

Christchurch Branch Newsletter – July 2021

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IMPORTANT MESSAGE

there will be no meeting on 29 July

Winter programme

Over the winter months we will change our meeting time from the last Thursday of the month at night to a daytime meeting at the weekend.

Our next function will be:

12:00 noon Sunday 1 August
Little Spicy, 87 Riccarton Road
Cost: \$20

<https://www.menulog.co.nz/restaurants-little-spicy-chinese-restaurant/>

For those of you who do not like their food too spicy (and I'm one of them!), do not be put off by the name Little Spicy; they will provide a Yum cha set menu to cater for all tastes, and the chef will explain the different types of food to us.

It should be an interesting and enjoyable afternoon. If you plan on going:

please RSVP by 28 July to christchurch@nzcfs.com

Magnificence of Embroidery exhibition

The exhibition runs until 29 August and is open Tuesday to Sunday 9am – 3pm.

Our first winter meeting was Sunday 27 June at the Fo Guang Shan Buddhist Temple in Riccarton Road.

About 12 members were given a tour of the temple by the friendly and helpful guide, who explained how the temple functions and the significance of the religious symbols in it. Following the tour and talk we went into the café for a delicious vegetarian lunch; highly recommended.

Of course once we had finished our tasty lunches, we were eager to view the Magnificence of Embroidery exhibition, which is the work of YAO Hong Ying, an artist from Suzhou, the hometown of Chinese silk embroidery. She grew up in a village where almost every woman was good at embroidering, including her grandmother, mother and sister. She became interested in hand embroidery work at eight years of age, and her embroidery skills were already very good by the time she graduated from senior high school, having learned from her mother and sister.



She later sharpened her skills when she apprenticed herself to the great embroidery master Wang Wenzu in the Suzhou Embroidery Research Institute. In 1999, after she became a certified craft artist, YAO Hong Ying founded her own embroidery studio in Zhenhu. She won the award of excellence in the Chinese Arts and Crafts Fine Works Exhibition in the same year. Since 2002, she has won many gold, silver and bronze medals at different arts and crafts shows. In 2005, she held her first embroidery exhibition in Taiwan, which hit the headlines in the local media.

Embroidering flowers and birds, oil paintings, and portraits are all YAO Hong Ying's specialty. She is especially good at embroidering religious subjects such as Buddha, Guanyin and arhats (*In Buddhism, an arhat or arahant is one who has gained insight into the true nature of existence and has achieved nirvana. Mahayana Buddhist traditions have used the term for people far advanced along the path of Enlightenment, but who may not have reached full Buddhahood*).

Ms YAO uses both parallel and random stitches. The needle is her paint brush, and the threads are the colours. She incorporates thin and thick threads, long and short stitches and different techniques of colour, layering and winding to create combinations of lines with rich expressions; quite remarkable and complex.

This exhibition is simply stunning. As silk has been used, by moving backwards and forwards you can allow the light to play on different parts of each artwork, which makes it come alive and seem to move; quite fascinating. They even provide magnifying glasses so that viewers can get a really close up look at the work involved.

We were confused as to how one person could have done so much work in one lifetime, especially after being told that some of them took six years to complete, but then the guide explained how she has a team of skilled embroiderers working with her. I



would think she works like the great artists of the past, who did the same thing; they would do the hands and faces etc and other skilled artists would do the rest.

All in all it was a very pleasant afternoon, thoroughly enjoyed by everyone. The temple has a lovely peacefulness to it; in a busy world that's a treasure to enjoy and value. I know I have included quite a few photos here, but with such a fabulous exhibition, I think that's warranted. Of course, as with all art work, they look much better than they do in a photograph.

If you have not been to see it yet, please go (dates and opening hours are above), be sure to tell them you are a member of the New Zealand China Friendship Society, you can be assured of a warm welcome - and be sure to visit their café afterwards, on both counts you will not be disappointed!



A Century of Friendship towards a Shared Future

On 11 May, the Beijing People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries held a webinar to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of China <http://www.bjyx.org.cn/portal/xsbnmyyq/#/>. This was reported on in our June newsletter, where we had the speech given by our national president Dave Bromwich. We said at that time other speeches would follow.

Elspeth Sandys is a cousin of Rewi Alley. In 2017 she travelled to China with other family members to mark the ninetieth anniversary of Rewi's arrival in Shanghai in 1927. An outcome of that journey was her book *A Communist in the Family*. It is a superb read, and is highly recommended for anyone who wants to better understand this fascinating man. To whet your appetite for the book, following is Elspeth's speech; very interesting.

Elspeth Sandys' speech

When Rewi left New Zealand in 1926 he was not a communist. He believed in the British Empire, the Monarchy and, to a lesser extent, the Established Church. He'd voted for National - the right-wing party - in the election of 1925. What he would have called himself at that time was a soldier. He'd fought, and been decorated for bravery, in the First World War. But by 1926 the war had been over for eight years. For six of those years Rewi had been a farmer. But like many men returning from the trenches, he'd been given land under a government scheme that was virtually un-farmable. In 1926, with nothing to show for his years of labour, Rewi walked away.



What was he to do now? His brothers and sisters were all in professions - nursing, teaching, childhood education. He, was, at least in his father's estimation, the dunce in the family. One day his eye was caught by news of the revolution going on in China. Maybe I should go and take a look, he thought. See if I can help a bit. If there was one thing he knew he was good at, it was soldiering. Rewi arrived in Shanghai in April 1927. He had no clear plan, nor much idea about what was going on. All he knew about China was what he'd read, and his reading, inevitably, was limited to what the British had to say about a country they'd been exploiting for decades. He would learn quickly. Within three days he'd landed a job with the Shanghai Fire Service. He immediately set about mastering the language, and trying to make sense of the chaos around him. Shanghai was not governed by the Chinese. It was part of a Concession ceded to the British and the French, and as such subject to their laws. The life on offer to Rewi was comfortable. He was an officer, with access to all the best clubs and parks. He had a chauffeur to drive him to work. But he couldn't close his eyes to what he saw when he left the leafy streets of the Concessions and wandered into the longtangs and alleys where the Chinese lived in conditions worse than anything he'd seen in the trenches of France. This was the time of the White Terror. It wasn't just inhuman living and working conditions Rewi witnessed, but the random execution of anyone even vaguely suspected of being a communist. The united government of Nationalists and Communists, advocated by Sun Yatsen, had collapsed. From 1927 on, despite intermittent periods of co-operation, Chiang Kaishek, the Nationalist leader, would do everything in his power to rid China of what he called those 'red bandits'.

Rewi didn't meet Zhou Enlai in 1927 despite both men being in Shanghai at that time. Years later, when the two men became friends, they would look back on the events of that year and wonder at their proximity to one another at such a crucial time in China's history. Zhou, recently returned from study in Paris, was the mastermind behind a city-wide strike in Shanghai. He was one of the lucky ones. He escaped with his life. But now he had a price on his head. To Chiang, Zhou was the number two red bandit, Mao being number one. Eventually Chiang would label Rewi a red bandit too. And put a price on his head.

For the first few years after Rewi's arrival in Shanghai he did the job he'd been employed to do, working first as a fire officer then as a factory inspector. But what he saw every day in the course of his work was slowly undermining all the things he'd previously believed in. The factories he visited in the course of his work were death traps. Children as young as six laboured over boiling vats in the silk filatures. Few of them survived into adulthood. He saw children scarred by the wire whips the foremen used to keep them in line. He saw children with chromium poisoning, children dying of typhus and malaria, girls sold into prostitution. He became determined to do what he could for these victims of a savagely cruel system. He set up canteens in the factories, serving fresh vegetables and unpolished rice. He arranged for the worst cases to be sent to hospital. Years later, in Shandan, he would continue this rescuing, liberating children from

mines, taking orphans into his school and teaching them skills for survival. He adopted two orphans as his own sons then, when his fellow teacher at Shandan, George Hogg, died, he took on the responsibility for his four adopted children. Other fosterings would follow. Rewi's love for children would become legendary.

By 1935 Rewi's views had changed dramatically. He'd become part of a study group set up by the American journalists Edgar and Peg Snow, and Agnes Smedley, Soon others, including Soong Chingling, widow of Sun Yatsen, would join the group. The purpose of the group was to study the works of Marx and Lenin, with a view to finding solutions for the terrible suffering they saw around them. Gung Ho grew out of these conversations. Set up initially to help in the fight against the Japanese, it quickly spread across north-west China, becoming, as Mao himself acknowledged, an essential tool in the struggle to free China from foreign domination.

With the ending of the war Rewi was faced with a choice. He could go back to New Zealand or he could stay on and continue his work for Gung Ho. He knew there was a civil war coming. And he knew which side he would be fighting on. He'd seen too much of Chiang's ruthlessness and corruption to want anything to do with the Nationalists. He'd taken their money when it suited his purposes, but the soldier in him knew the time for such compromises was over. He wouldn't be going home. He would be staying in Shandan. 'I seem to have become a communist' he wrote to his family. And he had.

Practically, a teaching revolution



Rewi Alley's statue and a seal he once used are on display at the Shandan Alley memorial museum in Zhangye, Gansu province.

This very interesting article from the China Daily is about Rewi Alley's work in Gansu province, and in particular his founding and development of the Shandan Bailie School, from when he arrived there in December 1944 with 60 students through to the school of today, which now has approximately 3000 students. Over the decades, the school has trained numerous technicians in sectors such as

mechanics, petroleum and agriculture, many of whom have made a contribution to the country's development.

Wang Zigang, former vice-principal of Shandan Bailie School, says: "The school's greatest value was that it brought modern industrial civilization to remote, underdeveloped north western areas, and cultivated talent for the construction of New China." This article is well worth the read.

http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202107/01/WS60dd0463a310efa1bd65f08c_3.html

Chinese astronauts reach new space station for three month mission

Three Chinese astronauts have arrived at China's new space station, starting a three-month mission that marks another milestone in the country's ambitious space programme.

Their Shenzhou-12 craft connected with the space station module about six hours after taking off last week from the Jiuquan launch centre on the edge of the Gobi Desert.

About three hours later, commander Nie Haisheng, 56, followed by Liu Boming, 54, and space rookie Tang Hongbo, 45, opened the hatches and floated into the Tianhe-1 core living module. "This represents the first time Chinese have entered their own space station," state broadcaster *CCTV* said on its nightly news broadcast.

Construction of Tiangong – meaning Heavenly Palace – began in April with the launch of its first module, Tianhe. The crew will live on the cylinder-shaped module measuring 16.6 metres by 4.2 metres while carrying out further construction work.



The module has separate living spaces for each of them, a treadmill for exercise, and a communication centre for emails and video calls to ground control.



Let's face it, English is a Crazy Language

There is no egg in eggplant nor ham in hamburger;
Neither apple nor pine in pineapple.
English muffins weren't invented in England.



We take English for granted,
But if we explore its paradoxes,
We find that quicksand can work slowly,
Boxing rings are square;
A guinea pig is neither from Guinea nor is it a pig.
Why is it that writers write, but fingers don't fing,
Grocers don't groce & hammers don't ham?



Doesn't it seem crazy that...
You can make amends but not one amend?
If you have a bunch of odds and ends...
And get rid of all but one of them,
What do you call it?



If teachers taught, why didn't preachers praught?
If a vegetarian eats vegetables,
What does a humanitarian eat?



Sometimes I think all people who speak English
should be in an asylum for the verbally insane.
In what other language do people recite at a play,
And play at a recital?

We ship by truck but send cargo by ship...
We have noses that run & feet that smell;
We park in a driveway & drive in a parkway.
And how can a slim chance & a fat chance be the same,
While a wise man & a wise guy are opposites?

You have to marvel at the unique lunacy of a language
in which your house can burn up as it burns down;
In which you fill in a form by filling it out,
& in which an alarm goes off by going on.
And in closing....



If Father is Pop....
How come Mother's not Mop????

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