

## Christchurch Branch Newsletter – October 2021

Editor: Dave Adamson [dacb@outlook.co.nz](mailto:dacb@outlook.co.nz) 022 1283215

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### Contacts

Patron: The Right Honourable Sir David Carter KNZM

Hon Patron: Simon Deng Li

President: David Stringer  
[david@dhstringer.co.nz](mailto:david@dhstringer.co.nz)

Secretary: Gwynneth Tinkler  
[gandgtinkler@gmail.com](mailto:gandgtinkler@gmail.com)

Treasurer: Felicia Cheng  
C/- P O Box 7366  
Sydenham  
Christchurch 8240

Executive 2021:  
Graeme Tinkler (VP)  
Vivien Qin (VP)  
William Qiu (VP)  
Ailsa Dodge  
Anna Chen  
Bill Willmott (Honorary Patron)  
Dave Adamson  
Alex Fraser  
Matt McKenna  
Chris Goodwin  
Laura Carter  
Cara Chen

### William Edward Willmott



Our dear friend and valued branch member Bill Willmott passed away on 12 October. While it was not entirely unexpected, it was nevertheless very sad news. Bill was a stalwart of our society and of course of our branch in particular, having held many roles over the years, including Christchurch branch president and also national president for 10 years.

Bill was born in China, where his parents were missionaries in Chengdu. In 2001 he was made a Companion of the NZ Order of Merit for his services to New Zealand - China relations.

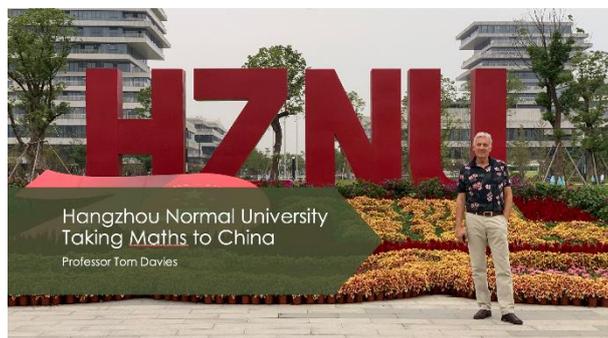
The funeral was held on Wednesday 20 October. Owing to Covid, it was restricted to 100 invited attendees. Once the Covid restrictions have been lifted the family will hold a full commemoration, where everyone will be welcome to attend and pay their respects and reminisce about this wonderful man who touched so many of us over many years.

Our love and heartfelt condolences go to Di and the extended family at this very sad time.

A fuller article on Bill will be in the October issue of the national newsletter, which will come out next week, so please be sure to read it.

## October speaker

### Professor Tom Davies



Our speaker this month, as you'll see below, is going to give us a very interesting talk:

*I started teaching in 1990 and was quickly disillusioned with the teaching of Mathematics in the UK. I developed my own style and resources and became a specialist teacher of Maths using Problem Solving techniques. This was particularly successful with students in the UK who*

*had literacy issues.*

*On arriving in NZ in 2005 these techniques and styles matched the NZ Curriculum and became effective here.*

*As a result of travel internationally I met Professors and a Dean from Hangzhou Normal University in 2018. They invited me to visit and teach there.*

*My first visit was in 2019. I was subsequently invited to Lecture at the University and undertake research in Chinese schools in 2020. As a consequence of Covid that did not happen. However I was invited to lecture and deliver my course on line to Maths graduates at the University. I am also, in cooperation with another Professor and past students undertaking research into Problem Solving in China and continue to lecture.*

*Thank you for inviting me to share my experiences.*

*Professor Tom Davies*

*Lecturer, Teacher & Researcher*

*Hangzhou Normal University & Hanmer Primary School.*

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**September meeting** was very interesting. Jenny Han gave us a great talk on her childhood in Inner Mongolia, and this was followed by the 25 minute DVD on the life and work of Kathleen Hall, a New Zealand missionary nurse in China during 1923 – 1941, who worked in poor rural areas under extremely difficult conditions, and trained local nurses to work alongside her. The Chinese people called her He Mingqing The DVD was produced by our Hamilton branch and was funded by our society's Rewi Alley Friendship and Exchange Fund (RAFE). The video was launched at the annual conference in May.



Our branch has a copy of this very interesting DVD, so if any member would like to borrow it, please see our president David Stringer.

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## **Two He Mingqing Scholars selected**

Following on from the article above, the following is a heart-warming story of how our society is building on the story of Kathleen Hall (He Mingqing). As you know, our society has what we call the He Ming Qing scholarship, whereby young women are chosen from the poor villages in China to be trained as nurses so that they can then return to the villages and work with the women; it's a great project of which Kathleen Hall and Rewi Alley would have fully approved. Our branch has contributed for many years towards the cost of this training programme by running raffles at our national banquets. Below is some very positive and pleasing news on the latest stage of this wonderful programme:

*NZCFS' He Mingqing Scholarship Committee received three recommendations in August 2021: two recommended by Shaanxi Women's Federation, and one from Shanxi Province. We have to date supported three female students that Shaanxi Women's Federation have recommended. We are pleased to have received a recommendation from Shanxi Province, as Kathleen worked in Datong Shanxi Province for some time.*

*The Committee selected two: Xiang Yuxuan from Shaanxi and Huang Lixia from Shanxi, and organized a video interview with each of the candidates. We had a chance to learn more about their family situations, their hometowns and their plans for the future. We are pleased to hear how moved they are by the story of Kathleen Hall (He Mingqing). The Committee is very happy with both recommendations and decided to support both from the year 2021 to 2025.*



**XIANG Yuxuan**, recommended by Shaanxi Women's Federation, was born on 10 April 2002, and has been admitted to Xi'an Medical College, with a major in Nursing. She's from Ning Qiang County, Hanzhong City in southwest of Shaanxi Province. Her home is about 40 minutes' walk to the nearby Hujiaba town. She's from a solo-parent family. Family members include grandma, mum and a sister. Her mother, aged 53, is now working outside of town and is the only bread-winner for the family, with an annual income of about 20,000 Chinese Yuan. Her grandma is 85 and is not in good health.



**HUANG Lixia**, recommended by Shanxi Provincial Youth Development Foundation, was born on 1 June 2003, has been admitted to Shanxi Datong University, majoring in nursing. She's from Wanrong County, Yuncheng City, in the southwest of Shanxi Province. The family is a poor household that is recorded in the local government as a low-insured household. She's from a solo parent family with no income. Her father has uraemia and both lower limbs amputated, with no ability to work. Both grandparents are unwell.



## ***Southern Vice President***

With the sad passing last month of Christine Ward of the Nelson branch, the role of Southern Vice President became vacant. Graeme Tinkler, a member of our branch executive, stood at the May AGM for the national executive, but was unsuccessful. After consultation with Nelson branch president Barbara Markland and Graeme, he has agreed to fill the role until the AGM at the Auckland conference in May 2022. This appointment has been confirmed by the national executive.

Those of us who know Graeme will know what a good guy he is, that he has sound judgement and will be a very suitable replacement.



## ***China National Day***

Due to the current COVID-19 pandemic, the Consulate-General in Christchurch did not hold a reception this year. Instead, it made some video clips and published them online to celebrate this special day. They invited the Christchurch branch to say a few words about our friendship and cooperation, which of course we were only too happy to do.

<https://www.facebook.com/NewZealandChinaFriendshipSocietyChristchurch/videos/374820284350376>



## ***New Zealand China Council Insight page launched***

A new 'Insight' page has been launched on the NZCC's website. The page will host explainer videos, interviews, discussions and speeches on topics that influence and impact on the NZ China relationship.

The Insight page contributes to the 'inform' pillar of the Council's Strategic Plan – which aims to inform, educate and engage New Zealanders on this important relationship. Check it out [here](#).



## ***Moon Festival***

Of course it has been and gone now, but the following was forwarded to me and I thought our members would find it of interest.

### **1. Why do we celebrate Mid-Autumn Festival?**

*Each September, Chinese families gather to celebrate the Mid-Autumn Festival. The moon's roundness symbolizes harmony and prosperity, and the festival celebrates the harvest, often bringing together family members from near and far.*

### **2. What is the meaning of Mid-Autumn Festival?**

*Falling on the 15th day of the eighth lunar month, Mid-Autumn Festival, or Moon Festival, is when families gather to sample autumn harvests, light lanterns and admire what's believed to be the fullest moon of the year.*

### **3. What do Mooncakes Symbolize?**

*Family is important at this time, in Chinese culture, roundness symbolizes completeness and togetherness. A full moon symbolizes prosperity and reunion for the whole family. Round mooncakes complement the harvest moon in the night sky at the Mid-Autumn Festival. The mooncake is not just a food.*

### **4. How is Mid-Autumn Festival celebrated?**

*The Mid-Autumn Festival is the second most important festival in China after Chinese New Year. Chinese people celebrate it by gathering for dinners, worshipping the moon, lighting paper lanterns, eating mooncakes, etc.*

### **5. What is Mid Autumn Festival all about ?**

*The central legend associated with Mid-Autumn Festival concerns the goddess Chang'e. This tale tells of how, long ago, the Earth had 10 suns, the heat of which ravaged the world with a terrible drought. At the request of the Emperor of Heaven, the great archer Hou Yi shot down nine of the suns, saving life on Earth.*

### **6. Who is Chang E boyfriend?**

*Houyi, an expert archer, stepped forward to try to save the earth. He successfully shot down nine of the suns, becoming an instant hero. He eventually became king and married Chang'e.*

### **7. Who is the goddess Chang E?**

*Chang'e, Wade-Giles romanization Ch'ang O, the Chinese moon goddess whose loveliness is celebrated in poems and novels. She sought refuge in the moon when her consort, Hou Yi (the Lord Archer), discovered she had stolen the drug of immortality given to him by the gods.*

### **8. What are Chang E Powers?**

- *Nigh-Omniscience: Chang'e can possibly see events on earth as she seems to be aware of modern culture such as pop music, large stadiums, and the use of special effects in performances.*
- *Flight/Levitation: Chang'e seems able to fly and levitate in the song Ultraluminary.*

### **9. Why does Chang E have a rabbit?**

*The Jade Rabbit is a character from Chinese folklore, who lives on the moon with Chang-e, and is always seen preparing the elixir of life for the immortals. He is a noble and benevolent creature to whom offerings are often made during Mid Autumn Festival.*

### **10. Why is Hou Yi stripped of his immortality?**

*In the end, nine of the Jade Emperor's sons were dead. Houyi left only one sun alive, to give the earth light and warmth. Upon hearing the news, the Jade Emperor was furious. He banished Houyi and his beautiful wife Chang'e from Heaven, stripping them of their immortality.*

### **11. What's the story behind moon cakes?**

*There is a folk tale about the overthrow of Mongol rule facilitated by messages smuggled in moon cakes. Mooncakes were used by the Ming revolutionaries in their effort to overthrow the Mongolian rulers of China at the end of the Yuan dynasty. ... The pieces of mooncake were then eaten to destroy the message.*

## 12. Why do Chinese emperors celebrate Mid-Autumn Festival?

*Ancient Chinese emperors worshiped the harvest moon in autumn, as they believed that the practice would bring them a plentiful harvest the following year. ... The term "Mid-Autumn" first appeared in the book Rites of Zhou (周礼), written in the Warring States Period (475 – 221 BC)*

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### China's Grand Canal



The Grand Canal, linking Beijing and Hangzhou is by far the longest in the world at nearly 1800 km, with a carefully engineered 'fall' that keeps the water flowing north to south.

It has 24 locks and 60 bridges, and its greatest height is reached in the mountains of Shandong, at a summit of 42m. After the pound lock was invented in the 10th century, ships in Chinese canals did not have trouble reaching higher elevations. Truly an engineering feat of the ancient world, built in sections from the 5th Century BC. It is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and a huge tourist attraction.

Starting in Beijing, it passes through Tianjin and the provinces of Hebei, Shandong, Jiangsu, and Zhejiang to the city of Hangzhou, linking the Yellow River and Yangtze River. The oldest parts of the canal date back to the 5th century BC, but the various sections were first connected during the Sui dynasty. Dynasties in 1271–1633 significantly restored and rebuilt the canal and altered its route to supply their capital.

Historically, periodic flooding of the Yellow River threatened the safety and functioning of the canal. During wartime, the high dikes of the Yellow River were sometimes deliberately broken in order to flood and thus sweep away advancing enemy troops. This would cause disaster and prolonged economic hardships for local residents. Despite temporary periods of desolation and disuse, the Grand Canal furthered an indigenous and growing economic market in China's urban centres from the Sui period onwards to the present. It has allowed faster trading and has thus improved China's economy. The portion south of the Yellow river remains in heavy use by barges carrying bulk materials and containers. For further information on this fascinating canal have a look at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grand\\_Canal\\_\(China\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grand_Canal_(China))



## ***The circle of life***

A school teacher has risen to the challenge of caring for his Alzheimer's-stricken mother, in memory of his childhood, Wu Ni reports in Shanghai.

Chen Binqiang often remembers how he played and slept on his mother's back as a child while she toiled on their hometown farm in Pan'an county, Zhejiang province. His mother would usually tie him to her with a wide, long belt.

Chen, now a 37-year-old middle school teacher, uses the same belt to strap his mother against him so they can ride together on his electric bike to his work. Chen's mother, 64-year-old Chen Yueguang, has struggled with Alzheimer's disease since 2007. The illness overtook her very quickly and she has lost the ability to speak and has become incontinent. None of Chen's other family members, however, could take care of their sick mother. Chen's father died in a traffic accident when he was 8; his two sisters married far away; and his wife has a 92-year-old bedridden grandmother to look after. A nursing home was not an option, either.



"In the preliminary stage of the disease, when my mother maintained some mental ability, some relatives asked whether she was willing to live in a nursing home. After thinking for a while, my mother replied that she would like to live with her son," recalls Chen. "My tears flowed immediately when I heard her words and I was determined I will never leave her alone," Chen says.

Chen taught Chinese in the Central School of Lengshui town, which is about 30 kilometers away from his home in Pan'an. Due to the long distance, he spent five days at school and only went home on weekends. When he announced he would take his mother to work, even his wife was doubtful and worried.

"I really didn't think it is realistic for him to take care of his mother in school. If he lost his job because of this, who would sustain our family?" says Chen's wife, Fu Liuping.

But Chen was determined, and soon he was strapping a safety helmet onto his mother's head, settling her on the bike's back seat, and securing her snugly to his back with the belt for the ride to school. "My mother used to take me around with the belt and now I am using it to take her. Every mother would dedicate the best she could offer to their children, and I would like to try my best to care for her," Chen says.

Luckily, the school supported Chen's idea and provided him a free dormitory to accommodate his mother.

A timetable in Chen's room reveals his busy day:

1 am and 5:30 am: Wake up mother to take her to the toilet;

7 am: Feed mother breakfast and comb her hair;

teach classes during the day;

9 pm: Take a walk with mother;

10 pm: Help mother fall asleep.

Chen Yueguang has the mental capability of a 1-year-old child, and her son must feed her at every meal. Though engaged in the chores of looking after his mother, the teacher is popular among his students as "he is humorous and always has a big smile".

Lu Yixuan, one of Chen's students, says she feels "teacher is always in a hurry".

Recently, things got a little easier for the mother and son, as his story gets known. With the help of Pan'an county's education bureau, Chen was transferred to a new post in Pan'an Experimental Junior Middle School in October 2012. The new school is only five minutes' ride from his home, which means the dutiful son could take care of his mother more conveniently. Chen feels happiest when his mother is looking at him although she cannot speak.

"She must have forgotten who I am, and she could not call my name. But she surely knows that I am kind to her," he says. "That's enough for me."

In December, Chen was elected one of 20 candidates for Touching China Awards, held annually by China Central Television to honour those whose performances have moved the nation over the past year.

#### **Branch Officers**

President: David Stringer [david@dhstringer.co.nz](mailto:david@dhstringer.co.nz)

Vice President: Vivien Qin [vivien.qin@xtra.co.nz](mailto:vivien.qin@xtra.co.nz)

Vice President: Graeme Tinkler [gandgtinkler@gmail.com](mailto:gandgtinkler@gmail.com)

Vice President: William Qiu [nzpr.group@xtra.co.nz](mailto:nzpr.group@xtra.co.nz)

Branch Honorary Patron: Bill Willmott

Treasurer: Felicia Cheng [chengmengpingcn@gmail.com](mailto:chengmengpingcn@gmail.com)

Secretary: Gwynneth Tinkler [gandgtinkler@gmail.com](mailto:gandgtinkler@gmail.com)

Newsletter Editor: Dave Adamson [dacb@outlook.co.nz](mailto:dacb@outlook.co.nz)