

President's Notebook September 2010

Website: www.nzchinasociety.org.nz

CANTERBURY EARTHQUAKE

Christchurch members appreciate the many messages from around New Zealand and from our friends in China enquiring about our well-being following our shocking earthquake. Most members experienced breakages within their houses, a frightening time and the occasional fallen chimney, plus a few who unfortunately experienced serious house foundation moving. Contacting those in the worst hit areas is hampered by their phones still being off and some have temporarily moved to live with family members or friends and are difficult to locate. Some have only now had their water reconnected and a few are without sewer still.

Those whose houses may need rebuilding we think may be a handful and they themselves still do not know if that is the case until further inspections have been made. Judy, Christchurch Branch President, and I went visiting one members home this last weekend in the worst hit area, no one was home (she may be overseas), the house was green stickered meaning it could be occupied, but a neighbour showed us his house also so marked that had completely split its foundation and his house may have to be rebuilt.

Di Madgin, National Executive member and Bill Willmott live in an area badly affected, now have the water on, a green sticker but an uncertain house future. Di is coping with her school class reunion, a tennis tournament, her mother's rest home being closed, a daughter's scheduled operation and partially living at home and in other places while the sewer remains unconnected – she is of staunch Southland pioneering background.

The earthquake struck worst in a handful of specific

localities, ranging from the countryside closer to the epicenter to patches in the suburbs, plus the older buildings in the city centre. Most Christchurch people spent time caring for each other, their friends and relatives, especially those living by themselves who find the continuous shakes most upsetting.

A 7.1 earthquake at night is like being tumbled in darkness in a washing machine riding a roller coaster with the noise of a few express trains. In darkness, rudely jolted awake into this nightmare ride, the choice of moving to your predetermined safety spot from the bucking bed, seemed madness like trying to get to another roller coaster while both are going at full speed!

We were amazed our house had so little damage after such an experience, but then we were not right on top of the fault line nor in one of the areas whose soil structure reacted badly to constant vibration. An Asian friend said he now knew New Zealand homes were very well built! All the Society members we have been able to speak to or exchange emails, have their individual stories and this event will be a defining one in our city's history.

Member Lubra Roth says (she, husband Eddie are fine but they have family members whose house is very much lopsided living with them). *“By this morning, we've had exactly 365 aftershocks, one for each day of the year. Should stop now, but only God knows the answer. We are all exhausted from lack of sleep, anxious not knowing when the next aftershock is going to take place, where? how deep? & how strong? Nothing one can do against mother nature!”*

One of our Chinese members, a teacher describes her experiences. *“I have all the symptoms-anxious, can't*

concentrate, upset, can't sleep well, the worst, I don't have insurance. I had experienced 6.4 and 7.3 GRT in Taiwan but not the landslip nor so many aftershocks. I continually dream when kids were young. We have not got fresh water back yet, can't flush toilet. City council checked the house yesterday-GREEN card. 😊 I thought I could not take further responsibility for the property fixed. John, an adult learner from the class kindly offered to check the ceiling & under the floor".

Earthquake web sites became our most important source of information including geonet.org.nz which lists the after-shocks, plus maps.google.co.nz where you find the after-shocks shown in terrifying detail, to such a stage that we knew last Tuesday they were creeping closer to our home by the hour going to bed with the last one only two kms away!. Did we need to know! On Wednesday, sure enough, the epi centre of an after-shock was in the fields at the end of our short street only 200 metres away. Now I know a 3.5 after shock close by is 100th less than 7.1 one miles away!

We will keep you informed of where help for individual members would be appreciated, but it could be sometime before we really know. Your offers are very much appreciated and reassuring as we calm down and normalise our lives.

PROMINENT PERSONS & LEADERS DELEGATION

Our 2010 Delegation has headed out to Shanghai and the Friendly and Sister Cities two yearly Conference and other special events and visits. We are pleased to hear they are enjoying the themselves although that cannot be easy for Bill Willmott, Delegation Leader, who left home a day after the earthquake struck.

TOUR LEADERS FOR 2011 WANTED

With two great tours planned for next year, one to Tibet, one to Shanxi and Henan, Expressions of Interest are invited from suitably experienced or members knowledgeable about China who would like to be considered as leaders. Contact Vice President Trevor Linyard linyards@actrix.co.nz

SMALL TREES IN HUNAN

Well known author & poet, Owen Marshall of Timaru, was in the Society's Prominent Persons & Leaders Delegation in 2008 that visited Hunan, in his latest book of published poems, is:

*We boat in the Yellow Dragon cave, listen
To speeches of friendship in translation.
We see hand-crafted silver, ethnic dancers
Translucent porcelain, and a swollen short-
Haired dog in the canal. We are accorded
Banquets with duck, turtle and bullfrog, and
Watch toffee being pulled on an iron hook.*

*But the memory that chooses me, that persists
Outside actuality and photograph, is of the
Small trees at dusk on Hunan's hills.
Whole slopes green with citrus trees holding
Lamps of mandarin among their darkening leaves.*

"Sleepwalking in Antarctica & Other Poems" by Owen Marshall, published by Canterbury University Press.

JAMES BERTRAM SCHOLARSHIP

Great news – Victoria University of Wellington has established a scholarship in memory of James Bertram, former Professor of English and first chair of our Wellington Branch. Jim, a Rhodes Scholar from Otago, was the China reporter for the London Telegraph in the 1930s & his interview of Chairman Mao Zedong at Yan'an, became the only piece in Mao's collected works not written by Mao This scholarship was announced in July by Prime Minister John Key in Beijing, provides for a Masters of Arts degree in International Relations at Victoria University and a MA in Public Policy at Beijing University, including six months study of Chinese Language. See our web site "What's New".

TEACHER URGENTLY REQUIRED - SHANDAN

Available for start as soon as possible, or late February, 2011, Conversational English, 14 to 16 hours per week for students aged 17 to 20. A teaching qualification or degree required, age limit of under 65. Salary 3000 yuan per month, air fares support, travel within China and an apartment provided. Contact Dave Bromwich dbchinz@xtra.co.nz with a brief CV.

Regards, Eric Livingstone, National President