at 13,048 males compared to 109 females.<sup>63</sup> This gender imbalance – already present amongst white settlers – was the cause of great concern and there was a feeling that the lack of the nuclear family as the basic societal unit would lead to the spread of immorality, drunkenness, prostitution and the ‘curse’ of homosexuality.<sup>64</sup> This curse was, however, soon replaced by a greater fear of ‘miscogenracy’ and of white women being lured into relationships with the Chinese through the use of opium or tricked by them into the debauched profession of prostitution. Both the *Bulletin* and the *Illustrated Australian News* published full-page cartoons illustrating its fear of such possibilities. ‘Chinese Sketches in the Slums’ shows two young and clearly respectable women being approached by pigtailed Chinese with the caption ‘Their Victims’ while the *Bulletin* has two debauched and semi-naked western women being offered an opium pipe by a similar villain.<sup>65</sup> A horrified *Empire* reported that ‘Whether desirable or not, we are, as a community, becoming partially Chinese, and the dreaded amalgamation of the races, which we have frequently foreshadowed, has already commenced’.

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<sup>63</sup> Lindsay M Smith, *The Chinese of Kiandra, New South Wales: A Report to the Heritage Office of the New South Wales Department of Urban Planning*, Sydney, 1997, pp. 17 & 43.

<sup>64</sup> Bagnall, *Golden Shadows*, p. 38.

<sup>65</sup> ‘Chinese Sketches in the Slums – Their Victims’, *Illustrated Australian News*, September 1, 1893; Phil May, ‘The Chow and his Charmers’, *Bulletin*, August 21, 1886.



WILLIE'S MISSUS SMOKES THE POPPY-PIPE.

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As Kate Bagnall has shown in her work 'Golden Shadows on a White Land' the Chinese vegetable seller was of particular concern as this was the one area where white women could come into contact with the Asiatic and where a Chinese man could enter white suburbs without raising suspicion.<sup>67</sup> This fear was clearly shown in the 1881 story 'A Celestial Lothario' published in the *Bulletin* in 1881. This depicted the wooing of a Glebe Point girl named Evangeline by an unnamed Chinese vegetable seller.<sup>68</sup> Though he succeeds, largely through the regular bestowing of gifts upon his target, in inveigling himself into her affections, he is ultimately thwarted by the return of Evangeline's seafaring

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<sup>66</sup> 'Chow Town. Spread of the Yellow Leper - China's Peaceful Annexation of Australia', *The Bird O'Freedom*, March 25, 1895, p. 5.

<sup>67</sup> Bagnall, *Golden Shadows*, p. 72.

<sup>68</sup> 'A Celestial Lothario', *Bulletin*, January 29, 1881.

brother who beats the hawker so badly his skull is cracked and his cart, and thus his means of making a living, is destroyed.<sup>69</sup> This, the reader is led to understand, represents a just punishment. A similar tale was told in the ‘The Maiden



Tribute to Modern Chinatown’ – a play on the *Pall Mall Gazette*’s W. T. Stead’s (1849-1912) famous 1885 sensationalist expose on child prostitution ‘The Maiden Tribute to Modern Babylon’ – ‘warned parents of the risk they ran in having Chinese hawkers calling at their houses’.<sup>71</sup> It was not only the populist press to express concern. The 1875 Sydney City and Suburban Sewage and

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<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> Photograph of a Chinese Vegetable Hawker c. 1895. Courtesy of the National Library of Australia.

<sup>71</sup> ‘The Maiden Tribute to Modern Chinatown – A Shocking Story’, *Sunday Times*, September 24, 1911, p. 5; ‘THE CHINESE CURSE – William Nean, Corrupter of White Girls’, *Sunday Times*, November 19, 1911, p. 13.

Health Board and the 1891 Royal Commission into Alleged Chinese Gambling and Immorality both launched governmental investigations into the corruption of European femininity. The latter investigation interviewed a number of white Australian women in relationships with Chinese males. Despite considerable urgings, none criticised the men they were living with or attributed to them a fall from respectability. Minnie, a 27-year-old who had been living with her partner for seven months was asked:

Have you ever heard of Chinamen entrapping or inviting virtuous girls to their places and ruining them?

No.

Have you ever heard of virtuous girls being taken to the Chinese quarters by women who have already become degraded?

No; I have not.

In fact both Minnie and two earlier witnesses, Ellen and Margaret testified they had lost their 'respectability' after being seduced by Europeans under a false promise of marriage.<sup>72</sup> While Ellen acknowledged there were 'houses of ill-repute' catering to a Chinese clientele, she gave a glowing testimony to the former Cooks River market gardener and now vegetable hawker with whom she co-habited.

Has he always treated you kindly?

Yes. He has always been a very good man to me. I could not wish for a better man.

He has never desired you to go with other men for money?

No. He has always had constant work.

In point of fact, you live with this man as faithfully as if you were married to him?

Yes.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Ellen to 'a European' p. 399; Margaret in her home town of Young before she moved into the Chinese community. P.405. Minnie had been previously married but had left her husband due to his 'cruelty and drunkenness', p. 410.

<sup>73</sup> *Chinese Gambling Commission – Minutes of Evidence*.P. 399; Bagnall, *Yellow Shadows*, p. 82.

All three women admitted to Opium use, but it is important to note that whilst the smoking of opium was frowned upon it was not made illegal until early in the twentieth century and was a source of considerable income for the New South Wales government. Opiate based remedies, for example, 'Dover's Powder' – a mixture of ipecacuanha and opium – were freely available from chemists and advertised as a treatment for colds in contemporaneous newspapers.<sup>74</sup> Gambling too, considered the second vice inherent to the Chinese community, was also widely practiced by Europeans. Despite this, areas such as Arncliffe were frequently the destination of punitive drug or gambling raids by the constabulary:

Saturday, October 10, 1891: Police raided two 'gambling dens' in Botany, one on Kent Road the other Botany Road, arresting 67 Chinese.<sup>75</sup>

Saturday July 4, 1891: A successful raid on a 'common gaming house on Botany Road. Those arrested were shackled and taken to Redfern Police Station.

Sunday August 25, 1895: Police led by Inspector Bremmer raided gambling dens on Botany Road disrupting a game of Fan tan.<sup>76</sup> 35 Chinese males and 4 Europeans were taken to Newtown Station. Fines ranged from 20 pounds or three months in gaol to 10 shillings plus costs. 23 of those taken stated they were employed as gardeners with an additional one a vegetable seller.

July 10, 1897: Sub-Inspector Elliot and five other members of the Newtown police made a raid on the Chinese quarters in West Botany Street.<sup>77</sup> Fifteen men were taken into custody and charged with attending a 'common gaming house'. As each officer only had a single pair of handcuffs, each of the arrested men were manacled to another with the odd prisoner being tied by his pigtail as they were marched to Rockdale station and from there to Newtown Police Station.<sup>78</sup> Each

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<sup>74</sup> Virginia Berridge, 'Victorian Opium Eating: Responses to Opiate Usage in Nineteenth-Century England', *Victorian Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 8, 1978, p. 440. See for example *Ipswich Herald and General Advertiser*, January 18, 1879 on colds 'A full dose of quinine can do naught but good, a mustard foot bath, 10 grains of Dover's Powder, a nice warm ginger drink with a glass of sherry...'

<sup>75</sup> 'Raid on Gambling Dens', *Bathurst Free Press and Mining Journal*, October 12, 1891, p. 2.

<sup>76</sup> 'Chinese Fantan Players – Raid on the Botany Dens', *Daily Telegraph*, August 7, 1895, p. 6  
'Chinese Gambling – Raid by the Police – A Botany Retreat', *Australian Star*, August 26, 1895, p. 5.

<sup>77</sup> 'Chinese Gamblers: Raid at Arncliffe', *Evening News*, July 12, 1897, p. 5.

<sup>78</sup> Police behavior on this occasion was subject to outside criticism. Sim Johnson, the translator for the Chinese language newspaper *Australian Herald* wrote to Mr Bruncker, NSW Under

man was subsequently fined 10 s. 8 s. costs. The age of the accused ranged from Mar Qua Yon aged 20 to Sam Lee, aged 54.

Sunday August 24, 1898: 20 constables board a tram to stage a raid in Retreat Street, Waterloo, an area with a large Chinese population. A group of Chinese on board the tram and en route to Arncliffe leap off the tram and commence shouting warnings to the locals.<sup>79</sup>



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Arncliffe and Botany market gardeners also faced the animosity of local branches of the Anti-Chinese League and other populist anti-immigration organisations. These had held meetings since at least August 1861, with gatherings recorded in Ashfield, Balmain, Glebe and in the Mechanic's School of

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Secretary and received an assurance that the practice would not be used in future. 'Chinese Dignity', *Darling Downs Gazette*, August 11, 1897, p. 2.

<sup>79</sup> 'Raid on Chinese', *Armidale Chronicle*, April 30, 1898, p. 7,

<sup>80</sup> Chinese Life in Sydney: Police Raid on a Chinese Gambling Den in Goulburn Street', *Illustrated Sydney News and New South Wales Agriculturist and Grazier*, June 12, 1880, p. 13.

Arts in Pitt Street in that month alone.<sup>81</sup> A similar meeting in Botany in 1878 was said to garnered between 1,000-1,200 supporters.<sup>82</sup> The Newtown branch of the Anti-Chinese League, which existed from at least 1888, and met weekly in the Town Hall Hotel on King's Street had a stated goal of 'eradicating the Chinese from Newtown'.<sup>83</sup> Though not seeming to be a particularly large organisation it could boast officials of considerable importance amongst its members. These included George Hudson Sparkes (1843-1917), Justice of the Peace and Mayor of Camperdown, Stephen Campbell Brown (1829-1882) M.L.A., Charles Whately (1831-1894), an Alderman and by the end of 1888 Mayor of Newtown, Ninian Melville M.L.A. (1843-1897), and Printer, newspaper editor and politician E.W. O'Sullivan (1846-1910) M.L.A. This organisation attempted to impose a ban on Chinese grown vegetables.<sup>84</sup> At a 'regular meeting' on October 25, 1888 it formed a deputation and waited upon the manager of the Newtown Markets requesting that in future no stall should be leased to 'Chinese vegetable vendors'.<sup>85</sup> The manager of the markets assured the League that 'it gave him great pleasure in assisting them in this matter'. The following month the league arranged to meet at the English's Hotel, Kogarah to solicit support from European market gardeners. Of the merchants who continued to deal with Chinese market gardeners they proposed a boycott. Following a torch-lit parade through the streets of Newtown, the League's President C.E. Coles announced that they had

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<sup>81</sup> 'Anti-Chinese Meeting at Balmain', *Empire*, August 31, 1861; 'Notes of the Week', *Sydney Morning Herald*, August 24, 1861; 'Town and Country News', *Sydney Mail*, August 3, 1861, p. 1.

<sup>82</sup> 'Meeting on the Botany Road', *Maitland Mercury and General Advertiser*, December 12, 1878, p. 3.

<sup>83</sup> Mr Cole, 'The Anti-Chinese League', *Australian Star*, August 1, 1888, p. 3.

<sup>84</sup> Vashti Farrer, 'Brown, Stephen Campbell (1829-1882)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.edu.net.au/biography/brown-stephen-campbell-3082/txt4557>, published first in hardcopy 1969, accessed online 25 July 2019.

<sup>85</sup> 'Newtown Anti-Chinese League', *Australian Star*, October 26, 1888, p. 7.

identified some 50 merchants who would be sent a threatening letter and if they did not cease would face an organised boycott.<sup>86</sup> The League's goals were also raised at the Newtown Council minutes of July 3, 1888. A circular and subscription list was also received from the Secretary to the Anti-Chinese League. This was ordered to be laid 'on the counter in the Clerk's office who was authorised to receive any subscriptions etc.'<sup>87</sup>

The boycott did to seem to have adversely affected the Chinese Market Gardeners to any great degree. The normally ferociously chauvinistic *The Bulletin* spoke of 'A Workman's Wife', who was married to a member of the Anti-Chinese League. The piece put forward the case of white women and the 'problem' of buying non-Chinese vegetables. Although being asked to boycott the Chinese hawker, she continued to buy from him, not, she argued, because of her ignorance of political issues—she had thought about it and did 'desire to see the white man hold his own against the heathen'. She had tried, in the spirit of patriotism, to buy only from white hawkers, but discovered that she not only paid three times what she would normally have did so to purchase vegetables that the white sellers had often themselves purchased from Chinese market gardeners.<sup>88</sup> Similar movements to boycott Chinese produce in New Zealand were proposed in Wellington in 1895-6 and Christchurch 1895. In neither case were they successful.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Mr Cole, 'The Anti-Chinese League', *Australian Star*, August 1, 1888, p. 3.

<sup>87</sup> Newtown Council records 1863-1948, <https://www.newtownproject.com.au/2009/06/1888/> accessed 03/07/2019.

<sup>88</sup> 'The Chinese Hawker', *Bulletin*, June 16, 1888, p. 8; Newtown Council records 1863-1948, <https://www.newtownproject.com.au/2009/06/1888/7/> accessed 12/5/2019.

<sup>89</sup> Boileau, *Market Gardens*, p. 101.

Though the boycotting of Chinese grown vegetables proved to be economically unviable the market gardeners still had to endure abuse, mockery and physical assault. As one sympathetic letter writer reported to

SIR – Since the landing of the Chinese by the White Star, and Arabia, the other day, I regret to observe that many of their number have been subjected to the most shameful treatment. Not a day passes that they are not brutally accosted in our streets and maltreated. Busmen, in particular, seem to take a delight in running their vehicles to the opposite side of the road, endangering the safety of the passengers, for the sole purpose of having a cut at these quiet, inoffensive people. Only yesterday, I saw one of these vehicles block the street, whilst some one from behind leapt off the bus and deliberately struck a fearful blow at a Chinaman, of whom there were several together. The poor fellow was knocked down by the force of the stroke, whilst several others were abused by the throwing of stones and rotten eggs, although they had not given the slightest cause for the abuse. Surely something ought to be done now that these men are here, to stop such disgraceful conduct. To blink at such proceedings would be a disgrace to the *Sydney Morning Herald* in 1861.

HUMANITY<sup>90</sup>

Certainly such attacks were frequent. A single issue of the *Sydney Morning Herald* carried reports of three such cases. Edward Cowall and William Jackson (alias Maloney) both aged 15 were charged with assaulting with stones Sam Leung and inflicting a severe wound on his forehead. Two other youths, Patrick and Thomas Burns were charged with kicking, punching and pulling to the ground Ah Hee, whilst William Andrews, a publican, assaulted a cabman whilst shouting ‘This man employed Chinese labour!’<sup>91</sup>

Hawkers were particularly vulnerable. In November 1891, for example, Alexander Colquheum and Michael Feeney approached a vegetable-seller named Yem Fong whilst he was selling wares in Alexandria. First taking his fruit without paying for it, the two assailants then struck the hawker with his carrying stick,

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<sup>90</sup> ‘Ill Treatment of Chinese - To the Editor of the Herald’, SMH, June 22, 1861, p. 4.

<sup>91</sup> ‘Assaulting Chinese’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, December 13, 1878, p. 7.

fracturing his arm.<sup>92</sup> A similar assault was carried out in 1896 when Shang Lee, a market gardener was robbed of some celery. When he remonstrated he was struck on the head and face.<sup>93</sup> Of more severity was an attack on two vegetable hawkers, Ah Boon and Ah Fat, on Christmas Eve 1892. The men were approached by a group of three youths who demanded their wares free of charge. When they refused they were set upon, their assailants hurling rocks, one of which – said to be large enough to fell an ox - fractured Ah Boon's skull, causing his death.<sup>94</sup> Two of the three perpetrators, identified by Boon from his hospital deathbed, were Michael Harrington 16 and William Mercer, 18, both boot-makers.<sup>95</sup> Mercer later received a sentence of seven years penal servitude for manslaughter whilst Harrington was found not guilty.<sup>96</sup>

In the wake of Australian federation the government moved swiftly to introduce legislation designed to control the presence of those it deemed 'unwelcome'. The 1901 Immigration Restriction Act was an attempt to curtail further Chinese immigration – a move taken when Chinese Australians represented only 0.78% of the general population. This 'Natal model' – suggested in 1897 by Foreign Secretary Joseph Chamberlain (1836-1914) – required all potential immigrants to pass a dictation test of 50 European words or face exclusion.<sup>97</sup> This was implemented selectively upon the basis of the applicants' ethnic background and to 'place certain restrictions on Immigration and to

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<sup>92</sup> 'Assault on a Chinaman', *Evening News*, November 11, 1891, p. 6.

<sup>93</sup> 'Assault upon a Chinaman', *Daily Telegraph*, August 12, 1896, p. 6.

<sup>94</sup> 'The Assault on a Chinese – Death of the Victim', *Australian Star*, January 3, 1893. 'Done to Death – The Killing of Ah Poon', *Australian Star*, March 3, 1892, p. 6.

<sup>95</sup> 'Assault on a Chinese – His Dying Depositions Taken', *Australian Star*, December 31, 1892, p. 6.

<sup>96</sup> 'The Redfern Murder – Mercer Found Guilty', *Evening News*, March 1, 1893, p. 5.

<sup>97</sup> Fitzgerald, *Red Tape, Gold Scissors*, p. 30.

provide for the removal from the Commonwealth of prohibited Immigrants.<sup>98</sup> This was followed by the 1903 Naturalisation Act. This legislation excluded non-European migrants from becoming citizens and from 1905 prevented non-Europeans from bringing their wives or children into Australia.<sup>99</sup> Workers needed for specifically Chinese businesses, such as importing, were granted only short term entry permits.<sup>100</sup> Such anti-Chinese attitudes made it increasingly difficult for immigrants from China to arrive in Australia. Between 1888 and 1893 over 4,000 Chinese passed through Sydney but only 104 sought to disembark in Sydney. Of these only 13 paid their poll tax.<sup>101</sup> For those already within Sydney it became a choice between remaining indefinitely or returning to China permanently. Added to the falling numbers of Chinese to work the gardens the 1920s and 1930s saw an influx of arrivals from Southern Europe.<sup>102</sup> Greeks, Italians, Maltese and Yugoslavians all settled in New South Wales and set up their own market gardens.

Bayside market gardens were already vulnerable. Areas around the Cooks River had been severely damaged by the great flooding of 1889.<sup>103</sup> Tramvale – an area from modern Victoria Road to Sydenham Station – had been completely engulfed after four days of torrential rain and market gardens situated along the Cooks River had been washed away and their accompanying accommodation had

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<sup>98</sup> 'Immigration Restriction Act 1901', <https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C1901A00017> (Federal Register of Legislation), accessed July 22, 2019.

<sup>99</sup> Morag Loh, 'Testimony from White Australia – Oral History with Chinese Immigrants and Their Descendants', *The La Trobe Journal*, No. 90, 2012, p. 113.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>101</sup> Fitzgerald, *Red Tape, Gold Scissors*, p. 30

<sup>102</sup> Boileau, *Market Gardening*, p. 116.

<sup>103</sup> 'Great Flood at Marrickville', *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miner's Advocate*, May 29, 1889, p. 3.

been destroyed.<sup>104</sup> Railway expansion further encroached upon the territory of the market gardeners. In 1931, for example, the new railway traversed the farms around the Wolli Valley.<sup>105</sup> Leases were not renewed and former market gardens were converted into housing or light industry.<sup>106</sup> Similar loss of land occurred in Rockdale.<sup>107</sup> Thereafter market gardening across the valley sharply declined. In 1944 the *Propeller*, a paper published in Hurstville, reported that 'a six acre Chinese market garden in West Botany Street, Arncliffe, had been abandoned as 'its owner could not sell his produce at a reasonable price... the Chinese walked off, leaving the tomatoes to rot.'<sup>108</sup> By the year 2000 only a few, centred on the muddy Creek area near Botany, survived.<sup>109</sup>

Conversely, even as this occurred, Chinese Australians were becoming more confident and expanding out of their traditional occupations of market gardening and cabinet making. By the beginning of the twentieth century the opportunity for profitable business dealings amongst the new generation of Chinese migrants had far outstripped their nineteenth-century forbears. Providing vegetables for an increasing Australian urban population market gardeners and hawkers recognised the advantages of fluency in the language of their adoptive country.<sup>110</sup> *The Self-Educator*, a phrase book with sections for vegetable sellers and hawkers was published by Sun Johnson, a Chinese

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<sup>104</sup> 'History of cooks River', <http://www2.canterbury.nsw.gov.au/cooknet/www/html/209-history-of-cooks-river.html?guiValue=23957EFC-630A-4B49-955A-599EE82E4977> accessed 19/07/2019; Chrys Meader, 'Sydenham' *Sydney Journal*, No. 1, 2008, p. 113.

<sup>105</sup> Ian Tyrrell, *River Dreams – The People and Landscape of the Cooks River*, Sydney 2018.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>107</sup> Boileau, *Market Gardens*, p. 116.

<sup>108</sup> 'Market Garden Abandoned – What Happened at Arncliffe', *Propeller*, January 20, 1944, p. 3.

<sup>109</sup> Tyrrell, *River Dreams*.

<sup>110</sup> Mei-Fen Kuo, *Making Chinese Australia: Urban Elite, Newspapers and the Formation of Chinese-Australian Identity, 1892-1912*, Victoria, 2013, p. 261.

newspaper editor, in Sydney around 1892.<sup>111</sup> The Chinese language periodicals such as the *Chinese Australian Herald* similarly provided an opportunity to expand knowledge of wider Australian customs and society.<sup>112</sup> The children of market gardeners, often on the advice of their parents, chose to take up less taxing and undependable occupations.<sup>113</sup>

Finally, though this work has painted a bleak picture of Australian attitudes towards Chinese migrants it would be wrong to posit this as being universal. Liam Ward's *Radical Chinese Labour in Australian History* has challenged the perception of the Chinese being pliant and non-unionised competitors to Australian workers. He provides revealing examples of the two groups working together in their class interest. The 'Red Ribbon' rebellion, for example, led by former Chartist George Thompson (1826-1899) involved both groups marching in opposition to the mining licence fee.<sup>114</sup> Vegetable hawkers and their customers could, and did, cross the cultural barriers of respectability. Kate Bagnall has detailed cross-cultural relationships in her work 'Across the Threshold: White Women and Chinese Hawkers in the White Colonial Imaginary' and Margaret Egerton, wrote of her interaction in her 1896 piece 'My Chinese':

From that day a strong friendship sprang up between us, and it was my custom each week to present him with some of my choicest flowers, cakes

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<sup>111</sup> Kate Bagnall, 'Across the Threshold: White Women and Chinese Hawkers in the White Colonial Imaginary', *Hecate: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Women's Liberation*, Vol. 28, No. 2, 2008, p. 14.

<sup>112</sup> Kuo, *Making Chinese Australia*, p. 264.

<sup>113</sup> Loh, 'Testimony from White Australia', p. 116.

<sup>114</sup> Liam Ward, 'Radical Chinese Labour in Australian History', *Marxist Left Review*, No. 10, 2015, <https://marxistleftreview.org/articles/radical-chinese-labour-in-australian-history/> accessed 09/06/2019; Dorothy Kiers, Thompson, George Edward (1826-1889), Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/thomson-george-edward4716/text7761>, published first in hardcopy 1976, accessed online 23 July 2019.

and preserves, while he, on his side, quite embarrassed me with the royal munificence of his gifts.<sup>115</sup>

A similar sentiment is displayed by the unknown artist of *Christmas in*

*Melbourne*:



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<sup>115</sup> *Cosmos Magazine*, September 19, 1896.

<sup>116</sup> Christmas in Melbourne: a Chinese pedlar making presents to his customers, Artist unknown, *The Graphic*, 24 December 1887. Chinese Museum, Melbourne 1985.07.13