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No. 8 – September 2018



**Invitation to  
Mid-Autumn Garden Party  
September 30, 2 - 4 p.m.  
Huangshi Chinese Garden**



***You (and friends) are invited to a party to celebrate the Chinese Mid-Autumn Festival, the Equinox (Spring in the Southern Hemisphere), Full Moon, China's National Day (October 1) and the start of NZ Daylight Time.***

***Good reasons for a party!***

***Enjoy time in Nelson's Chinese Garden.***

***Taste a selection of Chinese teas.***

***Tea and Chinese delicacies will be provided by China Friendship Society. The party will be cancelled in case of bad weather. If in doubt, ring Bruce Ward (538 0344) or Barbara Markland (544 4712) for information.***

## August Meeting - Main Speaker, Richard Chen

Richard Chen was going to speak about Confucianism and its applications in modern China, but he started with the story of his family's experiences during the Cultural Revolution. This was a long and fascinating story and it was important that Richard kept on to share with us his early life under the Mao regime.

He was born in 1949 when Chiang Kai Shek was retreating to Taiwan and Mao Zedong had become the first chairman of the Peoples Republic of China. Richard's father was dismissed from his university teaching job and transferred to Beijing to teach surveying and map-making for the central information system. Everyone had to join the communist party and wear a uniform. Mao instituted the Great Leap Forward in which everyone was to return to their home towns - 'We cannot feed idle people'. But Richard's father could stay in Beijing, although he, his mother and brothers went to their home town in Shanxi to live with grandparents who were steeped in Confucian theory. The life was very primitive and they were very poor. For 6 years they did labouring jobs and lived a subsistence life, eating porridge made of vegetable skins and flour. Many people died from starvation and hard work.

In 1964 the family went back to Beijing. The children had funny countryside dialects, but they could now learn fast in a safer environment. Their father was a professor, and their mother a wise and loving influence, though uneducated. Richard remembers going to Tiananmen Square at 5am to stand for 5 hours to shout 'Long live Chairman Mao' on National Day. During this time many people were shamed and paraded in the streets on trucks with labels announcing their crimes, this included Richard's father. One day Richard's mother sent the children to see their own father imprisoned with other academics sitting on the floor in a bare room. He was later exiled to Gansu province for being a Kuomintang man. Richard's mother was also paraded with her head shaved. Thus the family spent 3 years seeing condemned people being paraded for various 'crimes'.

When Richard was 15, he was lucky to be chosen to go to a military training facility in Hunan. He was there for 4 years, making good use of his opportunities to learn and develop communication skills. He grew to be in charge of equipment for the army.

On his return to Beijing after being judged as re-educated, Richard quickly passed university exams, having been tutored by his father. He concentrated on English, technical drawing, and factory management. He rose to management positions and was awarded a Kissinger scholarship to study in the States.

In New Zealand, Richard has found a peaceful place to think about the meaning of life, to read, and work at home-schooling his teenage sons.

On Confucianism as the basis of modern China, Richard finished with some brief comments. He said Confucius was a 'wise guy' and was very practical. He did not write books, but his thoughts were put together by others, sometimes long after he was gone. Richard has read lots of books about western and eastern philosophies and has tried to clarify the differences between the west and China. Confucian thought is now being revived throughout the world. Confucians are not atheists. He did not want to talk about life after death, saying 'We do not know enough about life, why should we worry about life after death?' Most of what Confucius said was commonsense. For over 2000 years Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism have existed side by side in China, with people paying honour to one or other as they felt applicable to their own lives.

Richard asked 'What is the way China wants to go in future?' He thinks they want to build a socialist society with Chinese characteristics. Every country must find its own way. Democracy and authoritarianism have been tried and there are problems with both. China seems to be trying to find a third way - to form a balance between democratic and authoritarian principles.



## From Nelson Executive

- Nelson's Masked Parade is scheduled for the last Friday in October. In order to avoid that event our 'October' meeting will be November 2. The next meeting after that will be November 30, as there are 5 Fridays in November.
- Main current emphasis is in planning for three events:
  - 1 Garden Party in the Huangshi Chinese Garden September 30 at 2 p.m.
  - 2 Nelson's displays for New Zealand Chinese Language Week September 23-29. Mandarin Language classes in the Nayland College Language Hub, Clifton Terrace School, Henley School, and Nelson Intermediate School have been preparing displays under the guidance of their Mandarin Language Assistants. Rather than hanging these displays in trees as originally planned, they will be hung in selected shop windows in the CBD.
  - 3 Liangyang Senior High School Arts and Cultural Visit to Nelson. The committee decided to:
    - invite a group of 8 students and 2 teachers to Nelson in March 2019,
    - accept a draft programme from Ian Lister for the visit,
    - plan for funding from available branch funds, but continue to seek contribution from other sources, including NZCFS Deng Fund,
    - establish a working group to continue planning.

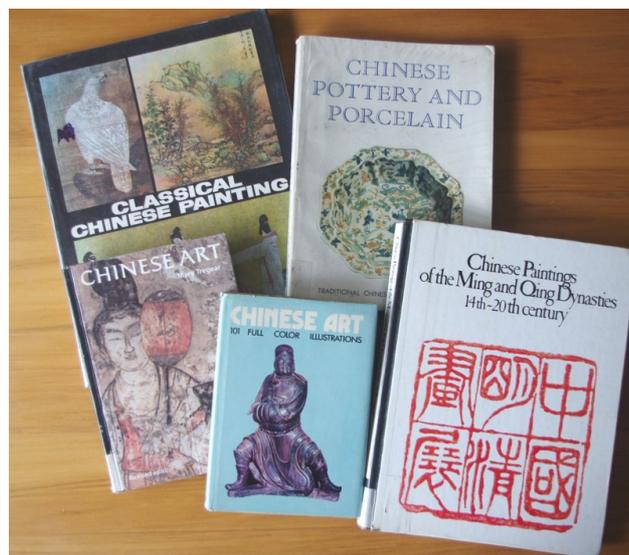
## Chinese Art & Culture books

At the August Branch meeting, Jill Blechynden presented some Chinese art and culture books to the branch library. Jill had collected these when they were discontinued from the Nelson Library as she has a long-held interest in China through her father's family. She presented a short talk on her grandfather's China experience.

He was a marine engineer from Northumberland, working on ships around the world. In Tokyo, around 1876, he was employed to design boats for the US Navy. Later he set up an engineering consultancy in Shanghai. He emigrated with his family to New Zealand in 1906, but continued to work in Shanghai for part of each year. He bought a block of land in central Nelson, (Bronte Street area) and two bush properties in the Tophouse area. These later became Roundell Station.

On his frequent trips to China, Jill's grandfather brought back many interesting artefacts and works of art. Jill showed us some tiny slippers for the 'bound feet' of the day, some white jade, and a box of silver coins that had been hollowed out so as to steal some silver and replace it with other metal of the same weight.

We are grateful to Jill for the books which add nicely to our library collection and also for the insights into Shanghai society in the years after the Boxer rebellion.



## Nelson Displays for New Zealand Chinese Language Week, September 23-29

Over the last couple of weeks, students studying Mandarin with Nelson's three MLAs have been working on displays for New Zealand Chinese Language Week, held annually in September. Some of the children have been blowing black paint on paper using straws to 'paint' the branches of plum trees, then tapping a finger in red paint to make the seasonal flowers. The photos on the next page show how this has been done on paper plates by Nayland College students. Other samples show Chinese symbols and Chinese words with class sentiments such as 'Chinese people are cool'. We have many samples which will be used to make displays in some shop windows in Central Nelson.



## Perceptions of China

NZ China Council have recently published results of a survey on perceptions of China. Some of the findings are quite positive.

- 43% of New Zealanders say New Zealand's relationship with China is positive, while 14% say it is negative
- More than one third (39%) of New Zealanders would like to see trade between New Zealand and China increase, 12% want to see it decrease, while 38% want it to remain the same.
- 69% of New Zealanders think Mandarin is one of the most useful foreign languages New Zealand schools can teach.

More information is available at <https://nzchinacouncil.org.nz/news/>.

## USA-China Trade War – Threat or opportunity?

On 29 August Auckland Branch hosted a panel discussion on this topic at Auckland University. National President Dave Bromwich joined fellow panellists: Stephen Jacobi of the NZ China Council, Dr Zhi Dong of the Auckland Business School and Ms Naisi Chen, past president of the Chinese University Students Association and the 2017 candidate for Labour at the East Coast Bays electorate.

The topic draws on the Chinese term for 'crisis' 危机 *wei ji* – with its two component parts: *wei* meaning danger and *ji* meaning opportunity. This is exactly the example used by Dave Bromwich in his speech 'Understanding Chinese Culture: the challenge to the West' mentioned in our newsletter last month.

A summary of the discussion can be found at <http://nzchinasociety.org.nz/?p=33557> and Stephen Jacobi's full speech is available at <https://nzchinacouncil.org.nz/news/>.