

Chinese and Leprosy in 19th Century Victoria.

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Chinese Lepers at Ballarat, c1876.



Ballarat Historical Society, Photograph 607-79.

The photograph above is hand dated 1868 but the correct date is probably 1876.

**A related article is in the Melbourne Age dated 16 June 1876
and the Colac Herald, 20 June 1876.**

The photograph was sponsored by *Hoyle's Pacific Vegetable Wonder*, a patent medicine.

Cure-all patent medicines were widely marketed in the 19th Century, with some offering cures for leprosy.¹

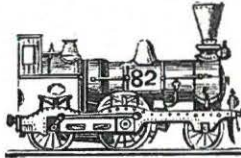
The two men at left rear may be the Presbyterian missionaries "Rev" William Young² and Cheong Peng Nam.

James Oddie, a prominent evangelical philanthropist and President of the Ballarat Benevolent Asylum may be the man at far right. The man seated at right front is Sergeant James Larner of the Victoria Police. The Chinese lepers, seated, are named as: Ah Yan; Te Chung; Ah Wah; Ah Quom; San Tac; Ah Chung.

¹ See online — <http://www.discoveriesinmedicine.com/Ni-Ra/Patent-Medicine.html>
<https://au.pinterest.com/pophaydn/quack-cures-and-patent-medicines/>

² Young used the honorific "Reverend" although he was not an ordained minister of religion. He was equivalent to a lay preacher. It was normal practice in 19th century Australia for such full-time church workers to use the honorific. The leading Chinese Anglican lay missionary, Cheok Hong Cheong, son of Cheong Peng-nam mentioned in this paper, also used the honorific.

**HOYLE'S PACIFIC
VEGETABLE WONDER**

TRADE  MARK.

849.C.

**A Certain Cure for Rheumatism, Sciatica,
Lumbago, Gout, Stiff Joints, Neuralgia,
Toothache, Asthma, Earache, and
all Affections of the Chest and
Nervous System.**

DIRECTIONS.—Paint the part effected FREELY with a
brush—and in all cases of earache and toothache apply a little of
the Pacific in a small piece of cotton wool into the ear or tooth.

None Genuine without this
Signature *E. H. Hoyle*

SOLE AGENTS,
DAVY & ROCKE,
WHOLESALE & RETAIL DRUGGISTS,
160 ELIZABETH STREET, MELBOURNE.

"Leprosy has always been considered an incurable diseases up to the present, but that it is on the eve of being no longer so appears to be within the limits of probability. The *Ballarat Courier* states that experiments of an almost marvellously successful nature were tried on Tuesday and Wednesday on the Chinese lepers now located at their new camp in the ranges. The new remedy is known as "Hoyle's Pacific Vegetable Wonder," and is applied externally. Mr. Hoyle, the inventor of the medicine, or lotion, or whatever it is, is an engine driver on the Victorian Railways, and is now on a holiday, He on Tuesday proceeded in company with Sergeant Larnier, to the leper's camp, and commenced to prove the efficacy of his patent. One old Chinaman, whose limbs were almost rigid, was first operated upon, and after the "wonder" had been freely rubbed over him with a brush, the rigidity vanished, and the poor fellow commenced to run about in great glee. Others were also tried, and in every case good appeared to be done, as well where the joints were afflicted as where the disease presented itself in a palpable form. The treatment was continued on Wednesday, and the effect was simply marvelous. Three of the poor unfortunates, who a week ago were quite blind, walked forward on Mr. Hoyle's welcome arrival, and informed him that they could see quite well. Another, whose feet and hands had been gnarled and twisted in every direction, held them up and showed how well he could use them; the fingers, which had been formerly cramped up as if in a vyce, could be moved in every direction, and he was able to walk easily, whereas previously he could hardly move to fear of falling. Two of the other lepers were progressing in a similarly favourable manner, and were evidently delighted at recovering the use of their limbs. The seventh leper, however, is in a very bad state, and refused to allow the application to be placed on his hands or feet; and after swallowing a pill, which Mr. Hoyle prepares for them, he retired to his hut, and refused to come out. Mr. Hoyle, who appears to be very sanguine as to the efficacy of his patent, freely asserts that he will have all the lepers well in a fortnight."³

The inadequate care and treatment of lepers in 19th century Australia reflects the absence of affordable private health insurance or a government sponsored universal social security system. The impoverished, the aged and the incurably-ill survived with the help of private charities in a society in which the British model of workhouses financed by property rates was rejected. A Victorian Catholic newspaper deplored the claims of European colonists that there was ample provision for the sick and poor.⁴ The lack of a coordinated “safety net” included people with mental disabilities, including lunacy⁵ and the intellectually disadvantaged. All forms of illness among the Chinese were compounded by language and culture. Rural towns and communities lacked the financial or human resources to provide adequate social welfare services and the most sophisticated facilities were centred in Melbourne and the other colonial capital cities, a pattern that remains substantially unchanged today. Australian history is marked by enduring tension over the social welfare and related services, including wages and working conditions, available to residents with continuing debate over benefits in the major urban centres and those in what are now labelled ‘Regional Australia.’”

A report from Geelong outlined the lack of compassionate care for mentally ill people in a major Victorian regional town.

The accommodation existing at Geelong for the reception of lunatics remanded from the police court is now attracting considerable attention. A local paper states that "at the present time there are ten females on remand in the Geelong gaol on the charge of being dangerous lunatics. In one of those cases, the patient—or rather criminal, according to the law—was particularly violent when brought before the police court on Tuesday morning, and was again remanded to gaol. The mayor, however, not satisfied with the discharge of this formal duty, subsequently paid a visit to the gaol to see what appliances the officials possess to deal with such cases. We need scarcely say that these were miserable in the extreme. A stretcher with straps to fasten the poor lunatic down, and thus increase the violence of the disorder, with only criminals to tend upon her, was all that our civilisation provides in the Geelong goal for this most unfortunate class of sufferers."⁶

Deaths were commonplace in the goldfields as a monthly report from Ballarat confirms.

BALLARAT MORTALITY.

THERE were 55 deaths registered for East and West Ballarat in the month of November, including 7 cases of violent death, to wit-drowning, 2; mining accidents, 3; fall from horse,

4 *Advocate* (Melbourne), 16 April 1870.

5 The only personal record of a Chinese detained for lunacy in Victoria was made by (John-Jong) Ah Sing. Jong, Ah Sing, Ruth Moore and John Tully, *A Difficult Case: an autobiography of a Chinese miner on the Central Victorian goldfields* (Daylesford: Jim Crow Press, 2000). See online <http://ergo.slv.vic.gov.au/explore-history/golden-victoria/life-fields/jong-ah-siug>
Shen Yuanfang, *Dragon Seed in the Antipodes: Chinese-Australian Autobiographies*, (Carlton, Vic, Melbourne University Press, 2001), Ch. 2.

6 *Argus* (Melbourne), 3 October 1867.

1; suicide, 1. Subtracting the violent deaths from the total, we have left 48, and of these 24, or exactly one half, were infants, and of them only 6 had passed the age of 3 years.⁷

Chinese district association membership in Australia and New Zealand included a provision for burial and later exhumation of the bones for return to family grave-sites in China⁸ but otherwise Chinese provisions for social welfare in colonial Australia paralleled the inadequate privately administered European arrangements.

The 1854 Census of Victoria listed 2373 Chinese residents. By 1857, there were 25524 Chinese in Victoria. Leprosy seems to have been first mentioned in an 1857 report from Spring Flat, Castlemaine by the Castlemaine Health Officer, Dr. William Preshaw although it was probably present from the mass Chinese arrivals beginning in 1855.⁹ Most, if not all, the early lepers were infected before they left China.¹⁰ A British medical report in 1873 stated:

The disease is very prevalent in the Canton province, it is endemic there... In the whole empire leprosy is most common in the provinces of Canton and Fuh-kien... In the province of Canton it is most prevalent around the city of Canton, in the districts of San-ni, San-ning, Sun-tak, Hiang-san and Tung-kan; also in the districts south of Canton.¹¹

Men were examined before boarding emigrant ships and any obvious signs of the disease would have resulted in their rejection. In the absence of external signs of the disease, such as lesions on the hands or face, men carrying the leprosy bacillus could not have been identified by a cursory examination.¹²

Leprosy has a long European religious identification with spirituality that was exaggerated for millenia by ignorance of how it was contracted and the extent to which was contagious.¹³ Reports from China suggest that although leprosy was regarded as contagious the daily reality

7 *Star* (Ballarat), 19 December 1860.

8 See discussion in *Empire* (Sydney), 9 October 1865. Loveday, Valerie, *The Things That Unite: Inquests Into Chinese Deaths on the Bendigo Goldfields, 1854-65*, "Provenance: The Journal of Public Record Office Victoria, Issue 7, 2006. Online file:///Users/ian/Documents/01a%20CHINESE%20MISSIONS,%20TROVE%20FLDR/2D.1B%20Vic-References/2D.1.01%20Lovejoy,%20Chinese%20Deaths,%20Bendigo,%201854-1865.webarchive

A list of Victoria exhumations is online — file:///Users/ian/Documents/01a%20CHINESE%20MISSIONS,%20TROVE%20FLDR/2D.1C%20VICTORIA-ARTICLES/Chinese%20Exhumation-Victoria.webarchive.

A NSW letter requesting permission to exhume c150-200 bodies for return to China.

Online_ <https://arrow.latrobe.edu.au/store/3/4/5/1/public/FMProb91b.html>

9 *Mount Alexander Mail*, (Castlemaine), 18 March 1857.

10 *Star* (Ballarat), 19 December 1860.

11 Cantlie, Thompson, *Prize Essays on Leprosy*, (London, The New Sydenham Society, 1897), p. 40.

12 Online - <https://web.stanford.edu/group/parasites/ParaSites2005/Leprosy/clinical.htm>

13 *Star* (Ballarat), 21; 25 August 1857. Fear of contracting leprosy was universal in the 19th century Euro-American world, and Australian fears mirrored those of North America and Europe. The Victorian public was advised that the disease was not contagious in October 1867, nearly two decades after it was first reported in the colony—*Ballarat Star*, 7 October 1867. The idea of leprosy as a contagious diseases continued in Victoria—online, Victoria, Hansard, 1884, p 761ff http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/images/stories/historical_hansard/VicHansard_18840723_18840805.pdf

was that lepers lived among non-lepers without the latter contracting the disease.¹⁴ Ignorance and fear resulted in episodes when leprosy was identified on nothing more than the statement of a Chinese Interpreter.

Stern Justice. — At the Bendigo Police Court on Wednesday, A Toy, an emaciated Chinaman, whose rags, filth, and vacant eye rendered him a most miserable looking object, was brought up for vagrancy and discharged, there not being sufficient evidence against him. The wretched creature appeared to be diseased, and the interpreter, O' Cheong, said lie was suffering from leprosy, and that his fingers were decaying. *The Bench ordered him to quit the district within twenty-four hours; and the crowd shrinking back from the "unclean thing,"*¹⁵ *the stranger wandered forth, shunned even by his own, with the world for his home, and none to aid or pity him.* On the following day, Mr. Anderson, the Chinese protector, protested against the extreme cruelty of this decision; the Chinaman had apparently obeyed the command of the bench, for he had departed from Sandhurst, and all search that had been made for him proving ineffectual, it was supposed he had committed suicide by throwing himself down a hole. (He has since been discovered, and is being taken care of.)¹⁶

Anxiety over the leprosy in Ballarat stimulated similar concerns in Bendigo.

The Bendigo Advertiser, in referring to the existence of leprosy amongst the Chinese of Ballarat, asks:— "Are we certain that nothing of the kind exists on Bendigo? Several instances have recently occurred of Chinese dying under circumstances rendering it tolerably certain that destitution and neglect had as much to do with their death as disease. Are there no instances here of Chinese being allowed to rot in filthy hovels that do not exclude the wind and rain, and receiving hardly any attention from their country-men?"¹⁷

In 1860, a special ward for "Chinese affected with leprosy" was opened in the grounds of the Ballarat Benevolent Hospital with Chinese contributions to the cost.¹⁸ The "Rev" William Young of the Presbyterian Chinese Mission, assisted by Cheong Peng-nam, reported visiting a man in the ward soon after it opened but it seems to have closed soon afterwards.¹⁹

In towns with significant Chinese populations, local associations took part in processions to raise money for European sponsored benevolent institutions that were the principal providers of relief.²⁰ By 1867, the Melbourne press was urging the Chinese, especially the wealthy merchants, to organise a community fund to provide permanent care for the lepers.²¹

14 Cantlie, Thompson, *Prize Essays on Leprosy*, (London, The New Sydenham Society, 1897), p. 302; 304.

15 An apparent reference to the Old Testament book of Deuteronomy, Chapter 23, verse 10.

16 *Mount Alexander Mail*, (Castlemaine), 3 August 1859.

17 *Argus* (Melbourne), 3 October 1867.

18 *Star* (Ballarat), 27 July 1860. *Argus* (Melbourne), 1 August 1860.

19 Young, Rev. William, Journal, 22 August 1860, *Australian Messenger and Presbyterian Review*, November 1860.

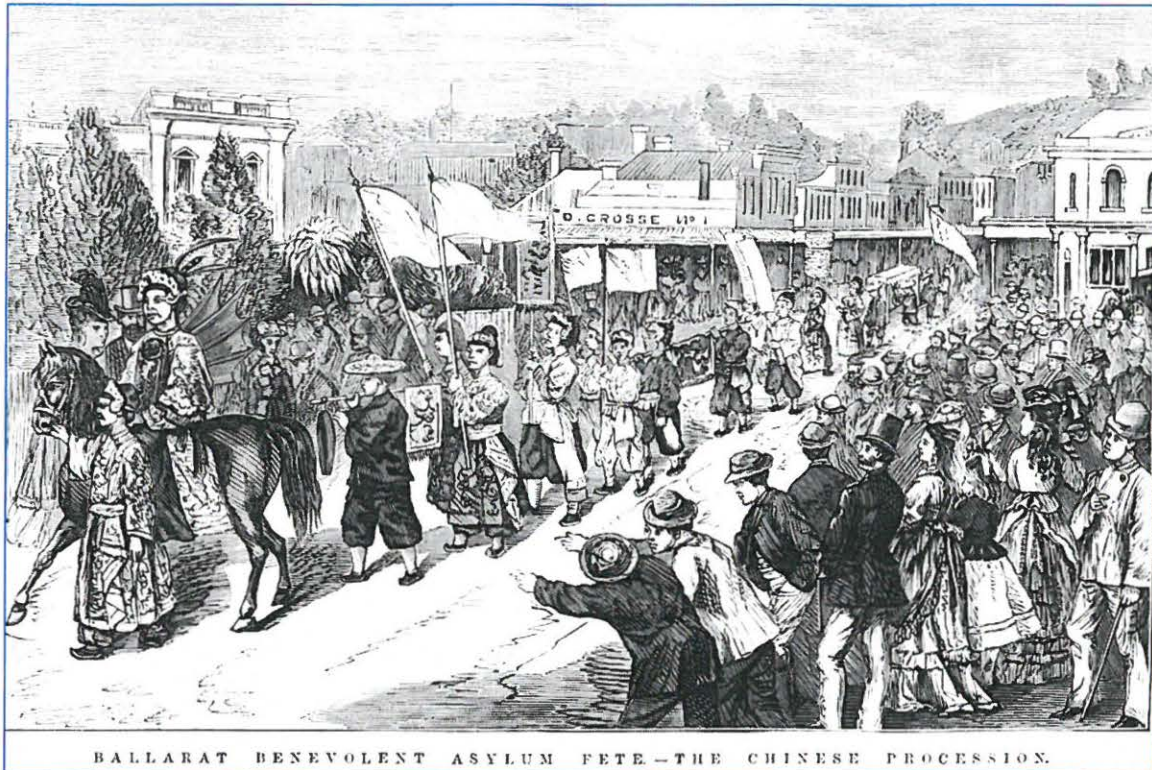
20 See description of procession in aid of the Melbourne Hospital, 1900. Online —

<https://arrow.latrobe.edu.au/store/3/4/5/1/public/FMProf03f.html>

Examples of restored Chinese parade banners at Beechworth are online —

<https://www.facebook.com/sun.loong/photos/a.949368431816489.1073741878.123316814421659/949369461816386/>

Ballarat Benevolent Asylum Fete—The Chinese Procession.



Illustrated Australian News for Home Readers, 1 December 1875.

By 1859 leprosy was being reported more frequently although still only a very small number compared to the total Chinese population of c20,000.

The *Ballarat Star* says:- "We regret to announce that leprosy has made its appearance in the Chinese camp on Golden Point, where an unfortunate Celestial, afflicted with this terrible disease, has been for some days in a miserable dog-kennel, 4 feet long and 3 feet in width, with no earthly covering but a piece of dirty old canvas thrown over two sticks which are stuck in the ground. As is generally the case, the unfortunate sufferer has been deserted by his unfeeling countrymen, who refused to go near him. Mr. Warden Foster, the Chinese Protector, on being informed of the circumstance, sent the Chinese constable (O'Neil) to look after him, when the officer, with commendable zeal, went to the Chinaman's countrymen, and from them and other persons collected £10, which he is laying out in providing a suitable tent, with bed and bedding for the sufferer. A Chinaman on Little Bendigo is also in a frightful state from this disease, and none of his countrymen will go near him. The constable has, however, sent him 10s."²²

An artist's impression of a Beechworth procession are online — <http://www.egold.net.au/objects/DEG000100.htm>
 Holsworth, Carol, *Chinese Lepers in Victoria: A Case of Charity and Cultural Clashes*, (Bendigo, Friends of the Bendigo Cemeteries Incorporated, 2009.

21 *Argus* (Melbourne), 15 October 1867. *Ballarat Star*, 18 October 1867.

22 *Argus* (Melbourne), 24 October 1859. *Bendigo Advertiser*, 30 December 1859.

A few days later the press was able to publish a slight improvement in the man's circumstances while maintaining press criticism of the hygiene of the Chinese and their camps.

LEPROSY AMONGST THE CHINESE.-The *Ballarat Star* says, "The Chinaman to whom we recently alluded as afflicted with leprosy on Golden Point [Clayton's Hill], is now comfortably lodged in a neat tent, and supplied with the necessaries of life, as well as some bedding, &c. The disease is described by the medical gentleman who examined the unfortunate sufferer as in its incipient stage; and there can be no doubt that the great aversion which 'John' has to soap, as well as the filthy state of the Chinese camps, are the primary causes of this dreadful disease."²³

Leprosy of Hands and Fingers.



<http://www.dermnet.com/images/Leprosy/picture/7632>

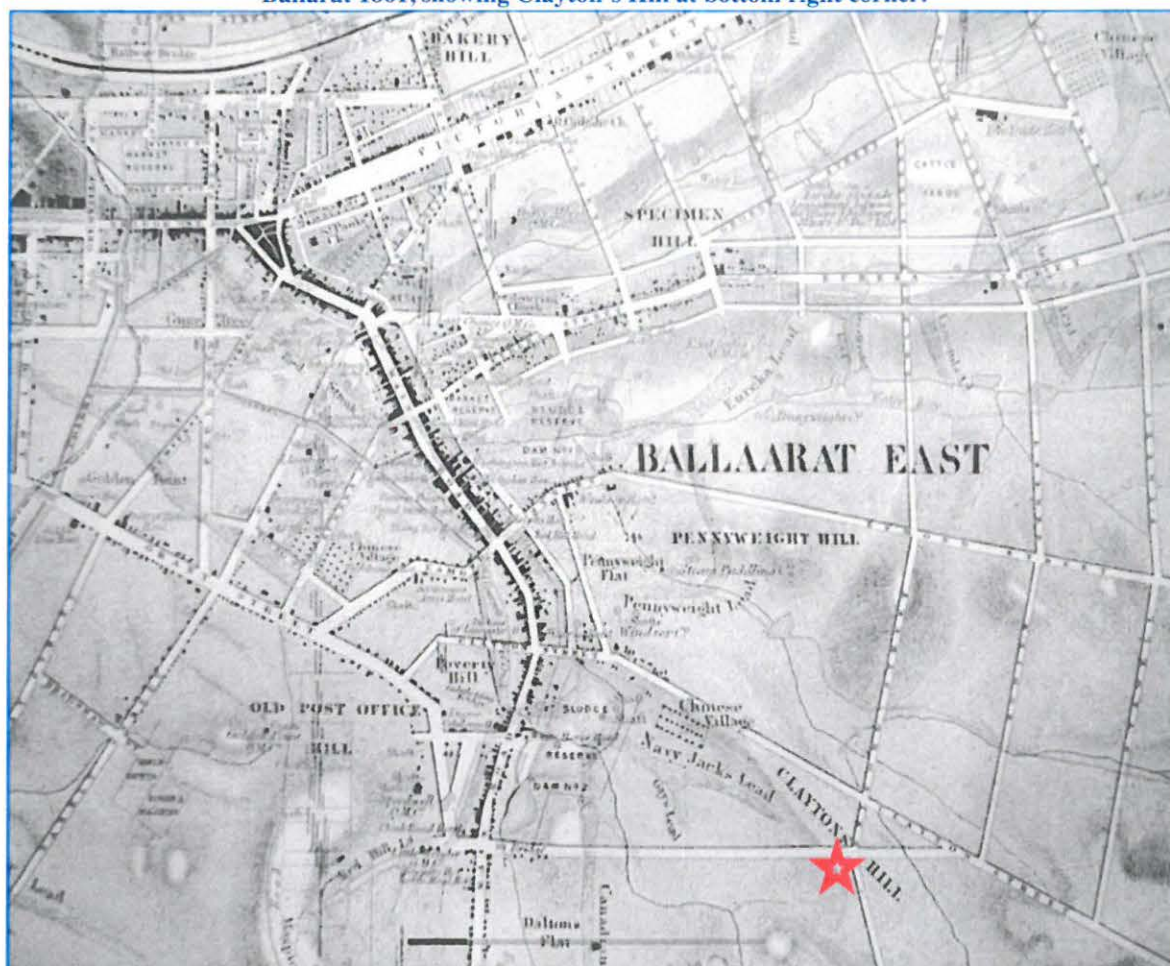
A report from Ararat in 1865 reveals the condition of an isolated leper for whom little was done except providing food. Bad as conditions in Ballarat might be considered, the situation of individuals elsewhere was profoundly worse.

A story of Chinese stolidity and patience under hopeless suffering is told by the *A and still Advertiser* in the following terms. At the base of the range to the west of Ararat, and in a thickly growing clump of young trees, is a lonely, and, — to all outward seeming, a deserted tent. It is surrounded by a thick hedge of brushwood, and offers no signs of being inhabited, beyond a worn path that leads across the threshold of the calico entrance. The dwelling is isolated from all others in the neighborhood, and presents a singular aspect of solitude. The stranger passing near at certain hours, if perchance he may stumble on the place, may see a can or plate of rice laid therefor the use of the occupant, or the haggard figure of a Chinese may be observed at times creeping towards the food, which he languidly takes within the tent, from whence he issues no more during the day. This unfortunate creature, who has been

23 *Bendigo Advertiser*, 30 December 1859.

deserted by his compatriots in all but the doling out of the daily supply of food, is in an advanced stage of leprosy, and is gradually lingering out his days awaiting the inevitable finale of the disease. If the curtain of the tent be lifted, the leper can be seen lying on the floor, on which is spread a rug and piece of canvas, apparently lost to all hope and resigned to the malady with which he is stricken. His feet and hands are covered with livid blotches, that show out darkly on his bronzed skin. One of his eyes is affected, and the lips present the appearance of being partially drawn awry by the progress of the malady. Ah Toy, for this is his name, raises himself wearily up if a European less fearful than his countrymen looks in, and he points with a stolid face to the marks and blotches which proclaim him what he is. It is painful to see the poor creature attempting to make any exertion, and to watch the dreary passionless way in which he replies by pantomimic signs to questions that may be asked of him. The Chinese say it cannot be long till the progress of the disease proves fatal; when it is probable that the tent and all contained within it, as well as the surroundings, will be burned. A Toy has been in the hospital for some time, but was discharged as incurable, and in the stillness of his miserable home, he is thus awaiting death.²⁴

Ballarat 1861, showing Clayton's Hill at bottom right corner.



24 Geelong Advertiser, 29 May 1865.

A similar account was given of a leper living near Ballarat and another at Chiltern²⁵ in the northeast some years later emphasises the absence of a systematic government policy on managing people suffering from leprosy.

Our Smythesdale correspondent writes;— “For the last two years a Chinese, frightfully affected with leprosy, has resided in a hut about a mile and a half from Linton, on the Springdalloh road. The poor creature is, it seems, in such a dreadful state that death apparently would be a blest relief to him from his present sufferings. It appears that his countrymen visit him occasionally to supply him with the necessaries of life, but that on such occasions the visitors approach no nearer the place than what they regard as sufficient to keep themselves out of danger. The sub-enumerator for the district, who is, it seems, the only European known to have been in anything like close proximity to the unfortunate creature for a long time past, is stated to have described the appearance of the wretched man as one of the most distressing sights he ever witnessed.”²⁶

The See Yup (Siyi) Society in San Francisco rules provided for assistance to the sick but the extent of this is uncertain.²⁷ In Victoria, association rules required a man’s mates to care for him but there was no corporate responsibility either from the central club-house in South Melbourne or any of the regional temples (usually tagged joss-houses).²⁸ Individual Chinese left food and other items such as clothing for lepers but, fearful of contagion, avoided close contact.²⁹ The press commented that:

Inquest. — On Monday, Dr. Preshaw, the coroner, held an inquest at Pennyweight Flat, on the body of a Chinaman, whose name was supposed to be Ah Pow, who died from leprosy. The evidence in this case showed that the deceased had been ill for some time, and had, about 12 months ago, been in the hospital. Lately his had assumed the form of confirmed leprosy, and he had been forsaken by his mates. He was found by a Chinaman dead in his tent, being covered with leprosy; the body was somewhat decomposed. The jury found a verdict that the deceased had died from leprosy, and that death was accelerated for want of proper medical treatment.³⁰

25 Age (Melbourne), 26 January 1875.

26 Ballarat Star, 7 July 1871. Mount Alexander Mail (Castlemaine), 8 July 1871. Wallaroo Times (South Australia), 26 July 1871.

27 Speer, Rev. William, Presbyterian Missionary to the Chinese, “The Democracy of the Chinese,” *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine*, Vol 37, 1888, p 847.

28 On William Young’s life prior to coming to Australia in 1854 see Wylie, Alexander, *Memorials of Protestant Christian Missionaries to the Chinese*, (Shanghai, American Presbyterian Mission Press, 1867) pp 66-67. From 1855-1858 he was the Superintending Missionary of the interdenominational Victoria Chinese Mission. He was briefly Interpreter-General for the Victorian Government, producing the much cited but deeply inaccurate: Papers Presented to Parliament, Legislative Assembly, Victoria, Young, Rev. W., *Report on the Condition of the Chinese Population in Victoria*, 1868. He served with the Victorian Presbyterian Chinese Mission until c1872 when he moved to Singapore.

29 Star (Ballarat), 18 February 1863. Mount Alexander Mail (Castlemaine), 8 July 1871.

30 Mount Alexander Mail (Castlemaine), 21 December 1859.

A summary in another paper stated:

As is the fashion of this people, his countrymen drove him from among them upon the disease showing itself.³¹

Ignorance about the causes and spread of the disease coupled with historic Judaeo-Christian identification of leprosy with spiritual inadequacy³² heightened colonial fears of Chinese “heathenism” and stimulated racism in Australasia.³³

Even in Ballarat, where efforts were consistently made to ameliorate their circumstances, lepers were invariably isolated until death ended their sufferings.

An inquest was held on Saturday on the body of a Chinese, named Ah Chee, who was found dead in his hut, situated off Clayton street, on the 16th instant. The deceased, it appeared, had been suffering from leprosy for the past two or three years, and lived alone. He was last seen alive on the 14th inst., when he was preparing something for himself to eat, and several of his countrymen who lived in the vicinity had reason to conclude that he died on the second day afterwards. Dr. Bunce who examined the deceased's body on Saturday, stated that it was leprosy in various places and exceedingly emaciated. His opinion was that death had been caused by leprosy, accelerated by exposure to the cold and by general neglect, and a verdict was returned accordingly.³⁴

An 1865 investigation by Dr. M'Crea for the Victorian Board of Health reported thirty-one known cases of leprosy in the colony comprising twelve at Ballarat, seven or eight at Castlemaine, and others in other goldfield centres including Ararat and Avoca.³⁵

The prevalence of leprosy among the Chinese at Ballarat has led to the adoption of special and substantial precautionary measures. So we learn from the *Star*:

A meeting of the committee of the Benevolent Asylum was held on Wednesday morning to confer with Dr. M'Crea, the head of the Government medical department, on the management of Chinese afflicted with leprosy. Dr. M'Crea observed that he attended at the instance of the Colonial Secretary, and having visited all the cases reported, he intended to suggest that the Government should provide a suitable building, say forty-eight feet by twenty feet, to be erected on the Benevolent Asylum Reserve, the Government also providing for the maintenance of the patients, whilst the committee of the asylum should

31 *Bendigo Advertiser*, 25 November 1859. *Geelong Advertiser*, 20 August 1861 gives a brief account of men, believed to be lepers, at the Mt. Alexander diggings.

32 Old Testament *Book of Leviticus*, ch. 13 v. 3. “The priest is to examine the sore on the skin, and if the hair in the sore has turned white and the sore appears to be more than skin deep, it is a defiling skin disease. When the priest examines that person, he shall pronounce them ceremonially unclean.”

33 Parsons, Meg, “Defining disease, segregating race: Sir Raphael Cilento, Aboriginal health and leprosy management in twentieth century Queensland,” *Aboriginal History*, Vol 34 2010, pp 85-114.

34 *Ballarat Star*, 24 July 1865.

35 *Ballarat Star*, 18 Jan 1866. *Maitland Mercury*, 25 November 1865. Dr M'Crea had provided a report to the College of Physicians of London as part of an Empire-wide survey requested by the Secretary for the Colonies on the “character and progress of leprosy in the various British colonies.” The report was published in 1867. The section on Victoria stated: “Leprosy is known in the colony solely among the Chinese, under the form of elephantiasis Graecorum, called by the Chinese ‘Fat Fung.’” (See online https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_leprosy) There are at present eighteen known lepers in the colony among the Chinese; but, probably, there are many others unknown. Then of them are maintained at the public expense, three in gaols, and seven in hospitals. Leprosy prevails most in the gold districts, in or near the townships of Ballarat, Castlemaine, and Beechworth.” *Sydney Mail*, 14 September 1867.

provide attendance and medical comforts. This plan was suggested because it would relieve the committee of the present cost of the patients' food, and would also save much trouble and cost in attendance. The members of the asylum committee are divided in opinion as to the expediency of the plan proposed, and it will come on for discussion as an order of the day at the next sitting of the committee, on Monday next, when the whole question, not only of the erection of a leprosy hospital within the reserve, but also how far the asylum is to be regarded as an hospital for chronic diseases, will be opened up. It will also be advisable for the committee to calculate on the probable accumulation of those cases, since the course of leprosy frequently extends over four years. The knowledge, also, once circulated of a hospital expressly intended for Chinese lepers, may be expected soon to cause the bringing hither of such unfortunate people from all parts of the colony; in which case a building forty feet by twenty feet would prove very inadequate for the intended purpose.³⁶

Considerable time elapsed between the submission of Dr. M'Crea's report and action.

William Young wrote:

As regards the poor lepers, nothing has been done for them as yet by the Government; they are in as deplorable a state as ever. You are, perhaps, aware that the Chief Secretary sent up the Chief Medical Officer from Melbourne, with the especial view of inquiring into the condition of the lepers here. I presume he has, long ere this, submitted the results of his personal observations to the Chief Secretary; and now that the dead-lock is over, I think the Government ought to be urged to delay no longer in taking action in regard to a permanent provision for the lepers. My application to the ladies of the Benevolent Society in Melbourne, through their secretary, Mrs. Ferguson, for assistance on behalf of the lepers, met with a prompt and favourable response. They sent me up a parcel containing shirts, blankets and a piece of calico, value altogether £5, which proved very acceptable to the unfortunate sufferers. With all that is done for them by occasional donations from private individuals, their urgent wants are far from being adequately relieved. Something on a large and permanent scale must be done to meet their case, and this the Government alone can undertake. It comes to be a heavy task to me to have the constant oversight of them. No medical man sees them to prescribe anything for the alleviation of their pains. In fact, one medical man has expressed his willingness to see and prescribe for them, if only they could be properly housed, and some person appointed to look after them and see that the prescriptions were carried out; in their present circumstances, he said, it was utterly useless to prescribe. And thus their misery, which might be alleviated, is daily aggravated. Surely our Christianity requires awaking from its sinful lethargy. Can it be possible that there is so much suffering, and so little done towards removing or lessening it?³⁷

The condition of the lepers at Clayton's Hill continued to exercise the Ballarat East municipality and the management of the Benevolent Asylum while the colonial government added to the confusion by failing to allocate clear responsibility for their care and to ensure funding to "prevent their dying from starvation."³⁸ Nearly a decade later criticism of the inadequate government management of the issue was exaggerated when a local butcher apparently complained that customers were reluctant to buy his meat for fear of contamination

36 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 November 1865. *Hamilton Spectator*, 5 May 1866.

37 Young, Rev. William, *Christian Review and Messenger of the Presbyterian Church of Victoria*, June 1866.

38 *Age* (Melbourne), 27 September 1867. *Mount Alexander Mail* (Castlemaine), 27 September 1867.

by flies from Clayton's Hill. The solution, it was argued, was a lazarette in an isolated location where the lepers would be out of sight, and presumably out of mind.³⁹ The "buck-passing" entirely missed the suffering created by the inadequacy of officialdom encouraged by widespread antipathy to the Chinese.

Borough Inspector's Report.—The inspector reported on various minor matters submitted to his consideration, and reported that he had visited the Chinese camp on the Red Hill, in company with Sub-inspector Ryall, and found nine Chinese lying in their old huts, suffering from leprosy, and they had neither clothes nor food, in fact, unless some steps were taken they would starve. The inspector stated that Mr Ryall had himself advanced the Chinese some money, and had directed him to bring the matter before the council.—Some discussion ensued in reference to the latter clause, and the letter which had appeared in that day's Star, from the Rev. J. O. Dykes, was also drawn attention to. The inspector stated that the huts the Chinese lived in were unfit for habitation. It was stated during the discussion that the Government were to blame in not having the projected building for the lepers erected, and that the council had not in any way impeded the building being proceeded with. The matter was ultimately referred to the mayor, it being also understood that the notice of the Benevolent Asylum should be drawn to the matter.⁴⁰

Even after the wide public discussion of the condition of the lepers at Ballarat in 1867, and some short-term philanthropic efforts, the situation of the men was appalling.

Sir,—The other day, after your able article on this painful subject appeared, I visited, with a friend, what passes for the Ballarat lazaretto, in the hope of seeing some signs of Christian kindness in this dark quarter. We entered all the huts, and found that the paragraphs which have recently appeared in our papers descriptive of the miserable condition of those wretched creatures came far short of the reality.

Two of the lepers are apparently suffering in the last stage of this fearful disease, and they live in the worst of the huts—cold, dark, and indescribably filthy; deserted by all their friends, hardly able to move, feverish, and with wide mouths panting for breath.

In your Tuesday's leader you say, "When first the existing state of affairs was disclosed much public sympathy was expressed, and the condition of the sufferers was immediately ameliorated by the exertions of the Ballarat police, acting, as we understand, as almoners for certain humane residents in the district."

Now, Sir, if these "humane residents" would themselves visit the Red-hills they would find that the police have done very little, and certainly nothing as to the removal of the filth which covers everything in some of the huts. What food is supplied I do not know. All I could see was a piece of putrid raw beef, tied by twine to the head of the bed on which lay a helpless leper, who could touch it with his mouth almost without moving.

I observe in to-day's Argus that the committee of the Melbourne [Ballarat?] Benevolent Asylum have declined the proposal of the Government to take charge of the lepers, and, as I think, on good grounds, knowing how divided medical men are as to leprosy being a contagious disease. Weeks may pass before anything definite is done by Government to ameliorate their condition; and in the meanwhile, unless the public will provide them with some temporary abode, these wretched

39 *Advocate* (Melbourne) 6 February 1875. *Ballarat Courier*, 10 February 1875.

40 *Ballarat Star*, 25 September 1867.

creatures will be forced to rot away in hovels not fit for beasts. Have we no kind friends to attend to this at once?—I am, Sir, yours, N. P. W.⁴¹

Providing improved living conditions did not always advance the welfare of the men at Clayton's Hill. In 1870 a sneak thief stole a bedstead from one of the huts and sold it to a scrap metal dealer.⁴²

As 1867 drew to a close, and despite almost continuous discussion, the condition of the lepers remained unchanged—plenty of talk but little action. Despite the following comment, the Rev. William Young, working with the Presbyterian Chinese Mission, did what he could to bring some relief.

This is what the Star says of their present position:—"The Chinese lepers remain uncared for by the Government, or the missionaries, or anybody but a Chinese or two .and the police—those cosmopolitan professors of charity, and doers also, as it seems, in this business."⁴³

The major focus of colonial benevolent societies was caring for the poor and destitute and they rarely provided acute medical care and were unable to do more than provide subsistence money for leprosy patients. The Benevolent Asylum sought, unsuccessfully, to have the Ballarat East Municipal Council exercise its health powers in providing a location for a lazarette and adequate finance for the support of the inmates.⁴⁴ The Council took some responsibility for the lepers while seeking to convince the Colonial Government in Melbourne to accept full responsibility. The Victorian Government did nothing of substance for years, despite having a quarantine site at Point Nepean that was rarely used.⁴⁵ A Queensland paper commented in early 1870 that:

Christianiised and civilised as Victorians profess to be, they could not afford to spend a few hundreds a year in preserving from starvation some seven or eight Chinese who had become affected with the fearful disease of leprosy, and who, surrounded by religion and religious people, were left to die uncared for and unheeded.⁴⁶

41 *Argus* (Melbourne), 19 October 1867.

42 *Age* (Melbourne), 15 October 1870.

43 *Argus* (Melbourne), 20 December 1867.

44 Dykes, Rev/J. Oswald, "The Chinese Lepers of Ballarat," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 October 1867. See also Annual Meeting of the Ballarat Benevolent Asylum, *Ballarat Courier*, 21 January 1870. The term "lazarette" derives from the name of St. Lazarus of Jerusalem. The Order of St. Lazarus was the name of a medieval Catholic military order founded c1120 dedicated to protection of Christians in Palestine, and in particular, care for lepers.

45 *Ballarat Star*, 24 August 1869.

46 *Maryborough Chronicle* (Queensland), 22 January 1870.

The Clayton's Hill site was officially announced on Friday 21 June 1867.⁴⁷ The Victorian Government had allocated £200 for a "house of reception" for the lepers but the Ballarat Borough Council still refused to provide a site and the money remained unspent.⁴⁸

At least one leper who had been admitted to the Ballarat Hospital discharged himself and preferred to live alone. The state of the man is tragic reading and serves as a salutary warning of the potential fate of people in societies lacking a coherent social welfare framework.

On Tuesday, at the Barley Sheaf Hotel, Ballarat, Dr Clendinning held an inquest on the body of a Chinese, named Fung Yen, whose death, according to the evidence, and the verdict of the jury, took place on the Sunday or Monday, in his hut on the Gum Tree Flat, Golden Point, and arose from natural causes, being caused by exhaustion from diarrhoea and dysentery of some weeks duration, consequent on the extreme ulceration of the large intestines. Lee Young, storekeeper, deposed that the deceased was from Canton, about thirty-eight years of age, and had been in the colony three years. He had had the leprosy for the last two years, and been in the Ballarat District Hospital for upwards of fifteen months. Being incurable, he left the hospital some six or eight months ago, since which he had been living on the Gum Tree Flat, by means of subscriptions from friends and some aid from the Benevolent Asylum. The deceased had been very bad in his bowels for two or three weeks; no doctor saw him, and his own countrymen would not go near him on account of his leprosy. Witness had not seen him for a week, but on Monday morning he noticed some woman standing at the deceased's hut door. Witness then went down and found the deceased lying on his back on the ground, with his feet towards the door-quite dead. William Young, missionary to the Chinese of Ballarat, deposed to having known the deceased, and repeatedly urged him to return to the hospital, but he invariably declined. For the last two or three weeks the deceased got thinner and witness again recommended him to go to the hospital. When he next saw him, the deceased said he had got some medicine, but his diarrhoea was worse. Witness had not seen him again alive. George Wakefield tendered the medical evidence. He had made a post-mortem examination, and found that the body, which was partially dressed, had [been] dead about twenty-four hours. It was greatly emaciated, and filthily dirty. There were no marks of violence except on the forehead, where there was a superficial abrasion of about an inch in length, but of some weeks' standing. All the viscera were quite normal except the colon and rectum, which were in a high state of inflammation and ulceration.⁴⁹

By 1869 the men at Clayton's Hill were still the responsibility of the Benevolent Asylum and improvements had taken place in their living conditions. Their huts had been rebuilt and new clothing, bedding and firewood had been supplied and weekly food rations improved. A total of £323 had been spent with a small part of this coming from the Chinese community, mainly through the efforts of the Presbyterian missionary, the Rev. William Young, and his catechist,

47 Victorian Government Gazette, 21 June 1867, p. 1121. *Ovens and Murray Advertiser*, (Beechworth), 25 June 1867.

48 *Age* (Melbourne), 27 September 1867.

49 *Star* (Ballarat), 18 February 1863.

Cheong Peng-nam.⁵⁰ The majority of the Victorian colonists had little or no contact with, or interest in, the Chinese. A public meeting in Ballarat in late 1870, called by the municipal leaders, attracted less than four hundred people. It did little more than to repeat the standard European complaints about the Chinese as an “alien race” listing gambling, opium, liaisons with “fallen” European women, abuse of children, etc.⁵¹

A common Chinese explanation for the community’s inability to relieve the sick was poverty but traditional cultural and social values were equally strong and coupled to the certainty that there was no cure known to the Chinese. William Young reported from Castlemaine in late 1855.⁵²

In the course of our visits we have sometimes witnessed scenes of suffering and wretchedness. On entering a Chinese tent one sees little or no comfort in it. It looks tenfold more cheerless when the occupant lies prostrate with sickness. In one instance we saw a wretched sufferer left entirely alone, (his companions having gone to their work when evidently he most needed help. There was an enclosure at the place which embraced within its space twenty or twenty-five tents but the sick man's tent was pitched outside of this enclosure. No kind friend stood near to minister to his wants, and he passed the whole of his time moaning, from the pain occasioned by his disease. We recommended him to get his friends to obtain medical aid; he replied, they had not the money.⁵³

“Informed” 19th century Euro-American opinion held that Chinese believed that illness, failure in business, or gambling losses, to take just three instances, could be the result of a grudge by a dead person and bring down the worst of bad luck.⁵⁴ Accordingly anyone who accepted responsibility for a dying friend could find themselves paying for the funeral and maintaining the grave. The cost of a burial was estimated by William Young at £7, or perhaps several weeks income for a poor man.⁵⁵ In later years the friend could also be responsible for the exhumation and washing of the bones for return to the family in China.

Twelve months from this date ... Chinese throughout the colony will be called upon ... to contribute to a general fund ... for the purpose of conveying the remains of 500 bodies of defunct celestials already consigned to mother earth from this colony to China. ... We learn that, during the last twelve months, a similar number of dead Chinese ... have been shipped ... from Victoria.⁵⁶

50 *Ballarat Star*, 23 January 1869.

51 *Ballarat Courier*, 14 September 1870.

52 Young, Rev. W., Report on the Condition of the Chinese Population in Victoria, 1868.

53 *Argus*, (Melbourne), 16 November 1855.

54 Doolittle, Justus, *The Social Life of the Chinese*, (London, Sampson Low and Son, Marston, 1868)

55 *Argus*, (Melbourne), 16 November 1855.

56 *Empire*, (Sydney), 9 October 1895.

In 1855, Young had provided an early example of the indifference of some Chinese to the sufferings of their countrymen.

On the 20th instant, the two teachers and myself went to the Adelaide Hill, in order to visit a sick Chinese. On arriving at the place, and entering the sick mans tent, I was shocked to seem his truly pitiable and miserable condition. He seemed like a living skeleton. Nothing whatever in the shape of comfort was to be seen in the tent. A loaf of bread, partly broken, hard as a brick, and black with mould, was lying on the lid of a box that stood beside his miserable bed, which was composed of a few strips of bark, while a jacket or some garment rolled up served for his pillow. On this his head rested about two or three inches above the bare ground; near his pillow were placed a plate and cup, but both were empty. I asked his mate why something of a nourishing kind was not put near him, in case he wanted it? He said the man had no appetite whatever for food. I put several questions to the sick man, Niw, his mate, and Chu-a-luk, but owing to the poor man's deafness, he could not return any satisfactory answer. After a while, three or four English diggers came up to us, and gave us some information about the poor mans circumstances. They told us that he was a half-witted person, shunned by his countrymen; was (when able to go about) in the habit of begging in the English tents; and used to make known his wants by signs, and pointing to his stomach. Some kind persons had frequently relieved his necessities by giving him bread and butter, coffee and tea, and from time to time a sixpence to a shilling, but our informants thought the money was always taken away from him by his countrymen. The best step, I thought, was to get medical aid for him, and to have a subscription raised among his countrymen at Adelaide Hill for the purpose of getting him a few comforts. Chu-a-luk went to Dr Montgomery, stated the poor mans case, and requested the doctor to pay him a visit. He kindly did so, but the man was then beyond the reach of human skill. He did not long survive our visit. I have often thought, on witnessing cases of sickness among the Chinese, how great a blessing a hospital would be to them. Many of their sick die from want of proper care and nourishment, as well as exposure to the damp.⁵⁷

The condition of the Chinese in Bendigo paralleled circumstances across Victoria and a press report drew attention to the concentration of limited public assistance in Melbourne. Although the article deplores the circumstances of poor and sick Chinese the writer seemed equally keen to hide them and avoid hurting the tender sensitivities of the Bendigo middle classes.

DESTITUTION AND DISEASE AMONGST THE CHINESE.

For some time back we have been aware of the existence of extreme destitution amongst the Chinese residing in this district, and more than once we have directed attention to cases which have come before the public where unfortunate Chinamen have been discovered in their huts dying of starvation, filth, and disease; Attention has been recently directed to the existence of a horrible leprosy amongst the Chinese at Ballarat, but we hardly doubt if the hovels in some of the Chinese encampments in our own district were vigilantly examined, that this same horrible and loathsome disease would be found to exist. Indeed, it is only a few weeks since that the police brought before the Bench a horrible looking object of a

57 Young, William, *Mount Alexander Mail* (Castlemaine), 14 December 1855. Victoria Chinese Mission, 5th Report for 1855, July 1855.

Chinaman, whose body, it was stated, was half decomposed by this fearful and incurable disease. The Hospital had refused him, the Benevolent Asylum had cast him forth, and the only resource of the magistrates was to send him to the Melbourne Gaol for the purpose of being forwarded to an asylum which, as it was understood, the Government had provided there for cases of the kind...

That destitution and poverty of the most frightful kind exist in the different encampments Around us, we have indisputable testimony everyday in the appearance of the emaciated looking and half naked Chinamen whom we meet in our daily walks. One particular instance may be specially referred to in the case of a Chinese mendicant, who for some days past has been allowed to wander about our principal streets. We say allowed, because we think that the authorities are neglecting a public duty in allowing public decency and propriety to be shocked by permitting this half naked Chinaman to be in the streets. We are quite aware that the police authorities cannot avert the evils of poverty and destitution amongst the Chinese, but at least they can take such steps as will prevent the possibility of their results being so prominently thrust under the noses and before the eyes of the public in the streets of the town.⁵⁸

In most instances local Chinese provided a minimum level of assistance, usually with food.

Leprous Chinese.— We have been informed that in several of the tents at the Ironbark and White Hills encampments there are Chinese afflicted with leprosy. On Saturday last our informant, accompanied by an intelligent Chinaman, paid a visit to the camps, and had pointed out to him three tents, on looking into which he saw loathsome objects who were, as he was told, suffering from leprosy. The tents in which they were lying are some distance apart from the others, and the unfortunate wretches are daily supplied with food by the other Chinese, who subscribe for that purpose. It appears that the police authorities are powerless in the matter, as they are on the other gold-fields where many similar cases exist. Surely it is high time that the Government, to whom the subject of this serious evil has been reported frequently of late, started to do something to prevent the spread of such a dreadful disease.

— *Bendigo Advertiser*, January 8.⁵⁹

One of the major challenges confronting mid 19th century medicine was the confusion of leprosy with elephantiasis⁶⁰ and other disorders that resulted in skin lesions.⁶¹ William Young noted.

Towards the last week in March, hearing that several sick Chinese, afflicted with a species of elephantiasis had been received into the Castlemaine hospital, the two native agents and myself paid them a visit. The resident surgeon kindly led us to the ward occupied by them, and after putting several questions to them through Chu-a-luk, about their state of health, food, effects of medicine, etc., he withdrew, and left us with them. After some little conversation with the invalids, I called upon Chu-a-luk to read to them a portion of the eighth chapter of the Gospel of St Matthew. This was probably the first time the name of Jesus Christ sounded in their ears. The healing of the leper, mentioned in that chapter, produced a thrilling sensation, which shewed itself in loud exclamations of delight, uttered

58 *Bendigo Advertiser*, 3 October 1867.

59 *Age* (Melbourne), 9 January 1866. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 January 1866.

60 *Star* (Ballarat), 25 August 1857.

61 See online <http://rare-diseases.org/rare-diseases/elephantiasis/> See also Cantlie, Thompson, *Prize Essays on Leprosy*, (London, The New Sydenham Society, 1897), p. 128.

by the invalids. That Saviour who shewed himself so willing and powerful to save the wretched applicant who came to him for cleansing, we told them, was able to help them also. We directed them to seek of him the pardon of their sins, and the restoration of their bodies to health; also, to pray for submission for whatever might be the will of God concerning them.⁶²

The social isolation that was inseparable from leprosy drove some men to suicide.

SUICIDE OF A CHINESE LEPER.

On Monday last Dr. Preshaw, the coroner, held an inquest at Barker's Creek on the body of a Chinaman named Hum Yung, who hanged himself on Sunday. The following evidence was given:—

Lin Mou: I am a miner, and live at Barker's Creek; I have known the deceased for a week only. I have seen him at work, he lived alone, for he was a leper: I had left a tub at a tent and went to fetch it yesterday morning from the tent. The door was shut; I looked in and found deceased hanging by the neck from the ridge pole of his tent. He was quite dead. I then went to tell another Chinaman; the man's face was all covered with "fat." In my country the complaint is incurable. We think one man gives it to another, and we don't go near him to touch. Deceased lived in a tent of his own, about a mile off, and had gone into the tent where I found him. I did not know that deceased had gone there, as the owner of the tent had been away for some time.

Ah Nieu: I am a miner, and live at Barker's Creek; yesterday morning I saw deceased near my tent; I knew Hum Yung was diseased, and shut the door and spoke to him from inside. He said he wanted to see James A'Coy about going to Sydney. He had a tent of his own. He was about the tent where he was found dead, some time since. Lin Mou told me yesterday after dinner that the deceased was hanging in a tent dead; I told James A'Coy, and he gave information to the police. The deceased had "fat fung," which is a disease not to be cured, and the Chinese think that one man gives it to another, and no one goes near him who is ill, for he is a leper.⁶³

Thomas Brown deposed — I am a miner and live at Barker's Creek. I saw a constable near a tent, and went to see what was the matter. I saw him open the door. It was fastened inside, and when opened I saw the deceased hanging from a ridge pole. He was dead and stiff. He was covered with a scab. I have seen him wandering alone on the creek. He was suspended by a piece of drill. His feet were 'about 10 inches from the ground, and his bed was close by, so that he could have suspended himself.

Thomas M'Grath deposed — I am a legally qualified medical man and reside at Castlemaine. At the request of the Coroner I have examined the deceased. I think I have seen him before as a patient. I found him extensively covered with leprosy. I found a ligature about his neck, tight, and a corresponding piece hanging from the ridge pole; I examined the mark on his neck produced by the cord, and there is an extensive swelling above and below. I opened the swelling and found it contained air and fluid. His tongue was protruding and black. There were no marks of violence on his body. His lungs were congested but healthy in structure. The heart and abdominal viscera were healthy. Deceased could have suspended himself. He was suffocated by the rope round his neck.

The jury returned a verdict, that the deceased was found on the 9th instant, suspended by the neck from the ridge pole of a tent on Barker's Creek, and we believe he had done it himself in a fit of temporary insanity, being a leper.⁶⁴

62 Young, William, *Mount Alexander Mail* (Castlemaine), 10 April 1857. Victoria Chinese Mission, Castlemaine, 1st Report for 1857—6 April 1857.

63 The Mandarin word for leprosy is **Ma-fung**. Von Scherzer, Karl et al, *Narrative of the Circumnavigation of the Globe by the Austrian Frigate Novarra*, (c1861, Reprinted Cambridge University Press, 2013. Pp 455-459.

64 *Mount Alexander Mail*, (Castlemaine), 12 October 1859.

Similar despair drove Ah Gooley, a hospital patient, to cut his throat.⁶⁵ A year later Ah Yen found “a spot on one of his cheeks which looked like leprosy.” He drowned himself the same evening in a nearby dam.⁶⁶

Cohabitation of European women with Chinese and the attendance of young European men in Chinese gambling houses encouraged the “anti-heathen” religious prejudices of many European colonists.⁶⁷ Some Europeans feared that inter-marriage would increase the number of mixed-race young people who might inherit the leprosy bacillus and spread it further into the European community.⁶⁸ Critics took every opportunity to exaggerate conditions in the Chinese camps and to link any disease to their allegedly unsanitary condition.⁶⁹

CHOLERA AND LEPROSY AT CASTLEMAINE.

The *Age* refers as follows to this alarming visitation: Intelligence of a most horrifying character has just reached us from Castlemaine. Asiatic cholera and leprosy have appeared among the Chinese! Yes, indeed! The positive existence of these terrible maladies has been certified by the Health Officer of the district, and the Town Council held a special meeting upon the subject on Wednesday last. It was at Little Bendigo that the leprosy first made its appearance; and, with characteristic selfishness and cunning, the Chinese might be seen flying away in hundreds, leaving their hapless doomed comrades to their fate. Of course the authorities will at once take precaution against these fearful plagues. The black, livid cholera is horrible enough, but one almost forgets its terrors in thinking of the appalling nature of the leprosy, which might spread through the community like wildfire, if not encountered in time. A special meeting of the Castlemaine Town Council was held on Wednesday, when Mr. Paynter introduced the objects of the call of the Council, viz., the fact of a case of Asiatic cholera occurring in Spring Flat, and leprosy existing amongst the Chinese, as certified by Dr. Preshaw, the Public Health Officer. The Chairman said he was over at Fryer's Creek on the very day when this case of leprosy occurred at Little Bendigo, when his attention was attracted to the extraordinary exodus of Chinese. On enquiry, he found they were leaving their diseased countrymen to their fate, and were flying from the disease in question. Mr. Froome moved that the Town Clerk draw up a report relating to these cases, to be immediately forwarded to the Central Board of Health, together with a copy of the Health Officer's letter, and that further instructions should, according to the Act, be requested.⁷⁰

The report contained significant overstatements not least that the Chinese fled in large numbers. Dr Preshaw had identified the cholera victim as a European and the leprosy was

65 *Mount Alexander Mail*, (Castlemaine), 18 October 1872.

66 *Ballarat Star*, 9 Jun 1873. *Mount Alexander Mail*, (Castlemaine), 10 June 1873.

67 *Ballarat Courier*, 1 and 9 July 1870.

68 *Ballarat Courier*, 21 March 1874.

69 Welch, Ian, “Demonising the Chinese: The Pathology of Cultural Difference, 1855-1906,” Ch 7 in *Alien Son: The Life and Times of Cheok Hong Cheong (Zhang Zhuoxiong) 1851-1928*, Online at <http://hdl.handle.net/1885/49261> —.

70 *Observer*, Adelaide, 28 March 1857.

mentioned in a vague reference to a coronial enquiry on a Chinese who was reported to have been "covered with the leprosy."⁷¹ The Castlemaine paper summed up.

Much excitement has been caused during the latter part of last week, by a report made by the Officer of Health to the Town Council, to the effect that, an undoubted case of Asiatic cholera had occurred in this neighborhood, and that leprosy of a fearful character was spreading among the Chinese, some of whom had died of that disease, We doubted the perfect accuracy of the report at the time, and subsequent enquiries have confirmed our opinion. The supposed leprosy is nothing more than scurvy⁷²; while the "Asiatic", cholera subsides into what is known by medical men as "sporadic" cholera, which 'is not an epidemic, and which need not be regarded with any alarm beyond what might be created by any ordinary disease; It has been confined entirely to one case; had it been of the -'Asiatic" character attributed to its fatal influences would have rendered it quite unmistakable by this time. It is very much to be regretted that so much alarm should have been occasioned; and we submit to the Health Officer that he should not commit himself to such reports until he is assured that they are well founded.⁷³

Another example of deliberate distortion of conditions in Chinese camps was published in Ballarat.

THE LEPROSY AMONG THE CHINESE.

We have received the following extract from a letter by a digger, at Daisy Hill, dated August 10th, but cannot help believing the statement to be greatly exaggerated: "Three days ago the troopers turned the Chinese out of their camp, but allowed them to take their tents, and then set fire to the rest; there are lots of them dying with the leprosy, and their camp was a regular nuisance. A carrier got £6 for burying one of them; he took the disease from the dead man, and the carrier is now dead. The doctors had the camp set fire to, as the stench used to come into the township, although the camp was a quarter of a mile away. -*Herald*.⁷⁴

The local municipal authorities did little to enforce or improve health standards in the Chinese camps, partly because the Chinese avoided paying municipal charges but also because of general European hostility about anything to do with the Chinese.

PRUDENCE OR PESTILENCE.

SOME months since the public was startled by the alarming intelligence that leprosy existed among our Chinese population. The matter was taken up by our medical *savans*, and the result proved the truth of the adage, that "doctors differ;" for while some continued to assert that the above-named appalling disease really existed, others, on the contrary, maintained that it did not exist; or if it did, that it was of a type so mild as to leave no grounds for uneasiness.

We have pretty good authority on the matter in dispute, and so are compelled to the conclusion that leprosy did-and we may therefore say, does still exist among our Chinese

71 *Mount Alexander Mail*, (Castlemaine), 18 March 1857.

72 A disease associated with Vitamin C deficiency in the Royal Navy, readily managed by providing citrus fruit such as oranges. By mid 19th century, many skin disorders were labelled as scurvy and then linked to leprosy. (Ballarat), 22 August 1857.

73 *Mount Alexander Mail*, (Castlemaine), 27 March 1857.

74 *Star* (Ballarat), 14 August 1857. *Portland Guardian*, 17 August 1857.

population. Supposing, however, that there is a doubt in the case, in favor of the non-existence of this loathsome disease, it becomes a grave question whether we have taken the proper precautionary steps to hinder the spread of this plague in the event of its appearance; or generally, whether we have paid that attention to our Chinese population, in regard to the sanitary condition of their camps, which we are bound to do by every consideration of duty and justice to them as human beings, and to ourselves as probable sufferers, in common with them, if we are negligent in such matters.

If we take the Chinese encampments on Ballarat as a fair sample of those in the colony—and, as we know of no special difficulties in the way here in regard to the observance of cleanliness, we are entitled to do so—it must be evident to even the most superficial observer that we have been strangely and culpably heedless of our own safety, as well as of our duty to the Chinese. Having learned that the coroner of the district had lately called the attention of some of our local authorities to the state of the Chinese encampments here, we visited the one situated on Golden Point, and, having made as careful and lengthy an inspection of it as we could compel ourselves to, even from a sense of duty, we returned, with the firm conviction, that unless immediate steps are taken before the summer sets in to enforce a greater degree of cleanliness, we may expect to have our population decimated through 'some pestilence or other, either generated in the Camp, or if carried there, how mildsoever, increased tenfold in virulence from contact with this horrid place. Small, over-crowded, ill-ventilated tents, are huddled together so closely as almost to defy passing between them; the lanes are covered with every abomination of filth, which a densely packed community creates; the Camp is in part surrounded by holes of stagnant putrid water, so that the air is laden with pestiferous exhalations—unendurable by European constitutions for any length of time with impunity. We do hope that some steps may soon be taken to bring about a better state of things. Let the Municipal authorities of Ballarat East, and the Chinese Protector see to it, by putting the law in force, as they hope for the avoidance of public censure for neglected duty. If this compulsory congregation of the Chinese population in encampments be favorable, as we have no doubt it is, to the collection of the special imposts on that portion of the community, we fear that the revenue so raised—no matter how large—will prove but poor compensation to the colony, when its collection in this way gives rise to, and fosters those epidemic scourges, which strike down their victims by hundreds. It has been found necessary to raise a revenue from the Chinese, who crowd to our shores. Throwing overboard considerations of humanity to them, or of self-preservation to ourselves, it is far from sound policy to collect that revenue under a system which tends, by the lessening of the number of the taxpayers, to diminish the amount that may be raised, and which the Legislature has determined to be the price of the privilege of their becoming colonists. As the summer is fast approaching, and the needed changes in the Chinese encampments cannot be effected in a day—there should be no waste of time in setting about the required improvements, or else woe betide us.⁷⁵

The Ballarat Benevolent Hospital provided 5 shillings a week to support the lepers and Sergeant Larnier secured other contributions from charitable Europeans. It seems to have closed shortly afterwards as a proposal for a similar facility was made in 1866. Deaths were regularly reported.

A Chinaman named Sum Wan was found dead in a hut at Golden Point on Monday, and an inquest held on the remains to-day. The enquiry proved that deceased and three others of his countrymen have been lying for some time in a miserable state, and quite uncared for by their countrymen. Dr. Bunce, in his medical evidence, stated that the cause of death was

75 *Star* (Ballarat), 21 August 1857. See response *Star* (Ballarat), 24 August 1857.

leprosy, and a verdict was returned in accordance with that statement. The attention of the police was also directed by the jury to the condition of deceased's surviving companions.⁷⁶

Young reported in 1867 that there were at least twenty-seven lepers in Victoria, mostly at Ballarat.⁷⁷

The most tragic account of the condition of the men at Clayton's Hill was as follows.

THE CHINESE LEPERS.

(From the Ballarat Star.)

AT this festive season of the year, when we are taught to look with feelings of peace and goodwill towards all men, there are a few miserable creatures in this town whose sufferings and wretched condition are almost indescribable. We refer to the Chinese lepers, most of whom are dragging out a wretched existence at Clayton-hill. Seven months since we paid a visit in company with Sergeant Larnier to the huts occupied by these poor outcasts, and their condition then was something dreadful to contemplate. Then, eight of these poor fellows were living in a few huts or hovels, consisting of a framework of palings and scrap wood, patched with tin and rugs. Upon hearing the voice of their kind friend Sergeant Larnier, they would come out and show their sores and deformities. Three or four of the number were then able to get about pretty well, and managed to chop firewood, and managed to shop, and cook for the others. One unfortunate had strength and energy enough left to fence in a small garden, which he cultivated, giving a slight air of comfort to his hut. Since that time, a great change has taken place in the condition of the lepers, as the disease since that time has made fearful havoc with their bodies. Better provision has, however, been made for their comfort through the unrelenting exertions of Sergeant Larnier and the action of the Benevolent Asylum Committee. The huts that were on the point of falling on the heads of the miserable occupants have been re-erected, chiefly by the exertions of Sergeant Larnier. Kong Khen, Sam Ack, Wing Ah Fin, Wing Ah Sin, Ah Tin, Ah Hoy, Tau Tu, and Ah Sam are allowed 5s. per week by the committee of the district Benevolent Asylum and this enables them to get along with some little degree of comfort compared with their former condition. Two of them are still able to chop wood and go about the town spending the money received by the others for necessities; but the fearful disease is making rapid progress, and it is impossible that these two men will be able even to move about in a very few months. The poor fellows were told by the interpreter a short time since that it would be necessary for them to help one another. They do so, and to observe them performing the various little offices of kindness to one another only serves to make their affliction appear more dreadful. The poor creatures seem to look upon themselves as men doomed not only to certain death, but to a short existence of misery and suffering. They dislike all companionship, and prefer to sit in the darkness of their closed huts, crouching in some corner, looking forward to their fate with a sort of stolid indifference. Two or three times a week they hear the welcome "Hi! John," of Sergeant Larnier when he goes to the huts to distribute the Benevolent Asylum allowance, and with distorted faces and limbs those poor loathsome looking creatures crawl out, and uncover their sores with a mournful "welly bad" and hopeless shake of the head. Their piteous looks of thankfulness for any small kindness are truly touching, but they seem to shun light, and crouch in some dark corner of their huts as soon as possible. It is almost impossible to imagine how six of them manage to exist. They cannot stand upright, as their

76 *Geelong Advertiser*, (8 February 1867.

77 Young, *Report*, 1868, p. 28.

feet appear to be actually on the point of falling off. Their legs are wasted their faces have lost almost all human shape, while in some cases the fingers have almost entirely disappeared. One unfortunate on Wednesday asked Larner for a shilling. One was thrown on the floor of the hut, and the Chinaman was unable to pick it up with his hands. After he had tried several times and looked appealingly to Larner, he got a fork, and raising the shilling a little picked it from the floor with his teeth, and then dropping it into his hand deposited it in a place of safety. Another exposing a wasted and shrivelled limb complained of pain, and made it understood that he required some ointment. Larner promised to get him some ointment and he appeared satisfied. Besides the eight lepers at Clayton Hill there are five others in different parts of the district, and these not bring in such a bad state are allowed 3s. per week by the Benevolent Asylum. Besides the sums allowed them by the asylum, Sergeant Larner often collects a little money to purchase them firewood, and if they were always to remain in the present state they might, with a little help, be made pretty comfortable. But the two poor fellows who do the shopping and other work for the others, are fast failing, and when they also are stricken helpless they must all starve unless some provision is made by the Government or the borough councils.⁷⁸

At Young's request, Dr. Clendenning⁷⁹ visited the lepers on 26 December 1867 and submitted the report on the following page. He had previously visited the men in 1866.⁸⁰

Dr. Clendinning recommended that a suitable common house, under a European attendant, should be provided for all the men; that food should be prepared for them daily; attention should be given to improved sanitation; and regular medical care should be provided. An inquest into the death of a leper named Ah San revealed that these suggestions were ignored.⁸¹

⁷⁸ *Brisbane Courier*, 28 January 1870.

⁷⁹ *Courier* (Ballarat), 23 February 2003.

⁸⁰ *Ballarat Star*, 21 April 1868; 22 August 1869.

⁸¹ *Ballarat Star*, 1 August 1870.

REPORT ON THE CONDITION OF THE CHINESE LEPERS ON CLAYTON HILL, BALLARAT
EAST, GIVEN PROFESSIONALLY BY DR. CLENDINNING.⁸²

- No. 1. **KONG-KAY-SUE**.—Aged 48 years; in colony, 12 years; unable to work, 10 years. *Hut*: Very bad; constructed of old sheets of tin and iron. *Disease*: Half of both legs ulcerated anteriorly; rest of legs and thighs leprous; several fingers of both hands swelled and ulcerated; small portion of each nates ulcerated. *General Health*: Very bad.
- No. 2. **WONG-AH-LING**.—Age, 40 years; in colony, 12 years; unable to work, 11 years. *House*: Of wood; not lined; roomy. *Disease*: Left eye blind, cornea opaque; right eye weak, conjunctiva and lids much congested; several fingers of left hand wasted and joints gone; those of right hand swollen; left foot and ankle much swollen and almost useless. *General Health*: Bad, with great debility.
- No. 3. **UNG-TING-KAH**.—Age, 34 years; in colony, 11 years; unable to work, 5 years. *House*: Good and roomy; not lined. *Disease*: Eyelids and conjunctiva much congested; fingers of both hands much wasted, some joints gone; left foot much swollen and apparently useless. *General Health*: Apparently good.
- No. 4. **LOCK-AH-HOEY**.—Age, 35 years; in colony, 12 years; unable to work, 4 years. *House*: Resides with No. 3. *Disease*: Three ulcers on joints of three fingers of right hand, hands and fingers otherwise normal; left foot greatly wasted, and toes nearly all gone; right foot, ankle, and lower part of leg greatly swollen, with ulcers on both ankles; toes wasted and partially gone. *General Health*: Delicate.
- No. 5. **LEE-SAM-TACK**.—Age, 31 years; in colony, 13 years; unable to work, 5 years. *Hut*: Of palings and old tin, very small and low; clean. *Disease*: Fingers of right hand almost gone (second and third joints), first joints much flexed on palm of hand; fingers of left hand in nearly the same condition; both insteps much swollen, and partially ulcerated; toes of right foot swollen. *General Health*: Apparently good.
- No. 6. **LEW-YEE-SUR**.—Age, 47 years; in colony, 13 years; unable to work, 6 years. *House*: Of wood; roomy. *Disease*: Feet much swollen; toes wasted and some joints gone; some fingers of both hands swollen; face and lobe of right ear much swollen. *General Health*: Bad.
- No. 7. **LUM-AH-FAN**.—Age, 21 years; in colony, 11 years; unable to work, 6 years. *Hut*: Of palings and old tin; very small and low. *Disease*: Conjunctiva of both eyes and muc. memb. of lids much congested; skin of face and legs leprous; can walk and use both hands. *General Health*: Good.
- No. 8. **YU-KE-HIN**.—Age, 34 years; in colony, 10 years; unable to work, 5 years. *Hut*: Sides of old tin, with bark roof; very small. *Disease*: Both feet slightly swollen, with sides of same partially ulcerated; skin of face leprous, with some tubercles; skin of fingers leprous. *General Health*: Delicate.
- No. 9. **WONG-AH-GOCK**.—Age, 32 years; in colony, 12 years; unable to work, 8 years. *Hut*: Sides of paling, roof of bark; very small and low. *Disease*: Both legs and feet leprous, with tubercles; fingers of both hands much contracted; face partially tuberculous. *General Health*: Delicate.
- No. 10. **WONG-AH-HIN**.—I did not see this leper, but the Chinese interpreter informed me as follows:—Age, 43 years; in colony, 14 years; unable to work, 14 years. *House*: Not seen. *Disease*: blind of one eye, the other eye bad; fingers of both hands contracted; both feet partially leprous; mouth drawn to one side.

82 Online — http://eurekapedia.org/George_Clendinning

The monetary provision from the Ballarat Benevolent Asylum was barely enough to keep the men alive while the irregular medical assistance was useless. Benefits were paid to the lepers by Sergeant Lamer and/or the Presbyterian catechist. William Young obtained supplies of clothing from mission supporters and Young, his catechist, Cheong Peng-nam, and Sergeant Lamer, were the only regular visitors.⁸³ The Benevolent Society provided £1200 over four years.⁸⁴ Many discussions were held in 1867 about the most suitable place to locate the lepers who had settled themselves on a site near an existing Chinese camp (see map).

The visits of Sergeant Lamer and others invariably described an inhumane state of affairs.

The Ballarat Courier gives the following particulars respecting the unfortunate Chinese lepers "On Tuesday, Mr. Sub-inspector Ryall and Sergeant Lamer came, at the Red-hill Chinese encampment, upon eight unfortunate creatures, suffering, on the one hand, from this terrible malady, and on the other from extreme poverty. They were without any clothes to cover them, no bed clothes to use, and their fingers and toes were destroyed to a considerable extent by the fell disease. The only food they possessed was raw rice. The miserable huts in which they had found refuge had been almost blown down by the recent violent winds. Upon discovering the condition of these miserable creatures, Mr. Ryall and the sergeant set themselves to work to collect means by which, to endeavour to alleviate their sufferings. Mr. Ryall collected £5, whilst Sergeant Lamer obtained £2, and with this £7 they at once purchased blankets, tea, sugar, under waistcoats, lollies, &c., for these deserted and dying creatures, for which they seemed most thankful; but the sharp instincts of John, even in the midst of all this misery, do not appear to have deserted these eight Chinese, for when supplied with the articles already mentioned, they individually said, "Me no boots," "Me no trousers," being a broad hint that those articles should be found them. At the sitting of the Eastern Council, on Tuesday evening, Sergeant Lamer reported the matter, and it was determined to leave it to the mayor to see what could be further done for them."⁸⁵

The local paper remarked:

CHINESE LEPERS.

Writing on this subject the Ballarat Star extols the humanity of Sergeant Lamer, who has assisted the Chinese lepers out of his own funds, and gives the following description of the leper colony at Clayton's Hill: — There are now lepers in seven huts on Clayton's Hill. The sight is one to make one think the leper must needs pray every day that he may die. Hideous and piteous to behold, the leper seems abandoned alike by God and men; by the one to the inexorable operation of physical law, and by the other in the instinctive fear and horror which the disease almost universally inspires. Those men on Clayton's Hill are not all alike. One has a nose eaten off, another has a face distorted, another eyes, or lips, or ears that seem to be running away in ulcers; another has all his fingers rotted off; another a foot nearly

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- 83 Young, Rev. William, *Christian Review and Messenger of the Presbyterian Church of Victoria*, March 1865; June 1866. *Age* (Melbourne), 16 January 1868, March 1865. *Argus* (Melbourne), 28 September 1867. Cheong Peng-nam reported. December 17. "At two o'clock in the afternoon ... gave the lepers their weekly allowance from the Benevolent Asylum."
- 84 Oddie, G. A., "Oddie, James (1824–1911)", *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/oddie-james-4318/text7005>,
- 85 *Australasian*, (Melbourne), 28 September 1867. *Ballarat Star*, 28 September 1867. *Mount Alexander Mail*, (Castlemaine), 30 September 1867. *Argus* (Melbourne), 20 December 1867.

gone, toes rotting, legs scaly and shrivelling — all presenting some shocking development of this most distressing of diseases. Our conductor is one whose voice and helping hand the unhappy wretches know well, but even he does not touch them, or go nearer than a yard or two. As he calls at each hut door, the crawling lepers open their doors and show their unsightly forms, where not only health is absent; but where corruption seems to exist rather than life, and even the semblance of humanity to be, in the worst cases, vanishing in the dark and horrible shadow of the great curse that is upon them. One or two are in the earlier stages of the disease, and these come out and walk about. The worst can only crawl, and it is said they all seek isolation, even from one another. Thus our guide tells us he must get two more huts, so that each leper may have a hut to himself. The Star asserts that it is surely high time that a proper Lazar-house were built for the lepers, either one at each gold field's centre, or one general one by the sea-side, to which all the diseased could be sent, and where they would have both proper care and proper restraint, and that it is clearly the duty of the Government to take steps to save those afflicted with leprosy from the insufficient succour of intermittent charity, and the public from the danger, as well as the disgrace, of lepers at large in the streets begging alms from their frightened fellow creatures.⁸⁶

Young's visits during the preparation of his Report published in 1868 stimulated a Melbourne paper a year later to remind colonists of the leper's situation that seemed to quickly "pass from recollection" and hence from any sense of public guilt or duty of accountability.⁸⁷ It is a pattern of evasive behaviour that was to be seen almost endlessly in regard to the persecution of the Jews in Eastern Europe that ultimately led to the Holocaust. In the 21st century there is a further example in the inability of the world community to deal adequately (or justly) with the suffering of Muslim communities.

The following Notice was Gazetted 1^o on 21 June, 1867.

BALLARAT EAST—Site for Chinese Lazar-house purposes, temporarily reserved by Order of 17th June, 1867 (in lieu of the site temporarily reserved for an Asylum for Lepers at that place, by Order of now cancelled).—One acre one rood twenty-four perches, county of Grant, town of Ballarat East: Commencing at a point on the northern boundary of the site, the said point bearing N. 84° 54' E. seven chains eighty-six links, S. 72° 28' E. eight chains thirty-seven links, and S. 17° 32' W. five chains fifty links from the point of intersection of the eastern side of the Plank road by the northern side of Lal-lal street; bounded thence by a road two chains wide, bearing S. 72° 28' E. three chains fifty links; thence by roads two chains wide, bearing respectively S. 17° 32' W. three chains fifty links, N. 72° 28' W. four chains, and N. 17° 32' E. three chains fifty links; and thence again by the first-named road, bearing S. 72° 28' E. fifty links to the point of commencement; as shown on the plan deposited at the Crown Lands Office, Melbourne.—(67.O.5339.)

J. M. GRANT,
President of the Board of Land and Works.
Lands and Survey Office,
Melbourne.

86 *Evening Post*, (Wellington, New Zealand), 14 September 1869.

87 *Age* (Melbourne), 3 May 1869.

BALLARAT EAST BOROUGH COUNCIL.

From the District Orphan Asylum, stating that a site had been looked out for a lazar-house for the Chinese, close to the asylum, and urging on the council to prevent such a building being erected in such close proximity to the asylum as the ground was required for the asylum. The Mayor observed that a spot had been looked out on Clayton's Hill, and that referred to near the asylum would not be adopted. Cr Dodds stated that he trusted the inhabitants there would collect together and burn the building down. It would be a disgrace to the town if the council permitted such a house to be erected within the precincts of the borough. There was plenty of scope for them in the outskirts of the town, in the ranges. Cr Clendinning stated that the highest medical authorities had come to the conclusion that leprosy was neither contagious or infectious. From the district-surveyor, forwarding a tracing of the site selected on Clayton's Hill.⁸⁸

In 1867 a visiting Scottish Presbyterian minister, the Rev. J. Oswald Dykes, had condemned the almost total disregard for the well-being of sick Chinese. His comments were very widely reported in the colonial press and gave some impetus to efforts to make better provision for lepers in Victoria.

THE CHINESE LEPERS OF BALLARAT.

The Christian Review for September contains the following article, by the Rev. J. Oswald Dykes, on the unhappy condition of the Chinese lepers at Ballarat. It appears that funds for the erection of a lazar-house are forthcoming, and only awaiting application, but the Bumbles of the municipal council of Ballarat East cannot agree about a site. The whole affair reflects the utmost disgrace upon the mammon-worshipping inhabitants of the richest gold-field in the world:—

"Any one who enters Ballarat, as not many do now, by the main road from the south, may observe on his right hand, just before he gets among the houses, some dreary gravel rises quite bare of timber, and rather bare even of grass. Further off, the ground is broken by yellow heaps from worn-out shallow sinkings, but on the rise nearest to the town are nothing but some half dozen hovels, hardly to be distinguished from the ground they stand on. These hovels are the lazarette [sic] of Ballarat. On this spot there is a Chinese settlement, almost as old as the town itself, but the healthy Chinese have now withdrawn to another quarter, leaving behind a handful of miserable lepers. Our Asiatic immigrants make extremely unproductive citizens. In return for the gold which those who are fortunate among them take or send to China, they have brought into the colony, opium-smoking, procuring abduction of infants, and other un-European vices. They have also brought the plague of leprosy. The unfortunate victims of this incurable and loathsome disease are fortunately not very numerous as yet, but they are very wretched like other Asiatic peoples, the Chinese shun their leprous friends with a superstitious horror which becomes downright cruelty. They abandon their neighbor-hood, cease all contact with them, refuse to minister to them, and but for the more merciful interference of Christians, would leave them, as it seems, to starve. We found, the other day, that of the ten leper patients known to exist in Ballarat, eight are housed in the hovels above referred to, and kept alive there by the charity of a benevolent society. But they are little more than kept alive. The two most decent dwellings are small wooden huts, with an earthen floor, no chimney, and a small unglazed opening for a window. Furniture, in a strict sense, there is none, but on a rude frame in a corner, a bundle

88 *Ballarat Star*, 10 April 1867.

of dirty rags does duty for a bed, and one of the inmates was trying, when we visited them, to kindle a scanty fire on the ground with faggots, his store of which piled up indoors, filled a good deal of the apartment. In one of these huts two, and in the other three patients were quartered, the less waiting on the more helpless. They are all men of middle age or under it. The poor fellow who crouched over his lighted sticks was a thin faced young man, with long hair like thatch over his keen eyes, and a silly expression of face. One tall man who spoke to us outside the door, showed fingers so eaten away by disease that we were curious to know how he had contrived to patch his clothes with the white piece which looked so fresh on the dark moleskin. He had drawn the needle through with his teeth. Through the tiny aperture which admitted a little light into one of these cheerless lazar dens, we caught sight of another man so much further gone than his fellows as to be unable to crawl from his bed, and fast dying, as they told us. But the inmates of these huts are so well housed in comparison with two lepers whom we had previously seen waiting the slow approach of death in tenements unfit for beasts, that we had little pity left to spend on them. Imagine a structure of old tin biscuit cases piled upon one another, roofed with canvas or plates of tin, with a ragged curtain for a door, and not a ray of light to be had when the curtain is down. Imagine a wretch in the last stage of emaciation, whose sinews are shrunk and his limbs covered with open sores, shivering in such a shelter, alone and tireless, on the damp earth, while the soaking rain and pitiless sleet of September swept across the open ranges. The first of these creatures who came to his curtain door when we called, though worn, and bitten, and livid, could still stand almost erect, and has probably years of suffering before him. But the next hobbled painfully out, with his knees bent into a sitting posture, and his cracked voice pled like a child for some covering to his legs, in which leprosy had worked raw wounds, and over which he wore no better garment than a pair of loose blue cotton drawers, reaching to the knee. It was pitiful. But indignation strove with pity. These poor dying fellow-men, abandoned by their heathen countrymen, have been thrown upon the charity of a Christian people, and in eight of the richest gold-holds in the world, we let them drag their broken wasted bodies through every stage of revolting emaciation into the grave, and the most we can do for them is to thrust into their lonely kennels from week to week some few shillings' worth of food. That we have been giving them through Mr Young, the only European in Ballarat, perhaps, who can accompany the alms with a word of kindness in their mother tongue, but Mr. Young is leaving in a week or two, and even this small link to the living, friendly world outside is to be broken. The victuals must be eaten without the words of kindness. It is true that, like most Asiatics, they are filthy, it is true that their disease is repulsive, but it is pronounced, on the highest medical authority, to be neither contagious nor infectious, and were it both, that is no reason why they should not have decent tenements which will keep out rain and let in light. Applications have been made to Government; Government officials have inspected and reported, £200 of public money and a site are at the disposal of the benevolent in Ballarat for a lazar-house, and the benevolent in Ballarat are prepared to erect it at once. All this was as true months ago as it is now, but nothing has been done, because the Municipal Council of Ballarat East cannot please itself with a site. The first site gazetted was within the borough, and though it was the very spot on which Chinamen have lived ever since Ballarat existed, and on which lepers have lived ever since there were lepers there, it was rejected. The second site was outside the borough, but it was too near it. Any site the council chooses will be taken, but the council has not chosen, and so the winter has passed, and the spring is passing, and the miserable eight lepers are where they were. It is intolerable that petty official circumlocution and delay should be allowed thus to come between the charity of the public and its objects. The Government ought either to insist on a site being selected by the borough, or to select one

itself, before summer heat comes to scorch in their metal dens sick and dying cripples whom winter rains have wet, for as things are they are a discredit to the humanity, not to say the religion, of any country.⁸⁹

A brief report a few months on mentions:

The existence of that most horrible and loathsome diseases — leprosy — amongst some of the Chinese residents in the colony, has caused some little alarm. At Ballarat, where, amongst the Chinese residents in that locality, it has appeared to the greatest extent, a species of leprosy hospital or lazar house had to be established by the authorities for the reception of the poor wretches afflicted with this incurable disease. Here some ten or twelve of the miserable beings are left to die, literally by inches, the only relief that can be afforded them being a supply of food and other necessities — hardly of life — so death soon steps in and claims them.⁹⁰

Nearly twelve months later, the discussion about the future care of the lepers was still vigorous but without improvement in facilities.

The lepers, though somewhat better attended to than last year in regard to food and clothing, are still living in the same miserable habitations, if they can be called such, which are a disgrace to the country, and especially to the community near which they dwell. The Government more than a year ago voted money to put up a house in which all afflicted with leprosy should dwell, and the Christian friends in Ballarat interested in all these poor perishing outcasts did all they could to second the efforts of Government in this matter. But the Municipal Council of Ballarat East, for reasons a stranger cannot understand, refuse a site for the building. At present, the miserable huts, patched up with pieces of timber and old tins, are scattered over an area of about an acre of ground, and in the immediate vicinity of many European families. To put them in better circumstances, and bring them all into one house, it is proposed to move them further off, about a quarter of a mile, and almost out of view from the rest of the community, and yet to this it is objected, as it were to spread contagion all around. But surely, if leprosy be contagious, the present circumstances of these poor creatures should long ere now have spread disease all around them. Policemen visit their huts occasionally; children play out and in among them; the missionary is with them once or twice every week; and Mr. Fraser (minister of St John's Presbyterian Church, Peel St, Ballarat), myself, and others have gone to speak to them, stood beside them in close contiguity to their persons, and yet no bad result has ever followed.⁹¹

The general trend of public opinion in Victoria regarding leprosy was described by Dr. Embling as “needless...ungenerous and cruel,” extinguishing “every atom of humanity from our hearts.”⁹² Fears were expressed that all Chinese carried leprosy and through intermarriage with Europeans would “add a leprous progeny to our population.”⁹³ Despite growing medical and

89 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 October 1867.

90 *Bendigo Advertiser*, 25 October 1867.

91 Mackie, Rev. George, *Christian Review*..., June 1868. Welch, Ian, *Alien Son: The Life and Times of Cheok Hong Cheong (Zhang Zhuoxiong) 1851-1928*, Online at <http://hdl.handle.net/1885/49261> — Appendix 13.

92 *Ballarat Star*, 14 November 1867.

93 *Ballarat Star*, 12 November 1867. *Argus*, (Melbourne), 23 November 1867.

informed public opinion that leprosy was not contagious⁹⁴ there were some colonists who believed that the disease could be spread from coins handled by Chinese lepers.⁹⁵ Although irregular efforts were made following the Dykes' article and widespread discussion in 1867 and 1868 the men at Clayton's Hill continued to die as "buck-passing" dominated every discussion and prevented positive action although the Government had decided to double their subsistence allowance from 5 shillings to 10 shillings a week.⁹⁶

A proposal was advanced for a lazarette to be opened but there were strong objections from local people, with a suggestion at a public protest meeting that the virtually unused Quarantine Station at Point Nepean should incorporate a facility for lepers.

Mr John Fussell, J.P., having been voted to the chair, explained the object of the meeting. It arose, he said, from the action taken by the Borough Council at its last meeting, when it appeared that the council had sanctioned the proposal of the Government to erect a building in their (the eastern) division of the borough, for the Chinese afflicted with leprosy. He would say for himself and, doubtless, for the inhabitants generally, that they were decidedly averse to the erection of a building for such a purpose near to their homes, to the peril of their health and the deterioration of their properties. If they permitted such a building to be erected, and that it was found to be inadequate, extended accommodation would be added, and the pest-house would become a fixture in their midst. It was therefore incumbent upon the inhabitants to take measures at once to prevent the erection of the contemplated edifice. As other speakers would lay their views on the subject before the meeting, he would not further occupy them. He called on Mr. Bridges to move the first resolution. Mr. Bridges read the resolution, as follows:— "That, in the opinion of this meeting, it is against the advancement and best interests of this portion of the borough that any Chinese lazaret-house should be erected by the Government for the reception and location of Chinese lepers, as proposed, on or near Clayton street." He was surprised, he said, to observe that the council had for a moment entertained the idea of tolerating the erection of such a building in the borough. Why it would, if carried out, depopulate the eastern part of the town. He would himself fly from the vicinity of such a pest-house, and he felt persuaded others would also leave if the erection was permitted. With these remarks he proposed the resolution as read, which was seconded by Mr. Long, and carried unanimously. Mr. Rowe, in moving the next resolution, remarked that there was no other course open to them but to bring the subject before the council, since that body had endorsed the views of the Government in reference to the erection of the lazaret-house. If the expenditure of £200 on such a building was allowed it would be found that they would have not merely the Chinese lepers in the district, but those from every part of the colony would be sent to the building in Ballarat East. He did not object to provision being made for the afflicted Chinese, but that should be in a locality where it would not be prejudicial to Europeans. He agreed with Cr. Rodier's suggestion, that the building should be erected at Point Nepean, where there was a health officer partly unoccupied, who could attend to the lepers, and where they would be apart from human abodes. In the Benevolent Asylum provision was made for some of the afflicted Chinese. Now, he saw no reason for entailing additional expense on the district by having lepers

94 Young, Rev. William, Report of Presbyterian Chinese Mission for January-April 1873, *Christian Review and Messenger of the Presbyterian Church of Victoria*, May 1871.

95 *Daily Telegraph*, (Melbourne), 11 & 12 January 1870.

96 *Ballarat Star*, 12 August 1870; 13 August 1870. *Ballarat Courier*, 17 August 1870.

brought into it. He therefore moved—"That a memorial be prepared and presented to the council, stating the views of the meeting and the Inhabitants of the district."⁹⁷

The *Ballara Star* supported the objections, suggesting that while a lazarette was needed in the colony, it should be centrally located on a railway line for convenience in moving lepers to a central lazarette and urging a special leprosy tax to be paid by the Chinese for their care. In the manner already noted, the paper's editorial was linked to suggestions for stricter enforcement of sanitary regulations in the Chinese camps—an echo of the long-standing prejudice against Chinese residence in Australia.⁹⁸ The idea of a special "leprosy" tax on the Chinese community, supplementing the government subsistence allowance, continued to attract interest in subsequent years.⁹⁹

By 1873 no new cases had been admitted to the Clayton's Hill lazarette but the physical state of the three diagnosed lepers still living there was "very bad indeed" with one man being completely blind.¹⁰⁰ In 1884 a new case of leprosy was identified at Ballarat. The man, Nobo, had been in Victoria for only a year and was working in a furniture factory when his illness was identified.¹⁰¹ The other men, desperately ill, eventually left Nobo as the lonely resident of the Ballarat lazarette. In 1888 an Amending Health Act authorised the Victorian Board of Health to make regulations for the "safe custody" of lepers in Victoria.¹⁰²

Eventually a leper facility was provided in the grounds of the Point Nepean Quarantine Station at Point Nepean in an area previously used to quarantine livestock.¹⁰³

On the station are three or four two roomed weatherboard cottages, all detached, and several outbuildings, stables, etc. The attendant is an old man who has decidedly seen better days. He is in fact a Bachelor of Arts.¹⁰⁴ He is there merely as a keeper. Their provisions are all provided from the Quarantine Station. ... A good deal of their time is spent in fishing ... they intend growing their own vegetables.¹⁰⁵

The 1891 Census reported four Chinese lepers living at Point Nepean.¹⁰⁶ A crematorium was built in 1892 to dispose of deceased lepers. The first man cremated was one of the four reported in the previous year. In 1895 a leper named Ah Fong, a carpenter in Melbourne, decamped and

97 *Ballarat Star*, 29 October 1867.

98 *Ballarat Star*, 4 November 1867.

99 *Ballarat Courier*, 17 August 1870.

100 *Age* (Melbourne) 25 August 1873.

101 *Age*, (Melbourne), 9 July 1884.

102 *Sydney Mail*, 5 January 1889.

103 Welch, Major James H., *Quarantine Station, Point Nepean, Portsea*, (Sorrento, Nepean Historical Society, 1968).

104 A graduate of the district or basic level of the three level Chinese traditional examination system.

105 *Daily Telegraph*, (Melbourne), 1 June 1885.

106 http://hccda.anu.edu.au/pages/VIC-1891-census_02-15_152

was later arrested in Melbourne and returned to Point Nepean. In 1902 another man with the same name, Ah Fong, aged 36 years, was identified with leprosy at Warrnambool and was transferred to Point Nepean.¹⁰⁷

The report stated that the men at Point Nepean received no treatment and remained there, with government subsistence and growing their own vegetables until they died.¹⁰⁸ The last lepers were moved to Coode Island, in the inner Melbourne region, in the 1930s.

LEPERS IN AUSTRALASIAN COLONIES, 1891.—ALL MALES.¹⁰⁹

	RACE.							Total
	European	Australian Aboriginal	Maori	South Sea Islands	Chinese	Singhalese	Javanese	
Vic	1				2			3
NSW	5				9		1	15
QLD	2	1		3	3	1		10
NT					3			3
WA					1			1
NZ			4					4
Total	8	1	4	3	18	1	1	36

107 *Argus* (Melbourne), 20 November 1902.

108 *Argus*, (Melbourne), 20 November 1902.

109 http://hccda.anu.edu.au/pages/VIC-1891-census_02-15_152