

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 November 2023

Next Branch Meeting: Wednesday 15 November 2023

Guest Speaker: Tong Xu



At our November monthly meeting Xu Tong, the new Director of the China Cultural Centre in Wellington, will share his fond memories of China-New Zealand cultural exchanges by telling his own private story of rediscovering the legendary Māori cloak (korowai) presented to Chairman Mao and its return on loan to Te Papa.

Born in Nanjing and graduating from Nanjing University, Xu Tong has served in diplomatic postings on five continents promoting culture and tourism. He has a close rapport with New Zealand.

The China Cultural Centre in Wellington was inaugurated by Chinese Vice-Minister of Culture Ding Wei and Chief Executive of New Zealand's Ministry for Culture and Heritage Paul James in December 2015. The Centre has since delivered many cultural exchange activities,

including performances, exhibitions, and art festivals, and cultural training in the Greater Wellington region.

Our monthly meetings are held at Newtown School Hall, 16 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 free carparking on site.

This is our last monthly meeting of the year.

The following dates have been booked for the year of 2024: 18 February (Chinese New Year Banquet at Aries Restaurant), 20 March (AGM), 17 April, 15 May, 19 June, 17 July, 21 August, 18 September, 16 October, 20 November. Please mark these dates in your calendar.

WELLINGTON BRANCH MEETING REPORT 18 October 2023

In our October monthly meeting, Stella Li presented 'Flowers of China' to the members and friends. This talk continued the discussion on the historical and cultural significance of Chinese gardens presented in July this year to branch members by Chinese scholar Duncan Campbell.

Stella began her talk by explaining why flowers have always been important in Chinese culture.



First, the Chinese see great similarities between the lives of flowers and people, and tend to see flowers as closer to people than other plants. For example, flowers beginning to bloom are seen as the same as people who are just reaching adulthood. Second, the Chinese have developed many practical uses for flowers. They are used to produce food and drink, medicines, cosmetics, incense, dyes and other products used in traditional Chinese culture. Finally, the use of flowers for decoration is probably more important to the Chinese than to similar uses by Westerners. This is because Chinese culture considers balancing the aspects of any items Ying and Yang necessary for it to properly fulfill its intended use. For instance, in a house or building, the Ying from the solid and rigid characteristics of the structure can be balanced by the Yang from surrounding colourful flowers.



Stella then briefly covered the associations various colours and shades have in Chinese culture. Red, pink and orange are seen as cheerful, sweet and vivacious. There is a difference in status between red and pink: red is for the Empress or the first wife in a household, pink is for the wives with lower status. Yellow is associated with prosperity, wealth and royalty, golden yellow being reserved specifically for the Emperor. Green represents life, vigour, health and longevity. Purple is usually seen as a colour for women, signifying maturity, experience, honour, authority and the ability to withstand vicissitudes. Similarly, blue is normally seen as a colour for men, indicating calmness, strength and inner peace.

Finally, black and white are associated with the concepts of Ying and Yang, as well as death and rebirth. The colour of a flower is therefore an important part of determining how it is used.

Having given some background to the topic, Stella then talked about the specific flowers. The most famous Chinese flower is the Peony 牡丹. The Peony is the national flower of China, and comes in pink, red, yellow, blue, green and white varieties. It is seen as noble, dignified, auspicious and prosperous, but at the same time is tenacious and not afraid to stand up to power. In Chinese mythology, it was the only flower that refused to bloom when commanded to by the female Emperor, Wu Zetian.



The Peony has a long history in China; the earliest records of it are from the Han Dynasty, detailing its use as a medicine for malaria. It is also thought to be good for circulation of the blood and menstruation. The Peony has been the subject of several famous Chinese poets, and has its own festival in Luoyang, held from 20th April to 5th May each year.

Stella shared a couple of famous poems about peony:

刘禹锡(Yuxi Liu)唯有牡丹真国色，花开时节动京城。 Only the peony is really a national beauty with its bloom shocking the capital.

李白(Li Bai)清平调其一: Qingping Theme #1 (Li Bai)

云想衣裳花想容: Clouds and flowers remind me of her dress and looks.

春风拂槛露华浓: Spring wind brushes rails; dew moistens flowers.

若非群玉山头见: **If she's not a fairy descended from Mountain Qunyu,**

会向瑶台月下逢: She has to be a goddess from Yao Terrace in moonlight.

The Lotus 荷花 or 莲花 is closely associated with Buddhism, and is said to signify purity, innocence, clear-mindedness, enlightenment and rebirth. Almost all of the plant is edible, and each part has medicinal properties. The petals are used to treat lung disorders, the seeds the spleen and gall bladder, the green parts the heart and the roots are good for "qi". There are several varieties; one interesting fact is that the number of petals the flower has seems to depend on the temperature in which the plant was grown.

The Lotus figures prominently in Chinese mythology and traditional Chinese poetry. It is closely associated with the Ghost Festival held each year on 15th July (Lunar Calendar), where Lotus lanterns are used to guide spirits seeking reincarnation to their new bodies.



Lotus Lantern at Ghost Festival



Every part of lotus is edible

[You can read more about the Ghost Festival on [China Daily](#).]

At this point, due to time constraints, Stella had to finish her talk. However she promised to return and cover the other important flowers in Chinese culture at a later date.

NZCFS "HANOI TO EVEREST BASE CAMP" TOUR

HANOI TO LHASA, with option to Mt Everest
An adventure with NZCFS, March–April 2024



You can read more about the tour on the [NZCFS website](#). The tour is now fully subscribed. To go on the waiting list or for other enquiries, please email tours@nzcfs.com.

NATIONWIDE MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES AND FEES FOR 2024

At the Society's National Annual General Meeting (AGM) held in Tauranga in May this year, members decided that it was time the Society adopted a simpler and more streamlined approach to membership.

From 1st January 2024, all branches will use the same three membership categories, and all branches will charge the same fees. There will be one annual fee for each class of membership — \$10 for a fulltime student, \$20 for an individual, and \$30 for a family/couple.

More information is available on the [NZCFS website](#).

DUNHUANG LECTURE 1 November



Wellington was extremely lucky to be able to host Professor Zhao Shengliang earlier this month and hear him deliver a public lecture on the caves of Dunhuang (also referred to as the Dunhuang Grottoes) **at Rutherford House, part of the Victoria University of Wellington's Pipitea campus.**

Professor Zhao researches and teaches in the field of art history. He has served as the director of the Dunhuang Academy and is currently the Chairman of its Academic Committee and the co-director of the Dunhuang Studies Research Center of Peking University.

Dunhuang, on the fringe of the Gobi Desert, was an important gateway to China on the Great Silk Road. It is also the cradle of Buddhism in China. Dunhuang has been designated a UNESCO World Heritage site and is famous for its Mogao temple caves filled with Buddhist art.

Chris Lipscombe, President of the New Zealand China Friendship Society and Wellington Branch President, delivered a presentation **on Rewi Alley and Joseph Needhams' visit to the Mogao Caves** in 1943. The history of Dunhuang shows us that people and communities can flourish when they embrace their differences, and can forge bonds that are world-changing.

The event was organised by the Confucius Institute in partnership with the China Cultural Centre in Wellington.

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 2024 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 2024 (subscription period January to December):

fulltime student \$10 individual member \$20 family/couple \$30

Applicant:

Given Names

Surname

Contact phone number: _____

Spouse/Partner:

Given Names

Surname

Contact phone number: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Payment total is as follows:		Payment method:
Membership Subscription:	\$ _____	Payment by internet transfer to:
Donation to NZCFS Wellington:	\$ _____	NZ China Friendship Society
Total:	\$ _____	ANZ Bank Account 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 separately to wgtncfs@gmail.com. Tick the box 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 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.

Donation Receipts: Following the end of each financial year, you will be sent a receipt for the total amount you have donated in that year. If you are a New Zealand tax resident earning taxable income in that year, you can claim a tax credit for the amount you have donated.