



THE CAPITAL CHINA LETTER 新中通訊



NEW ZEALAND CHINA FRIENDSHIP SOCIETY WELLINGTON BRANCH NEWSLETTER

Website: <https://nzchinasociety.org.nz/wellington-branch-of-the-nzdfs/>

NZCFS Wellington Branch - celebrating 70 years of promoting friendship, understanding and goodwill between the peoples of New Zealand and China

Newsletter May 2023

Next Branch Meeting: Wednesday 19 May 2023 at 6:30pm

Guest Speaker/Performer: Zoe Li

An Interactive Workshop: Erhu (Chinese Violin)



Zoe Li 李采奕 plays the Chinese violin (erhu, an instrument with only two strings) and is a player and teacher in Wellington. Zoe finished her Bachelor of Music at Wintec, Hamilton in 2019 and Master of Music at Victoria University Wellington in 2022. Within her classical career, Zoe has worked with quartets, ensembles and orchestras all over the world, including Beijing String Ensemble and Singapore Folk Orchestra. With the advantage of six years of teaching experience, Zoe also loves teaching erhu to students from age 5 to adult.

Zoe started to learn erhu when she was 6 years old. In 2005 she competed in Beijing's String Music Competition and was awarded the silver award for second place. In 2008, she was invited to play erhu in the Beijing

National Stadium, the Bird's Nest, and perform during the closing ceremony of the Beijing Olympic Games. In 2017, she met former PM John Key and received the gold award in the World Art Festival. In 2019, she received "Rising Star" Award at the final round of Melbourne International Shaoqin Erhu Competition. In 2021, she won first place in IMA international Music Competition. Alongside playing traditional Chinese folk music, Zoe has found a love for blues and jazz. She also plays in avant-garde ensembles, such as her collaboration with the great music doctor Jeremy Mayall on a semi-improvised textural multimedia piece called *Chloe and the ghosts of electric souls*.

At the meeting Zoe will share the history of erhu and demonstrate a couple of Kiwi tunes. Audience members will have the opportunity to try their hand at playing this ancient musical instrument.

Our monthly meetings are held at **Newtown School Hall**, Mein Street, Newtown, Wellington (off Riddiford Street, car park entry from Mein Street alongside Wellington Hospital), on bus routes 1, 3, 12, 18, 23, and 29.

There is plenty of carparking on site.

The following dates have been booked for our Wednesday monthly meetings: *21 June, 19 July, 16 August, 20 September, 18 October, and 15 November*. Please mark these dates in your calendar.



WELLINGTON BRANCH MEETING REPORT 19 APRIL 2023

In April we were very fortunate to host Rewi Alley's niece, the internationally accomplished novelist and playwright and scriptwriter Elspeth Sandys.

Elspeth has published several novels, collections of short stories and memoirs. Her stage plays have been produced in the UK, New Zealand and the US.

Of particular interest to NZCFS is Elspeth's excellent investigation of the life of Rewi Alley, told through the agency of a significant 2019 publication from Otago University Press with assistance from Creative NZ, titled *A Communist in the Family – the Search for Rewi Alley*, available from Unity Books.

In this part biography, part travel journal, part literary commentary, and featuring a selection of informative photographs, Elspeth brings us along in train with other family members on their travels through China in the footsteps of Uncle Rewi, during their 2017 expedition to observe the 90th anniversary of Rewi's arrival in Shanghai.



It is an inspiring journey.

Based on diaries and letters, her book is a valuable resource, diligently researched.

Elspeth began her presentation by introducing herself and her family connection to Rewi Alley, how he came to be named, and how he was known among family in New Zealand.

She explained the context of the social politics of his time, describing how she remembers Rewi being followed by the secret

service when visiting New Zealand.

His father, a Canterbury schoolmaster, was of a minor landed family in Ireland.

Rewi was named after the great Māori warrior and leader Rewi Maniapoto — the wild child of the family who, according to family legend, rode horses, living with Māori in the North Island.

Rewi Alley served abroad with the New Zealand Expeditionary Force during WWI, was wounded, and received the Military Medal:

West of Bapaume — 25 August 1918. For courage and devotion to duty. During the period of consolidation, he went forward several times under heavy fire in charge of patrols, and by his courage and initiative gained and brought back valuable information. His coolness and courage were a fine example to the rest of his men. [source: [AWMM online cenotaph](#)]

As a returned serviceman he was granted a parcel of land in the King Country. A rough, steep, difficult piece of land. He and his partner made the best they could of it. But after a few years Rewi felt compelled to re-evaluate his options.

Farming was not working out for him. He walked away, leaving his share with his partner.

His time of service in the Great War had perhaps robbed him of opportunity to pursue a genteel civilian career as his father may have preferred. Other family members were accomplished in their fields. One was an All Black, another a well-regarded academic.

He was a soldier. Now fully recovered and still in the Army Reserve, Rewi went out in search of adventure. The world outside New Zealand still had need of his skills. In 1927 Rewi Alley arrived in Shanghai during a period of intense lawless turmoil.

The Chinese Nationalists had lost their leader Sun Yat Sen and were engaged in the Red Purge instigated by their new leader Chiang Kai-shek against their unsuspecting erstwhile Communist allies. They were executing suspected communists on the street; anyone wearing red as a mark of affiliation.

The stench of death hung thick throughout the Chinese quarter, spilling into the International Settlement.

Rewi Alley through early family influences was himself fairly conservative, Christian, and probably felt at first more comfortable with the Nationalists. He found familiar company among fellow expatriates in the International Settlement.

He introduced himself and found employment with the Shanghai Municipal Council (SMC) as a fireman and factory inspector.

It was during this period that we meet the Rewi Alley we are familiar with.

Rewi Alley was inspired by American Missionary Joseph Bailie.

Dickensian misery was rife in the factories of old Shanghai. Children as young as six were being wretchedly exploited in dangerous toxic environments, experiencing hideous injury, great suffering, and death.

As a factory inspector employed by the internationalist SMC, Rewi found himself with some authority to advocate for an improved outcome. He would bring fresh fruit on his visits and teach safety. To the factory owners he counselled that if the children were better treated, they would produce a better result.

Rewi took a three-week holiday to Wuhan, where there was a massive flood. He joined in flood relief and began to organise relief for homeless children.

Rewi began to write poetry. He wondered about the quality of government in China.

As a New Zealander he was familiar with the cause of the common man, a just cause that at length ushered in many modern social innovations to his homeland.

Hallmarks of modern civilisation, such as an end to the exploitation of children, unionisation of labour, improved working conditions, free education, pensions for the elderly, and government-organised relief of poverty, were inspirations shared by Joseph Bailie.

But in the China then governed by the Nationalists Rewi could see only dystopian extremes of wealth and suffering, misgovernment, and corruption.

While working in what way he could to alleviate the suffering he found, he increasingly discovered that he was in the good company of others who likewise believed in a better future for China. But he had not forgotten his duty to the NZ Army.

He wrote his fourth application for an extension to leave in 1929, explaining that he was serving as a fireman in an integral part of the Shanghai Defence Force under Major General Woodford, tasked with protecting European nationals and their property, and that the knowledge he was gaining of Eastern subjects may be of interest to the NZ Military Command.

The expected result would be a discharge at the third request for extension of leave. His fourth request was also granted. The NZ Army must have valued him, Elspeth Sandys notes. It was not until 1933 when he still had not returned home, that the army recommended that he be retired. No record exists of this order.

By 1933 the barbaric Japanese war of aggression that developed into the Eastern theatre of World War Two was well underway. At length the Nationalist and Communist forces were again allied against the Japanese invaders. Through the vicissitudes of war, friends among allies in a titanic struggle, Rewi Alley travelled with the Chinese Communist forces, along with another Kiwi hero, the missionary nurse Kathleen Hall.

The legendary story of how Rewi helped in the rescue of 60 starving orphan children together with his best friend George Hogg assisted by Kathleen Hall was made into a film directed by Roger Spottiswoode in 2008 starring actress Radha Mitchell as an American missionary nurse based on the genuine lived experience of Kiwi Kathleen Hall, and Jonathan Rhys Meyers as George Hogg.

Rewi Alley is not mentioned or his existence inferred in this allegedly enjoyable Australian-German-Chinese co-production released around the time that China acceded to the WTO.

The Sydney Morning Herald at least rises to defend the memory of our ANZAC hero, however, in this review of [Children of the Silk Road](#).

Reviewer Paul Byrnes notes:

Rewi Alley founded the Shandan Bailie school in Shaanxi Province, recruited Hogg as headmaster, hatched the plan to save the boys, went with Hogg on their tortuous long march to Shandan, and ran the school after Hogg's demise, but he is never mentioned.

Wikipedia notes in an entry about [George Hogg](#):

In early March 1945, Hogg and his boys arrived in Shandan. Alley rented some old temples, turned them into classrooms and workshops, and appointed Hogg as headmaster. From the beginning, the school was aided by a group of friendly New Zealanders who later formed the New Zealand China Friendship Society.

We were not always so permissive in our attitude toward how Rewi Alley's foundational contributions to peace, understanding and good neighbourliness were perceived in an era when no underarm bowl escaped notice.

New Zealand Prime Ministers would ensure that a visit to Rewi Alley at his home in China was fixed into their itineraries. By the 1980s Rewi Alley was recognised as a true New Zealand hero in China and New Zealand.

Rewi Alley was of a generation of heroes living in times of great and often perilous change. That he came at length to identify more closely with the Communist cause in China is one of the very best-timed examples of New Zealand diplomacy.

China was not (and is not) the enemy; at the time the Axis Powers were the enemy.

By the time modern China emerged from the Civil War and Rewi Alley decided to stay among friends he had distinguished himself with honour as a man in the service of the people.

Arguably, all successes by NZ business in China over the decades since owe a debt to the foundation of trust and friendship laid by Rewi Alley.

Stories of heroes and of stirring times never grow old, but sometimes we neglect to tell them.

Lest We Forget

Elspeth Sandys, *A Communist in the Family – the Search for Rewi Alley*

ISBN 978-1-98-853160-1 available from Unity Books



To lay a remembrance poppy for Rewi Alley at Auckland War Memorial Museum online cenotaph Roll of Honour, please follow this [link](#).

Marisfrolg Reveal at Parliament 4 April 2023

Together with Wellington branch colleagues and the national leadership of the NZ China Friendship Society, a significant assembly of well-wishers attended the Marisfrolg project reveal in the Grand Hall at Parliament on April 4th, an international event deserving international news headlines. Members of Parliament, diplomatic missions from Germany and the European Union were visible in their attendance and praise.

The celebration was convened by the Honourable Dr David Clark MP, Member of Parliament for Dunedin, and Labour List MP Naisi Chen in honour of the grand achievement of Dunedin architecture firm principals Fred and Damien van Brandenburg.



Since 2007, the van Brandenburg team has been designing a signature campus for Marisfrog, a Chinese fashion design house in Shenzhen, now open for business and accommodating 5000 employees.

Until the congenial reveal event ably hosted by broadcaster Ian Fraser, there has been scant reporting over the last several years as concepts were developed and construction progressed. All was quiet, in typical understated Kiwi fashion, just getting on with the work at hand, creating a modern marvel of architectural art five times as large as Te Papa.

The Marisfrog campus is breathtaking in scale, a bold concept, elegant in design. The exterior largely features robust recycled materials such as ceramics and granite, all locally sourced. The building appears organic, like an enormous benign bird rising up for flight from its earthly habitat soaked in history, reaching for the sky.

It is an achievement to be proud of as much as it is an inspirational functional facility to be proud to be in. Already, designers now working within this beautiful environment are creating signature fashion designs which reference the architecture within which they are being conceived.

The Marisfrog campus is a fine example of what Kiwi talent can achieve on the international stage through China.

Here is André Chumko's report on Stuff: [Astonishing Kiwi-designed Chinese fashion house headquarters revealed](#). The project began when the owner of Marisfrog, billionaire Zhu Chongyun, visited the van Brandenburgs' studios in 2005. After Mme Zhu happened to stay at several places in Aotearoa that were designed by the company — including Wairarapa's Wharekauhau Lodge, Taupō's Huka Lodge and Millbrook Resort in Queenstown — she asked them to design Marisfrog's new headquarters.

This Kiwi success story is no accident. A native Kiwi approach to inter-cultural international projects based on talent, respect for others, a willingness to engage and hands-on leadership at the working face, has returned a great and long-lasting dividend.



The van Brandenburgs themselves are typically humble and approachable, acknowledging direct influence from and public homage to the Catalan genius, Antoni Gaudi.

The team van Brandenburg achievements, so clear, stunning, worthwhile and permanent, have reinvigorated the essential effort of building better relationships toward a mutually rewarding future.

REWI ALLEY MEMORIAL EXHIBITION IN WELLINGTON



Hosted by NZCFS, supported by the Chinese Embassy in New Zealand, and organised by NZ Friendship for Peace, the Rewi Alley Memorial Exhibition was held at Te Wharewaka o Poneke from 21st to 23rd April.

The exhibition was curated by Rewi's foster son Deng Bangzhen and his wife Lu Bo, and featured photographs, paintings and sculptures by the artist couple, and Rewi Alley's notebooks and personal effects.

Andy Boreham, the Kiwi journalist now working at Shanghai Daily attended the opening ceremony. You can read the Shanghai Daily report [here](#).

NZCFS NZ HEROES IN CHINA TOUR

Our Society's "NZ Heroes in China Tour" is on its way!

While the focus of the tour is on Rewi Alley and Kathleen Hall, and the itinerary is based on sites and partnerships important to their legacies, there is so much more. Spanning three weeks in October 2023, the tour will explore many sites of historical, cultural and scenic beauty, most of which are not offered on standard tours.

You can read more about the tour and register your interest on the NZCFS [website](#).

NOTICE OF PASSING OF WELLINGTON BRANCH LIFE MEMBER, ROBERT MCKIBBIN

It is with sadness that we note the passing of life member and friend Robert McKibbin, spouse of fellow life member and friend Joan McKibbin who preceded Robert when she passed away in 2019. Robert died peacefully in his sleep on 11 April 2023.

Born in Auckland 14 July 1927, Robert was married to Joan McKibbin for 61 years. They have two adult sons Adrian and Jeremy, three grandchildren, and five great-grandchildren.



Robert had a long and rewarding career, from 1943 when he began a 5-year apprenticeship in refrigeration, a trade that took him all over the world from Australia, the Pacific, the United Kingdom, the Middle East and back to New Zealand where he along with a group of colleagues opened their own business.

Robert is remembered as always busy helping, as an often humorous and kind gentleman. He volunteered for many years at the Samaritans and even in retirement was kept busy serving on various industry committees dealing with important issues like ozone depletion and apprenticeship training. In recognition of his contributions, he was awarded the honour of life member of NZ Institute of Refrigeration Heating and Air Conditioning Engineers in 1998.

Both Robert and Joan had a great love of travel and visited Australia, the Pacific Islands, many parts of the middle east, Europe, Scandinavia, Russia and of course China. Robert had a great love of all cultures and peoples and together with his wife Joan shared a particular affinity and respect for China and its people.



NZCFS 2023 NATIONAL CONFERENCE AND AGM 19–21 MAY

NZCFS 2023 National Conference and AGM will be held from Friday 19th May to Sunday 21st May in Tauranga. Both events will be held at the Armitage Hotel in Tauranga city centre.

The theme of the Conference is *Friendship in Action* 友谊在行动. More information on the National Conference can be found [here](#). Participation via Zoom will be supported. All members are welcome to attend.

BRANCH OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE

President:	Chris Lipscombe
Vice President and Treasurer:	Juping Zhou
Secretary:	Vera Xu
Committee Members:	Liqin Mi, Paul Sayers
Honorary Advisor:	Michael Powles

WEBSITE: <https://nzchinasociety.org.nz/wellington-branch-of-the-nzcfs/>

[Pay your 2023 subscription here](#)

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION

To join as a member or renew your membership, you can complete the [online form](#) or the membership form below.

I/We would like to renew/commence membership of the Wellington Branch of the New Zealand China Friendship Society Inc. for 2023 (subscription period January to December):

- Unwaged / Student (full-time) / Superannuitant **\$15**
- Single **\$25**
- Family **\$35**
- Organisation **\$50**

Name:
(Given names) (Surname)

Spouse's/Partner's Name:
(Given names) (Surname)

Address

Email

Contact Person for Organisation:

Payment total is as follows:	Payment method:
Membership Subscription \$	Payment by internet transfer to:
Donation (<i>optional</i>) \$	NZ China Friendship Society
Total \$	ANZ Bank Acct No: 11-7200-0080836-11

When making internet banking payment, please quote your NAME and the word SUBS, and be sure to email this form to wgtnczfs@gmail.com. Please let us know if a receipt is required.

Note: Donations over \$5 are tax-deductible. (Charities Registration No: CC27242)

Privacy Information: On acceptance of your membership subscription, you or the organisation you represent will become a member of the Wellington branch of the New Zealand China Friendship Society Incorporated ("the Society"). Your membership will expire on the 31st of December of the year to which the membership applies ("the expiry date"). The information you provide on this membership subscription form ("the information") will be held by us electronically in a Register of Members as required by the Incorporated Societies Amendment Act 2005 and will be removed from the current Register of Members following the expiry date. The information will be used by us to tell you about member events and activities and to send you notices of meetings. The information will be held securely by us and will be available for you to view at any time on application to the Secretary. The information may be shared with our parent organisation the New Zealand China Friendship Society Incorporated. We will not disclose the information to any other parties, except where required by law. Non-current members will remain on our branch mailing list as supporters, and we will continue to let you know about member events and activities. If you decide that you do not want to receive emails from us, you can 'unsubscribe' and we will remove you from our mailing list.