

# Tuene Henderson's Report on the Rewi Alley Youth Tour, 2017

## **Impressions of Rewi Alley (and George Hogg) and their relevance today in China and NZ**

Before coming to China, I honestly had never heard of Rewi Alley or George Hogg. However, after following Alley's footsteps all around China, I have learned so much about his efforts here. I have now come to appreciate all of his work and the legacy he has created here, as it has contributed to the strong relationship that New Zealand and China hold today. He positively changed and influenced the lives of the Chinese people during a period where they desperately needed it. He dedicated his life to the Chinese, and it definitely shows. There are museums, memorials and statues solely dedicated to him in nearly every city we travelled to (10 cities in 10 days). He established many corporate [*Gung Ho*] organisations and [*Baillie*] schools. Alley is so celebrated here that it makes me upset that New Zealand lacks the knowledge and respect for such an influential Kiwi. Owing to Alley's philanthropic work, it has moved me to want to do the same thing and help influence a country for the better. China has also given me great perspective on the life I lead at home. I am so keen to educate everyone on Rewi Alley.

## **Impressions of China, Chinese culture and society from your experiences**

My first impression of China was that it was extremely hot, crowded and hard to breathe. We went from a freezing 8 degrees (in New Zealand) to 40+ degrees, so it was a massive change! We had no idea what to expect, but everyone was so welcoming and Shanghai was huge! It took us a long time to get from one place to another. I didn't expect to like China much, but it exceeded all of my expectations and I have fully fallen in love with the people, the culture and the country!

Loved the Chinese culture! Everything seemed to interest me and everything is so beautiful and thought out. I find the Chinese history, detailing and views so fascinating and different from anything in New Zealand.

Chinese society is so different from that of New Zealand, in my opinion. Everyone is focussed on their own lives and not interested in judging others. Everyone works extremely hard and has the ultimate goal of obtaining a successful job. China seems to be very strict and money-driven. However, everyone has the kindest, warmest and open natures, which are hard qualities to find. There is no negativity from anyone, and I really appreciate the way everyone lives their lives, presents themselves and interacts with others.

## **Impressions of Chinese Youth, their thoughts, their ambitions**

The best thing about my trip was absolutely the people, as we travelled with a group of Chinese university students and teachers [*from Lanzhou City University*]. I was so incredibly touched by the warmth, friendliness and the openness of the Chinese people, who I am now so honoured to call my family. They are the most beautiful people I have ever met and we still keep in touch every single day. They made me feel at home in a foreign country and have now made China such a special place for me and I can't wait to return and see them all!

The thing that I learned about the Chinese youth was that they are all very driven and hard workers, with the ultimate aim to get a successful job. They were all so different: some louder than others, some more confident than others and some who tried to speak English more than others. They are all such kindhearted and open people, which are characteristics you don't usually find in New Zealand people. We still keep in touch everyday.

## **Was this tour worthwhile for you to join. Any life-changing moments?**

This tour was the best and most rewarding experience of my life. I feel so incredibly blessed and honoured to have been given the opportunity to travel to the most amazing parts of China with the absolute best company. These people opened my eyes to how everyone should be treated, and that is with the utmost respect. From following Rewi Alley's footsteps, I was able to witness his contribution and dedication to the Chinese and it has inspired me to want to help people in need. China has

definitely changed my life. I look forward to returning next year as I would very much like to take up Lanzhou City University's offer of a Rewi Alley scholarship there!