


Marina Wihongi's Report on Rewi Alley Youth Tour, 2017


Mokori ano Kia a rere a mihi Kia koutou E te Whanau

Da Jia hao, wode Ming zi shi Marina Wihongi, Wo de Zhong wen Mingzi shi Wei ruina, wo de nichen shi nana.

Hello everyone. My name is Marina Wihongi, my Chinese name is Wei Ruina & my nickname is Nana. I am 16 years old and was the youngest on this trip.

Before I came to China  I was unaware of this amazing opportunity until my good friend suggested I should fill in this application from the New Zealand China Friendship Society. I didn't have to give any personal information so I ended up filling it in and 4 days later I got a call from Dave Bromwich from the NZCFS saying, "When are you able to fly to China"? And I said, "This is real? Whenever will be okay!"

The 16th of July, 2017, changed my life. This was the day that started my journey. I left New Zealand for the first time ever. I honestly didn't know what to expect; we didn't know what was happening, where we were going besides Beijing/Gansu province & Shanghai, where we were

staying, nothing! But I just had trust in Dave. I was so scared  to jump on the plane



But I did it and 12 hours later we arrived in Shanghai. The heat surprised me! I was not expecting 45 degrees at all. I was so happy when Joe, our guide found us. We went to visit the Hongkou Fire Station where Rewi Alley first arrived on the 21st of April 1927 & volunteered to

become a firefighter.



My best highlight of this day was going to the Bund at night. I loved all the lights on the buildings and took heaps of photos with the group and the guys from Lanzhou City University, who were looking after us.

The 18th of July was the day we went to visit the house where Soong Qing Ling lived. Rewi Alley & Soong Qing Ling were good friends. They had connections in Hong Kong & Beijing and began a very long friendship together. Soong Qing Ling [*who latterly became Vice President of the PRC*] had 2 sisters [Soong Meiling, wife of Chiang Kaishek, and Soong Ailing The three sisters were a great support for CIC with Rewi being the consultant.

The highlight of this day was learning how Rewi Alley had so many connections around China and yet he didn't get any support from his own country (New Zealand).

The 19th of July we went for a 3 hour bus ride from Xi'an to Baoji to visit the cave factory where we met new people. This visit was important because Rewi & George Hogg first met in Baoji and George was the foreign secretary of CIC northwest office and later on they both ended up teaching. Years later the Japanese bombed Xi'an. Rewi Alley suggested they continue to build the factory and they gave this work to a famous Jianye company to build the factory. Mr Liguowei employed local people to work in the factory. If one family member worked there they could support their

entire family for food, water etc.. The construction started in January 1941 and was completed on February 28th 1942. There were 24 caves but now only 19 remain - the others having collapsed. The total tunnelling was 1.75 km long & there are 6 tunnels that connect 7 caves in order to transport machinery/ materials and the products in and out. The factory employed at its height, 3,142 workers. In the beginning they followed usual practice by working a two-shift 24 hour operation. However, the management were progressive and realised by moving to a three-shift 24 hour operation they would increase productivity and in the process provide more families with an income. They did not live there until after the Japanese bombing ended for safety reasons for the company staff. I felt really overwhelmed that there were about 30-40 people waiting to greet us outside in the blazing hot sun and the welcome was so warm. I felt proud to be a part of the Rewi Alley legacy. Also I was amazed at how long the buildings have been there and they are in such a great condition after so long. The caves were constructed by hand using picks and shovels and brute human strength. The residual earth was taken away and used to repair local roads. I honestly loved the caves because of their history and how the development came to be. At the end of the day we had dinner at the day-care centre where Rewi Alley took his family to eat vegetarian food. It was my first-ever time eating vegetarian food and, I'll be honest, it was quite different but really



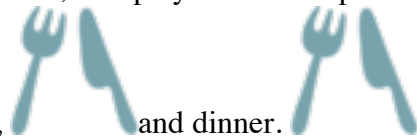
nice . After we all had eaten, I sang a *waiata* (song) called *He Honore He Kororia* to the students/local people in the restaurant. It was a great idea to end our day at the family restaurant.

The 20th of July was an interesting day. Something I would not think of actually doing in China was when the Xin Xi Lan [New Zealand] group and teachers walked down to the local markets in Zhangye and tried some of the yummiest food I've ever tasted e.g: the potatoes, the spicy

vegetables, the spicy chicken or pork - it just made me look forward to eating breakfast,



lunch, and dinner. It was the best Chinese local food I've ever tasted.



The 22nd of July we went to Shandan to look at some artifacts donated by Rewi Alley. There were over 3,700 items, the vast majority dating from the Ming & Qing dynasties. There were scrolls, paintings, plates, coins, porcelain and statuettes etc. If Rewi Alley had sold these, he would have been as rich as Croesus. What stood out to me was how I saw broken glass around the back area. I was thinking, " Why are these there? Is it to protect the artifacts or what? Also I loved visiting the cemetery where Rewi & George are buried. It was a very nice place and when I saw the tombs, it looked like they were royalty! It was big, flashy and was a very traditional cemetery and I was

amazed how the group gave flowers to Rewi & George as well as a song which was






George Hogg's favourite. It made me cry and honestly touched me. The highlight of this day was visiting the Bailie Technical School, where Rewi Alley worked in the 1940s, & the new Bailie International Vocational College in Shandan, Gansu Province. He introduced a lot of hardworking and practical/ technical talents for the New China and really inspired me as a young lady how I might have a positive impact on young children or youth/students enabling me to pass




down the knowledge I've gained on this 14 day trip. In this way, I might continue the Rewi Alley and George Hogg legacy.


The 24th of July was the best way to spend time getting to know Lanzhou and Beijing university


students/ teachers. This was achieved by having a singing  and dancing  performance as a cultural learning day with the Chinese students giving speeches and singing a song in Chinese with Stacey and I performing a haka in Maori. We also taught the Chinese students

the hokey pokey which was very funny.  We then had to catch a 22-hour train ride together which I liked and made so many friends that I didn't want to get off. We shared so many


laughs, and stories, and told so many jokes but above all getting to know everyone better. 

The 27th of July was the best day of my life because my dream came true. This was the opportunity to climb the Great Wall of China with a great group of friends whom I now call my

family  It was very hard and tiring but making it to the top was worth every step of the way. I was intrigued about the history behind the Great Wall of China and how it developed. But walking back down the wall, my legs were shaking like crazy, they were so sore, but I was proud of

all of us who climbed the wall and to be honest I would love to climb it again 

The 28th of July was such a sad day for me because that was the day we had to say our goodbyes to the [Lanzhou City University] teachers/helpers & the students. I didn't want them to leave but I know they had to. I remember them saying, " We will see each other in the future." They all became my extended family and I hope to see them all in Xin Xi Lan [*New Zealand*] or I will come

back to China to visit them all. I said, " I love you all".  □

I would like to thank Mr Dave Bromwich of the New Zealand China Friendship Society for giving me this amazing once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to make such new friends and I am truly grateful to have been chosen out of applicants. I'll never forget this journey. It will always be a part of my life. Also I'd like to thank all the teachers/helpers/tour guides for expanding my knowledge on Rewi Alley & George Hogg's legacy, as well as to the president of Lanzhou City University for giving me the chance to accept the scholarship to join the Lanzhou City University. I was so



surprised I didn't know what to say. But I said, "In 3 years you will see me again". I would like to take the opportunity to thank my friends so much for everything they've done for me, the hospitality, kindness, generosity, and love they've shown me. I'd like to say they are the best people I know. I thank everyone who put this amazing trip together because without it, I wouldn't have been able to experience/ share and create so many memories, stories, knowledge &



friendships. Xie Xie