On Both Sides of the Snowy Mountains: The Tumut and Adaminaby Chinese and the Patrick White Connection[1]

In this research note I will discuss four Chinese families on both sides of the Snowy Mountains – Tumut on the west and Adaminaby, 100 km east.[2] By goldfield standards Tumut's Chinese population was small; and Adaminaby's population even smaller. But for both towns the Chinese presence was significant, both commercially and socially. I will look closely at the role of tradition and custom in the lives of the Chinese people, their integration into local society, and their assumption of broader middle class values such as church, family and community.

Firstly I will discuss the Patrick White connection, for it focusses on his first book, *Happy Valley.*[3] At first the connection between our Nobel Laureate novelist and the Chinese may appear tenuous. However, it was anything but, for the fictional family of the Quongs in *Happy Valley* was based on the real-life Yen family of Adaminaby. My account of the Tumut and Adaminaby Chinese and of Patrick White relies strongly on interviews with descendants of early Chinese families in the district and other local people of long standing.

The Patrick White connection

Patrick White's novel *Happy Valley* was published in 1939 and won the Australian Society of Literature's gold medal in 1941. After winning his Nobel Prize, White allowed *Happy Valley* to be published in French and, for the first time, in Italian. But years before he had already put a ban on reprinting the book in English and had even forbade microfilm copies at universities. The main cause of this reluctance was the fear of being sued if the book ever re-appeared in Australia. According to his biographer, David Marr, this was because White could never shake the fear that…[the Yens] …could sue for what he did to them in the pages of *Happy Valley*. He could not be reassured about this. White went to his grave fearing the revenge of the Yens.[4]

White stated that:

> I had used the first names of a whole family without realizing what I was doing. As the characters in the book behave very much like the members of the actual family, trouble might blow up if their descendants realized. I don't want this generally known.[5]

[1] This research note has its genesis in the exhibition, "Tracking the Dragon: A History of the Chinese people in the Riverina", which was mounted in the Museum of the Riverina, Wagga Wagga, NSW from December 2010 to March 2011. The time span for the exhibition ranged from 1850 to the present day, with the themes illustrating all aspects of Chinese life, such as work, camp and family life, crime and punishment, religion and race relations. See also Barry McGowan, *Tracking the Dragon. A history of the Chinese in the Riverina* (Wagga Wagga: Museum of the Riverina; Sydney: The Migration Heritage Centre NSW and the Powerhouse Museum, 2010). Geographically, the Riverina is defined as the area from Hillston, Booligal and Balranald in the arid west to Tumut and Adelong in the east, south to the Murray River, and north to Temora. A new study, Barry McGowan, "Tracking the Dragon: Further Studies of the Chinese in the Riverina", consists of five illustrated and fully annotated essays on the lives of the Chinese people in the Wagga Wagga, Narrandera, Tumut, Hay and Temora districts of the Riverina. It will be displayed on the Museum of the Riverina's web site in 2016. This more detailed study of the Riverina Chinese has shed new light on the Chinese people in the district, in particular in the sub-alpine towns of Tumut and Adaminaby in the Snowy Mountains.

[2] The Adaminaby referred to in this paper is of course Old Adaminaby. The town was flooded and abandoned during the construction of Lake Eucumbene in the early 1950s.

[3] Patrick White, *Happy Valley* (London: Vintage Books, 2012).

[4] David Marr, *Patrick White. A Life* (Sydney: Vintage Books, 1992), p.b546; Kate Bagnall, "The Tiger's Mouth: Happy Valley. Thoughts on the history and heritage of Chinese Australia: Happy Valley: Patrick White's Impressions of an Anglo-Chinese Family":www.chineseseaustralia.org/archives/1666; *Canberra Times*, 26 May 2012.

[5] Marr, *Patrick White. A Life*, p.546.

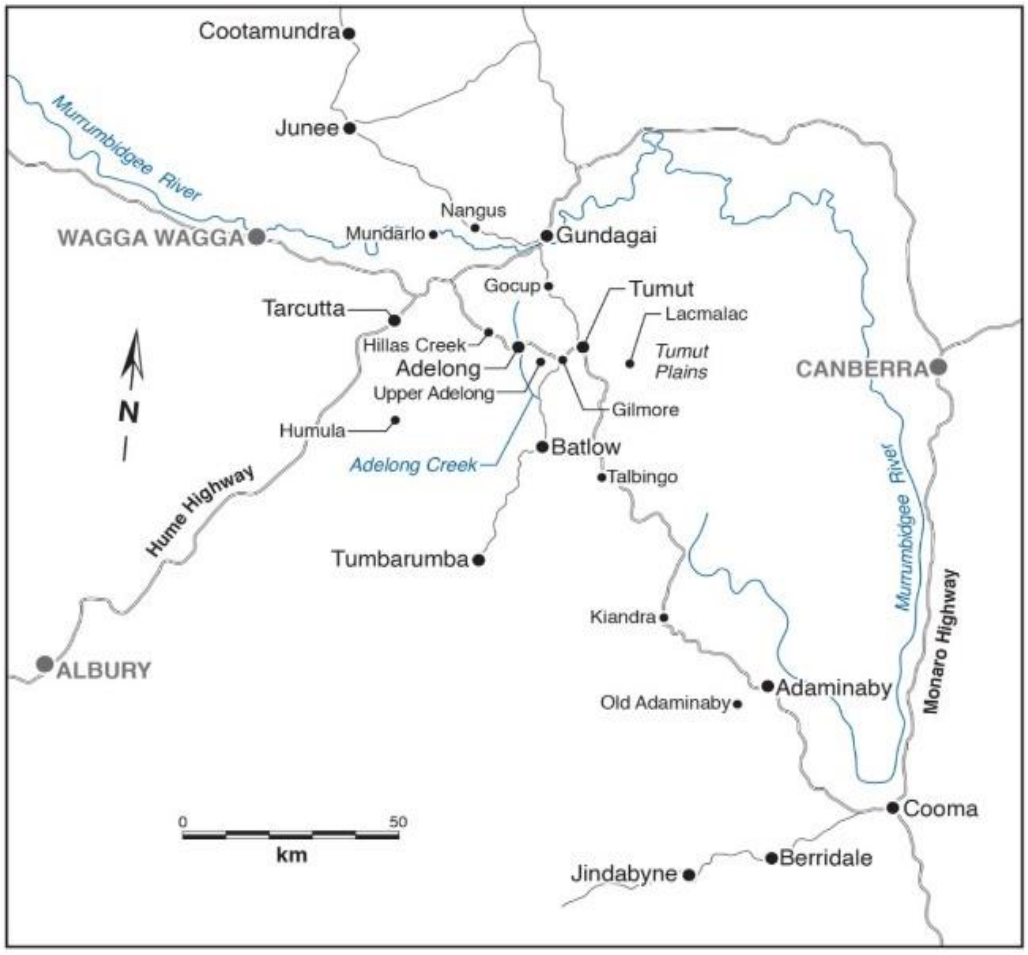

Fig. 1 Tumut, Adaminaby and Environs (Cartography: Clive Hilliker, ANU)

According to Adaminaby resident Neville Locker, the title *Happy Valley* almost certainly came from his family's property near Adaminaby. The book was written while White was working as a jackeroo at nearby Bolero station in the 1930s, and White would have ridden or driven past the property many times on his way to Adaminaby.[6]

Locker has stated that the book caused "quite a stir" when it was first published, for a lot of local people, not just the Yen family, recognised either themselves or other townsfolk in his novel.[7] But it was the Yen family, found in the novel as the Quong family, that White was particularly worried about later in his life.[8]

What did White write about the Yen family that made him so afraid of legal action? Of the Quongs he said, "People used to make guesses at how much the Quongs had got. You never knew with Chows. And this was a source of bitterness".[9] In voicing the thoughts of the new overseer, Clem Hagan, White wrote, "You could never say much for a place that was run by Chows. Chows or Dagoes. They always took the profits from anyone else".[10]

[6] Bagnall, "The Tiger's Mouth: Happy Valley"; Marr, *Patrick White. A Life*, p.546; information from Neville Locker. October 2014.
[7] Information from Neville Locker. October 2014. There were a number of Happy Valleys in Australia. The Araluen Valley near Braidwood was one.
[8] Bagnall, "The Tiger's Mouth: Happy Valley"; Marr, *Patrick White. A Life*, p.546.
[9] White, *Happy Valley*, p. 31.
[10] White, *Happy Valley*, p. 22.

White described Ethel Quong, Walter's European wife (Geoff Yen's wife), as "sour and thin, her whole aspect was a little virulent, so that people avoided her, and she said she had no friends at all because she was married to a Chinaman".[11] And of Amy Quong (Dill Yen), White wrote: "There was a core of hardness in Amy, as in most people who are self-sufficient. She could close up. She was a piece of stone. And there is no pity in stone".[12]

White was not just writing about the Chinese at Adaminaby, but also the Yan family of Kiandra (Kambala in the novel). He stated that the Kambala people were "kind of half-bred Chinese, quiet and industrious, though perhaps a little sinister to the eyes of a stranger".[13]

But who were these Chinese families in real life and how valid were White's observations? Was he being racist or did he accurately portray race relations in small-town Australia prior to the Second World War. It is to these issues that I now turn.

Fig. 2 Patrick White with his bulldog, Soames, on Bolaro Station, Adaminaby in 1931 (Source: *The Australian,* September 1, 2012)

Tobacco Farmers and Storekeepers

By way of background, the Riverina Chinese were unusual, for most came into the region after the gold rushes, and worked on the pastoral stations as ringbarkers, land clearers and market gardeners. The Tumut Chinese were even more unusual, for in the late 19th century and just prior to the Second World War most men worked as tobacco, maize and hops farmers, though some were, as elsewhere in the Riverina, storekeepers and market gardeners.

[11] White, *Happy Valley*, p.107.
[12] White, *Happy Valley*, pp.248-249.
[13] White, *Happy Valley*, p.4.

Fig. 3 Tobacco harvesting near Tumut (Courtesy of National Library of Australia)

There was strong economic co-dependence between the Chinese farmers in the Tumut area and the European landowners, similar to that between the pastoralists and Chinese labourers elsewhere in the Riverina.[14] Chinese men were a vital source of labour for pastoralists, who used the services of Chinese contractors to engage large groups to ringbark trees and clear their properties of timber. Ringbarking involved cutting a continuous ring of chips around the trunk, eventually killing the tree and helping improve grass growth. Generally, where ringbarking was practiced, up to double the number of stock could be carried. Throughout the 1880s newspapers advertised thousands of acres of "ringing and suckering", almost all of which was done by Chinese labourers.[15] The Chinese were also used for many other tasks on the pastoral stations, such as fencing, dam construction, wool washing, market gardening, shearing and cooking.

In the Tumut district, the Chinese were tenant farmers, renting the land from European landowners and paying an annual or quarterly rent, usually at a higher rate than most Europeans.[16] The growth of the tobacco industry was rapid, and by 1885 the Chinese were regarded as the most successful growers in the Gundagai, Tumut and Adelong districts. They also had "a strong hold of the hops industry".[17] In 1887 a correspondent remarked that production was almost entirely in the hands of the Chinese, the Europeans "not being possessed of the patience absolutely necessary to the successful production of this well-paying, but delicate crop".[18] By 1888 the Chinese tobacco-growers were firmly established in the local area.[19]

[14] A similar co-dependence also existed between Chinese labourers and European landowners in North Queensland. Cathie May, *Topsawyers. The Chinese in Cairns 1870 to 1920*, Studies in North Queensland History, No.6 (Townsville: James Cook University, 1984).
[15] Geoffrey Buxton, *The Riverina 1861-1891* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1967), pp.247-248; *Riverine Grazier*, 11 June 1881.
[16] The first attempts at tobacco and maize growing in the Tumut district were in 1875, and the success of these efforts soon encouraged others to follow. *Sydney Mail*, 23 November 1889; *Town and Country Journal*, 13 April 1889.
[17] *Gundagai Times*, 30 June 1885.
[18] *Goulburn Herald*, 18 January 1887.
[19] *Gundagai Times*, 21 September 1888.

This success was against the odds: anti-Chinese feelings were running high in many parts of NSW and an Anti-Chinese League was established in Tumut in late 1887, and one of League's main aims was to discourage European landowners from leasing land to the Chinese farmers. Many landowners however refused to cooperate, for the Chinese farmers were their "bread and butter".[20]

A local resident, Jack Bridle, remarked that the tobacco industry revived in 1904 when British American Tobacco persuaded growers to erect kilns to cure and dry leaf rather than sun drying it in open sheds. Jack commented that in the 1920s, 20 or more Chinese tenant farmers were growing tobacco and maize on the Tumut Plains at Wermatong. The Wermatong owners were very happy with the Chinese as tenants because they were "industrious, honest, and above all, because of their system of banking with their local storekeeper, their rents were always paid on time".[21]

In the Tumut district the Chinese were financed by Tumut-based merchants, of whom the main one was Dang Ah Chee. He helped set up their farms, taking a share of their crops as payment and bargaining with the landowners and the tobacco buyers on their behalf. Some of the Chinese were tenants on land that he either owned or leased.[22]

Fig. 4 Tobacco buying, Tumut. Dang Ah Chee, tobacco growers and tobacco buyer. Dang Ah Chee is most likely the person on the far left. (Courtesy of National Library of Australia)

[20] *Gundagai Times*, 21 September 1888; *Town and Country Journal*, 24 December 1887, 24 March 1888; *Sydney Mail*, 4 February, 24 March 1888.
[21] Jack Bridle, "Memories and information of the Chinese", *Memories of Tumut Plains*, residents and ex-residents (Tumut: Wilkie Watson, 1993), pp.12-14. Bridle stated that, with a new type of tobacco and a guaranteed price, the industry flourished.
[22] *Gundagai Times*, 5 October 1886.

The Dang Clan, Tumut

Dang Ah Chee was probably the first of his clan to migrate, but his earlier story is unknown. When he appeared in the documents he was already very well-off and owned large stores in Tumut and Gundagai. According to Will Carter's reminiscences he made a fortune from gold mining at Adelong Creek, and had a store at the Chinese camp, which he later sold to a relative, Dang Ah Hack.[23] In 1900, on the eve of his departure for China, Dang Ah Chee's Gundagai and Tumut stores, associated properties and stock, including tobacco leaf, were valued at £50,000, an enormous sum of money in those times.[24]

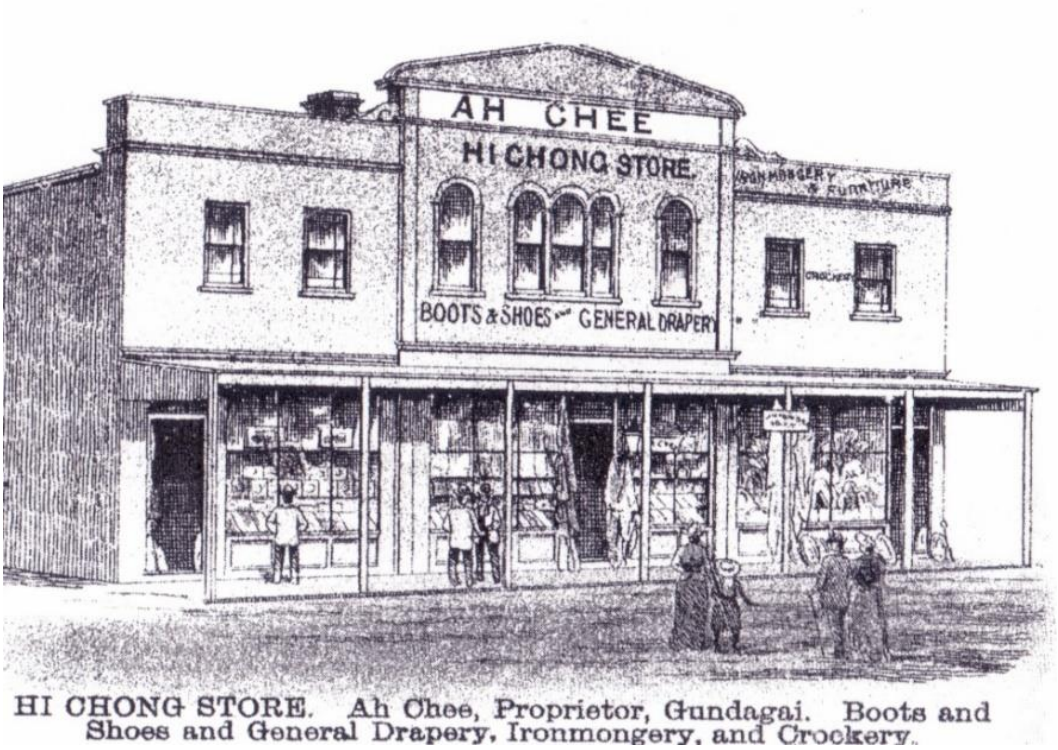

Fig. 5 Dang Ah Chee's Hi Chong store, Gundagai (Courtesy of Tumut & District Historical Society)

Dang Ah Chee's stores were multifunctional. According to historian Jane Lydon, Chinese storekeepers in Sydney played an "essential role within Chinese-Australian society - to house newly-arrived countrymen, providing them with board and lodgings, as well as information, assistance and protection". They also helped in the purchase of travel documents such as shipping tickets and in applications for Certificates of Exemption from the Dictation Test (CEDTs), translation, letter-writing and banking and remittance.[25]

Dang Ah Chee was followed to Australia by his brother, Dang Bown Sluey, and relatives such as Dang Loon (Dang Goon Loong), Dang Charles Doon and Dang Ah Hack.[26] It is possible that Dang Ah Chee sponsored other men as well, in particular some of the tobacco farmers. Another clan member was Foot Chung. He had worked at Ah Chee's

[23] Alan Turner, "Looking Backward. The Adelong Goldfield" (Adelong: the author, 1998), pp.40-41. In Ah Chee's obituary it was stated that he began work in the district as a teamster employed by Mr D. McGillivray, and was one of the original teamsters transporting goods from Sydney to Tumut and Adelong. *Tumut and Adelong Times*, 20 October1905.
[24] Dang Ah Chee, "Letter Book", Tumut and District Historical Society, Folio 378; Josephine Oh, Letter to Kate Bagnall, 20 October 2004; Letter to Pam Archer, 30 June 1988.
[25] Jane Lydon, *Many Inventions. The Chinese in the Rocks, 1890-1930*, (Melbourne: Monash Publications in History, 1999), pp.83-84; Michael Williams, "Chinese Settlement in NSW: A Thematic History", report for the NSW Heritage Office, (Sydney, the author, 1999), p.12, 22, 23.
[26] Information from Grace Ching (née Doon), March 2012.

stores in Tumut and Gundagai, and had leased land from him at Lacmalac, where he farmed for two years. In Hong Kong he had worked in Dang Chee's business on Queens Road.[27]

Dang Ah Chee worked with Dang Ah Hack and Dang Loon in his Gundagai store. Dang Ah Hack often worked with Dang Ah Chee in his produce deals and was regarded as one of the shrewdest produce dealers in NSW.[28] In his will, Ah Chee bequeathed £7000 plus the Club House Hotel in Gundagai and other property to Dang Ah Hack. He bequeathed his Hong Kong businesses to his son Dang Yeng Tang, and most of his remaining Tumut estate to Dang Bown Sluey.[29]

Fig. 6 Burning tower, Tumut cemetery (Author's photo)

For Chinese families in the 19th and 20th centuries lineage was everything. It was the centrepiece around which the clan evolved and developed - no lineage, no clan.[30] As historians Kate Bagnall and Paul Macgregor commented, many Chinese men in Australia supported the family lineage by providing for wives in China and overseas, the Chinese wives either having had children before the husband left for Australia, or conceiving again on the husband's periodic return. Taking a younger wife or adopting sons was part of this

[27] Series SP42, C1910/126, National Archives of Australia (NAA), Sydney. Foot Chung was naturalised in NSW in 1883, and applied for exemption from the dictation test in 1909. He was described as a cousin of Dang Ah Chee.
[28] SP244/2, C05/3806, NAA, Sydney; Josephine Oh, Letter to Kate Bagnall, 20 October 2004; Josephine Oh, Letter to Pam Archer, 30 June 1988; *Albury Banner*, 26 May 1905.
[29] Josephine Oh, letter to Kate Bagnall, 20 October 2004; Series SP 244/2, C05/5679, NAA, Sydney. Dang Ah Chee's wife received a modest lump sum and monthly stipend and their house in Hong Kong. She later took the family to England.
[30] Hugh D. R. Baker, *Chinese Family and Kinship*, (London: The Macmillan Press, 1979), pp. 49-70.

strategy.[31] For these men, family ties in China were important to their existence, even though they were thousands of miles away.

The Dang clan illustrates some of these elements. Emboldened by an intricate system of inter-marriage, clan and family allegiances and networks, Dang Ah Chee, his brother Dang Bown Sluey, and other clan members formed a business dynasty that endured for decades. Their marital and family lives were complex. Dang Ah Chee had a wife in China, who was childless. He decided to remain in Australia, where he was already very successful, and married an Australian woman, Margaret Carruthers, who was related to the then NSW Premier of the same name. Dang Bown Sluey also had a first wife in China, but left her there and brought a young wife to Tumut, and then on one of his returns to China acquired a concubine.[32] Dang Loon (or Dang Goon Loon) managed Dang Bown Sluey's Tiy Loong business while Sluey was absent in China on estate matters. He also had a first wife and a child in China. Dang Ah Hack had a wife, five sons and three daughters in Australia and a first wife, son and daughter in China.[33]

Tradition and custom was obviously important to Dang Ah Chee and his relatives. One of the clearer illustrations of this is the role that family members, including Dang Ah Chee, played in getting approval for and conducting exhumations of long-deceased Chinese men. The remains were subsequently sent back to China for re-burial. In 1882 Dang Ah Chee received permission to remove the remains of his countrymen from the burial grounds of Kiandra, Upper Adelong, Gundagai and Tumut.[34] The removal of the bones was accompanied by funeral ceremonies organised by the Chinese residents, the remains carefully cleaned, and, after soaking in gin, placed in boxes.[35] Similar ceremonies took place in 1904 when 26 Chinese were exhumed from cemeteries at Cootamundra, Gundagai, Tumut, Adelong, Adelong Crossing, and Hillas Creek.[36] In 1917 a permit was issued to Dang Loon, to allow him to exhume the remains of 12 Chinese persons interred in the Chinese cemetery at Tumut.[37] In 1905 Dang Loon accompanied the wife and family of Dang Ah Hack to China when the family took Dang Ah Hack's remains back to China for re-burial.[38] According to Hong Kong-based historian, Elizabeth Sinn, the return of bones to the actual villages was probably done through the Tung Wah Hospital in Hong Kong.[39]

Talking about Dang Quong Wing's Tiy Loong store, his daughter, Josephine Oh, recalled that:

> Each weekend the Chinese came in from their farms in horse and dray to collect provisions, mail from home and to socialise with each other. As it was a lonely existence for them, not having their families here, the weekend trip to town eased the isolation they endured for the whole week. They stayed the night, bedding down in the sleeping quarters, or overflowing into the end of the storeroom.[40]

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[31] Kate Bagnall, "A journey of love: Agnes Bruer's sojourn in 1930s China", in *Transnational Ties. Australian Lives in the World*, ed. Desley Deacon, Penny Russell and Angela Woollacott (Canberra: ANU Press, 2008), pp.115-134; Paul Macgregor, "Dreams of Jade and Gold. Chinese families in Australia's history", in *The Australian family. Images and Essays,* ed. Anna Epstein, (Melbourne: Scribe Publications, 1998), pp. 25-28.
[32] Letter from Josephine Oh to Kate Bagnall, 20 October 2004; Letter from Josephine Oh to Pam Archer, 30 June 1988.
[33] *Albury Banner*, 26 May 1905; see also Bagnall, "The Tiger's Mouth"; Series SP 244/2, C05/5679, NAA, Sydney.
[34] *Gundagai Times*, 7 July 1882.
[35] *Gundagai Times*, 15 August 1883.
[36] *Tumut and Adelong Times*, 1 July 1904.
[37] *Tumut and Adelong Times,* 4, 10 May 1917.
[38] *Albury Banner*, 26 May 1905; see also Bagnall, "The Tiger's Mouth"; Series SP 244/2, C05/5679, NAA, Sydney.
[39] Elizabeth Sinn, *Power and Charity, A Chinese Merchant Elite in Colonial Hong Kong*, (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2003), pp.70-72.
[40] Josephine Oh, Letter to Kate Bagnall, 20 October 2004, courtesy of Pam Archer; letter to Pam Archer, 30 June 1988.

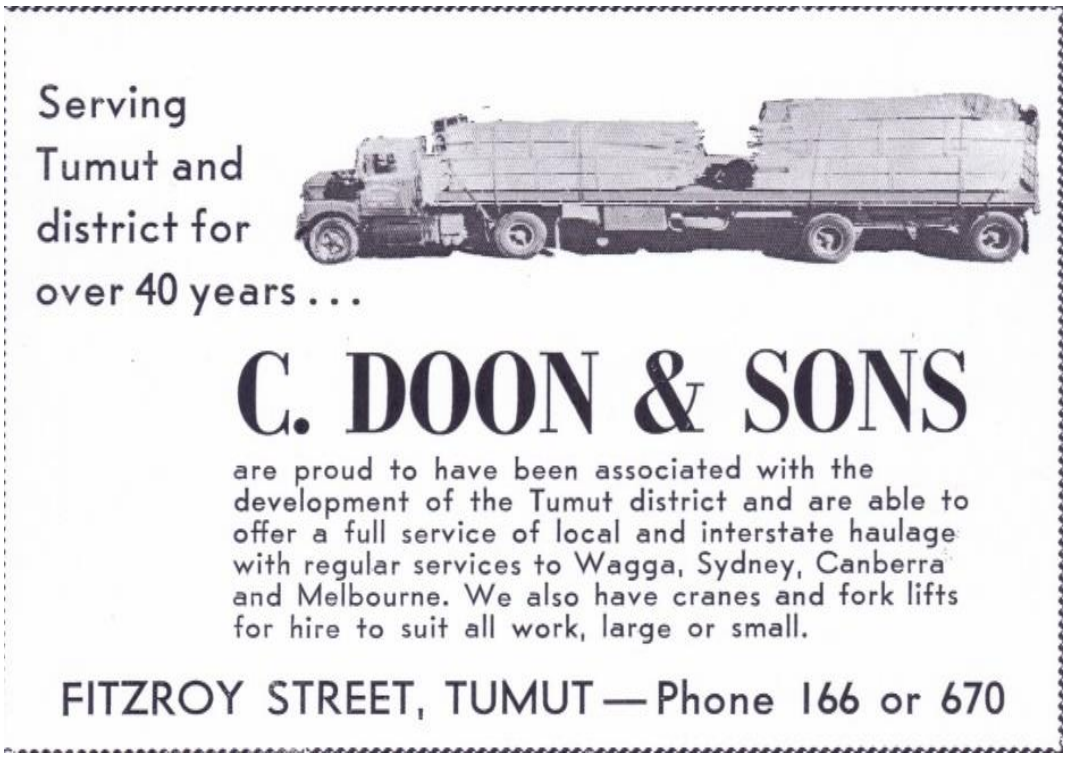

Fig. 7 C. Doon & Sons newspaper advertisement (*Tumut and Adelong Times*, date unknown)

Fig. 8 Dang Charles Doon, Esther and family, Tumut (Courtesy of Johnny Doon)

Fig. 9 Dang Loon, family and employees, Tiy Loong store, Tumut (Private collection)

Another star of the Dang clan is Dang Charles Doon. His family is the longest-standing Chinese family in Tumut. According to his obituary writer, Dang Charles Doon came to Australia with his uncle (more than likely Dang Ah Chee) when he was 13 years-old. Family members are adamant, however, that he came out to Australia on his own, accompanying his uncle's merchandise.[41] Dang Charles Doon worked first a cook and then a gardener.[42] Later he set up a wool, skin and tobacco-buying business, carrying skins to Sydney, and bringing back saleable items such as hardware. By the 1940s the family had a fleet of trucks and semi-trailers carrying wool, skins and hides to Sydney, Albury and Melbourne. Later, the transport business expanded to carry timber for the Snowy Mountains Scheme. The family also had a very successful horse syndicate.[43] At age 35, Charles Doon returned to China and married Esther Gow. They had one child, Richard, but because Esther and Richard were born in China they could not migrate to Australia. Esther came out 14 years later, and Richard (Dick) later still. The circumstances of Esther's arrival in Australia are shrouded in mystery, and part of the shadowy intrigue surrounding the administration of the White Australia Policy.[44]

Tumut was the only town in the Riverina where an association building of the Sze Yap community was located. One historian has commented that it was first built as a stopover place for Chinese men travelling to and from the Kiandra goldfields, and later served as a refuge. Older members of the Doon family, however, recall that the building had been built by local Chinese tobacco and maize farmers as a meeting place and social centre when in town.[45] Charles Doon was a patron or father figure for these men, and later took over financial responsibility for the building. His daughter Grace Ching recalls that her father prepared and performed burial ceremonies for the older men, which involved incense, paper money and the roasting of a pig. Towards the end of the 1930s the elderly men at the

[41] *Tumut and Adelong Times*, 18 November 1955. Information from Grace Ching, March 2012.
[42] *Tumut and Adelong Times*, 18 November 1955. In 1903 he leased about six hectares at Wermatong station for tobacco growing and possibly market gardening. Wermatong Station "Ledgers", Tumut Public Library.
[43] *Tumut and Adelong Times*, 18 November 1955, 10 November 1978, 28 August 2007, 21 May 2010. The brothers were part-owners of Arwon, the winner of the 1978 Melbourne Cup.
[44] Barry McGowan, "Transnational Lives: Colonial Immigration restrictions and the White Australia Policy in the Riverina District of New South Wales, 1860-1960", *Chinese Southern Diaspora Studies. Sources, Language and Approaches in Chinese–Australian History, 6* (2013), pp. 45-63.
[45] *Tumut and Adelong Times*, 21 July 2009; information from Grace Ching, October 2011, and Joe Shai Hee.

Chinese camp did not have much money saved, and there was no ceremony carried out, just the lighting of incense and the burning of paper money.[46]

Charles Doon and his family were very much part of the local community and were staunch members of various organisations. A keen athlete, Charles was also a member of the first Chinese Sunday School at Tumut Plains, one of the first Chinese persons to be baptised in the Anglican Church, and a founder of the Junior Anglican (JA) Boys Organisation in Tumut.[47] His sons followed in his footsteps. The boys were talented and passionate footballers and played with the JA and YA (Young Anglican) teams. They were also passionate about horses. Ted Doon became one of Sydney's leading jockeys, winning the Sydney apprentice's premiership in 1944-45 and scoring numerous big cup wins in later years.[48] Grace Ching recalls that her parents and siblings were always welcome in other people's homes, and the children invited to birthday parties and the like.[49] The only negative racial experience appears to have occurred when some local boys on horses confronted and bullied the young Doon boys on their way to church. Their father responded by buying the boys boxing gloves and giving them boxing lessons. The next time they were confronted the boys were ready and gave their tormentors a sound thrashing. That incident combined with their sporting prowess took care of the bullying.[50]

Eric Doon was a lifetime member, president and treasurer of the Tumut Football Club, and with his wife, Zelda, was heavily involved with the YA at Tumut.[51] It was through Eric and Zelda that the younger members of the Doon family and other Chinese families experienced social life in a country town, for they organized the Annual Debutante Ball in Tumut for many years.[52] Bob Doon and his wife May were heavily involved with the Tumut Lions Club. He was a Charter member, President, and a life member, and both he and May were regular attendees at various district, multi-district and international conventions.[53] In recognition of her charitable work and her special compassion for the needy, aged and the sick, May was named Tumut Citizen of the Year in 1991 and awarded the Order of Australia Medal (O.A.M.) in 2004.[54]

Despite these new allegiances, the Doon family maintained close contacts with other Chinese families, even after these families had left Tumut. Auntie Violet (Dang Loon's wife), as she was known to the Doon family, remained in close contact after Esther Doon's death in 1943. She helped Charles buy dresses for the Doon girls, and invited the girls to stay at their grocery shop in Surry Hills for Christmas holidays. Dang Loon's daughter, Thelma, had married Tom Young, who ran the Sun Kum Lee & Co store in Tumut. Their son, Don, spent his annual holidays with the Young family and became good friends with the Doon family. One of Don's sisters, Joyce, was a keen horsewoman and Charles made sure she had access to the horses in the stable when she visited Thelma and Tom. Gordon Wee's family were close friends of the Doon and Shai Hee families, and kept in contact after moving to Junee and Melbourne.[55]

[46] Information from Grace Ching, October 2011.
[47] *Tumut and Adelong Times*, 18 November 1955, 10 November 1978, 20 April 1993.
[48] Personal reminiscences from Ted Doon, 2010. The family entered the family horse in the Tumut and Gundagai shows, and later in the Sydney Royal Easter Show. *Sun Herald*, 26 July 1981; *Daily Telegraph*, 4 May 1888; *Racing and Sports*, 26 November 2011. Ted's wins included the AJC Metropolitan, Summer Cup (twice), Christmas Cup, Carrington Stakes (twice), Tattersall's Plate, Canterbury Cup and the Canterbury Stakes.
[49] Information from Grace Ching, May 2012.
[50] Conversation with Ted Doon, 2010.
[51] Information from Lel Doon, September 2011. Eric was Treasurer of the YA and Zelda was President. *Tumut and Adelong Times*, 18 January 1954.
[52] Recollections from Grace Ching and Zelda Doon, September 2011.
[53] *Tumut and Adelong Times*, 8 April 2004, 28 August 2007.
[54] *Tumut and Adelong Times*, 16 July 1991, 27 January, 8 April 2004, 28 August 2007.
[55] Information from Grace Ching, March 2012. Betty Doon took care of Tom and Thelma's daughter Janette on Saturdays for two or more years while Thelma worked in Tom's store.

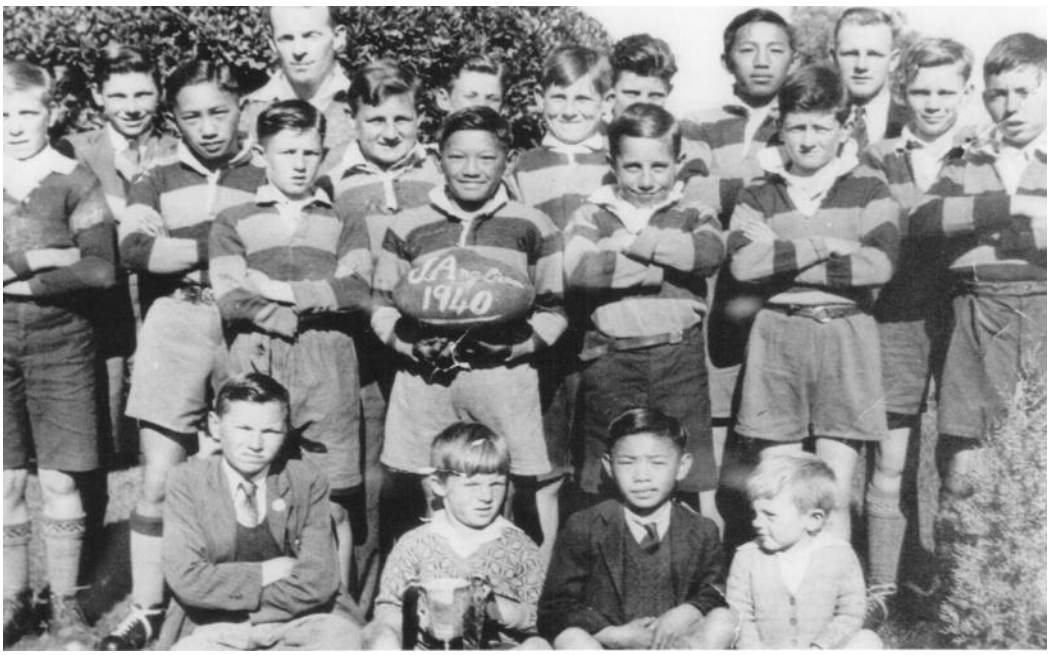

Fig. 10 Junior Anglican Football team, 1940, left to right, Bob, Ted, John and Eric
(Courtesy of Johnny Doon)

Quong Wing, seated, was a legendary draper, grocer and general merchant in Tumut for many decades. Today we publish an update on his story and family, as related by his daugther Josephine. Pictured left to right: Bessie, Norman, Madeline, Josephine; front: Gwen, Dang Quong Wing and Chin Shi Wing.

Fig. 11 Dang Quong Wing's family, Tumut (*Tumut and Adelong Times*, 10 August 2001)

Shai Hee family (Wong clan?) and the Yee Hing Company

Traditional Chinese customs and practices served to underpin clan and community loyalties. First and foremost were the district or native place associations and fraternal organisations such as the *hui*. These district associations were formed by men with the same district or county of origin, the most common in NSW being the Sze Yap (四邑). Although conventionally the "hui" were labelled "secret societies", there was nothing "secret" about most of them in Australia. They were primarily benevolent institutions promoting mutual interest among members and doing charitable work, and were important in protecting the interests of new immigrants and helping them become established. In Australia the *hui* (the main one of which was the Yee Hing 義興 Company, Hung Men 洪門 or Hung League) focused on mutual support activities such as arranging jobs, mediating disputes, assisting with everyday difficulties, arranging funerals and making representations to government. The evidence for the existence of the *hui* in the Riverina is overwhelming.[56] After Federation the League increased its social and political activities, campaigning against the White Australia Policy and supporting Dr Sun Yat-sen's revolutionary programme.[57]

While there was no lodge in Tumut, William Shai Hee's store, and his strong interest in the welfare of the local Chinese suggests that he had a strong connection to the Hung Men or Yee Hing Society. Further evidence is the family's connection with James Wong Chuey, a relative and partner in the store. Chuey was a strong patron of the Sze Yap Society and the Kuan Tia (or Kwun Ti 關帝) Temple in the Sydney suburb of Glebe. In 1904 he was awarded a gold medal in honour of his work in support of the Temple and the Society. The medal entitled the wearer to travel anywhere in China, and to military protection at all times.[58] He was also one of the founding members of the Chinese Masonic Lodge at Surry Hills, Sydney, and a very strong supporter of the Chinese Republican movement.[59] His stores in Junee, Cootamundra, Wagga Wagga, West Wyalong and Barmedman would have been district or fraternal association meeting places.

By the 1900s the Yee Hing store was more general in nature, selling '"everything but the kitchen sink". Jean Chin (née Shai Hee) recalls that the store served as a type of headquarters for the Chinese people in the district. The store had been a stopping over place for Chinese men *en route* to and from the Kiandra and Adelong goldfields, and before they returned to China. Her father looked after the older Chinese men, helping pay their fares back home, if necessary. If they died, he attended to all their affairs, withdrawing their money from the banks, and sending it back home to their families.[60]

[56] McGowan, *Tracking the Dragon. A History of the Chinese in the Riverina*, pp. 41-56.
[57] Dian H. Murray, *The Origins of the Tiandihui. The Chinese Triads in Legend and History* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), pp. 5-115; J. S. M. Ward and W. G. Stirling, *The Hung Society or the Society of Heaven and Earth*, Vols. I-III (London: The Baskerville Press, 1925); David Ownby, "Chinese *Hui* and the Early Modern Social Order: Evidence from Eighteenth-Century Southeast China", in *"Secret Societies" Reconsidered. Perspectives on the Social History of Modern South China and South East Asia*, ed. David Ownby and Mary Somers Heidhues (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1993), pp. 38-44; John Fitzgerald, *Big White Lie. Chinese Australians in White Australia* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2007), pp. 81-82; Cai Shaoqing,"On the Overseas Chinese Secret Societies of Australia", *New Zealand Journal of Asian Studies*, 4, 1 2002): pp. 30-45. Cai has commented that during the gold rush years probably at least half of the Chinese population was affiliated with the Hung league. The Hung League became the Chinese Masonic Society (or Lodge) in Sydney in 1911 and in Melbourne in 1914.
[58] *Chinese Australian Herald*, 2 April 1904; *Junee Southern Cross*, 6 March 1904.
[59] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 March 1912. In February 1912 he was closely involved in celebrations to mark the end of Manchu rule and the inauguration of the new Republic. A luncheon and picnic at Clontarf, Middle Harbour was attended by more than 3000 people, both Chinese and European. James Wong Chuey was President of the Young Chinese League and chaired the luncheon, which was attended by several members of Parliament and other notables.
[60] Information from Jean Chin (née Shai Hee), March 2012.

Fig. 12 William Shai Hee's father, Hing Gim (Courtesy of Chris Shai Hee)

Fig. 13 Young's Cash and Carry store, Tumut (Private Collection)

William Shai Hee was an early member of the Chinese mission at Tumut Plains and was baptized into the Anglican Church on the same day as Charles Doon. William was very wealthy and had very strong business interests in China, including a cotton spinning mill in Shanghai and a bank in Guangzhou. On one of his trips to China, William married Chin See, but had to return to Australia to attend to his businesses, leaving Chin See in the home village, Hem-Ning, Hoe-Sun, (near Guangzhou), where his first son, Ted, was born. A year later William brought his wife and son to Australia, and they lived at Tumut. They stayed in Tumut for six years and had more children, Jean, Allan, Eva and Reg. In 1933 the family returned to China for the children's education. Again William had to return to Australia. This time he took Ted, but the rest of the family remained behind, including the new-born Joe. During the Japanese invasion of China the family took what possessions they could and travelled by bus and ship to Hong Kong, staying with friends of William's until the family could travel to Australia.

William wrote on several occasions seeking an extension of visa for Chin See and the children. In the early 1930s he successfully pleaded the case for an extension based on the difficult trading conditions in Australia, and the need for him to remain in Tumut rather than travel to China with Chin See. In the late 1930s and early 1940s William argued that conditions in China were in a "deplorable state" and that it was "no place for a woman to be". By 1941 the Shai Hee village had been "completely wrecked" and their home destroyed.[61]

William's concerns with the immigration restrictions and the ever-present possibility that Chin See and Ted could be deported from Australia, led him to build two two-storied homes in Hem-Ning in the 1920s (*diao lou* 碉樓, meaning watchtowers or fortified multi-storey towers). He may also have had in mind living in China permanently because of his extensive business interests.[62]

[61] Joe and Reg Shai Hee, "An Anecdote on the life of Chin See Shai-Hee", (Sydney: unpublished reminiscences, 2004); information from Joe Shai Hee, February 2012; Series A2998, 1952/4657, NAA, Canberra.
[62] Tan, Jin Hua, Selia, "Kaiping Diaolou and Its Associated Villages: Documenting the Process of Application to the World Heritage List"; thesis submitted for a Master of Science Degree, University of Hong Kong, September 2007; information from Reg, Joe and Jean Shai Hee, February 2012. While in China, William, Chin See, and her children stayed in one house, while the two sons and a daughter from William's first marriage (the wife had died in China) stayed in the other.

Fig. 14 Chinese Mission at Tumut Plains
(Florence Stacey, *History of the Anglican Church in Tumut 1830-1926*. Publisher and place of publication unknown)

Fig. 15 Baptisms into the Anglican Church, Tumut.
Charles Doon fourth from right; William Shai Hee second from right

(Courtesy of Chris Shai Hee)

Fig. 16 William Shai Hee's family, Tumut, 1933. William & Allan, Chin See & Reg, Jean, Ted, and an unknown woman with Eva (Courtesy of Chris Shai Hee)

The Yan clan

Descendants of the Kiandra-based Yan clan have been long-standing residents of Tumut and neighbouring Adelong. The patriarch Thomas Yan (Thomas Ah Yan) was a gold miner and storekeeper at Kiandra. His partner, Catherine Wortz, was German-born and the couple had seven children, all of whom became well known identities in Kiandra, and later, with that town's demise, residents of Tumut and nearby Adelong.[63]

The principal Yan presence in Tumut was through Maggie, a daughter of Thomas Yan senior, and one of Australia's first female ski champions. Historian Judith Hickson has written at length on the involvement of the Chinese people, and in particular the Yan family, in skiing at Kiandra. In 1900 an article in the *Town and Country Journal* recounted preparations for a snowshoe carnival in Kiandra where "Chinese and Chinese children…, [were seen] all laughing, joking, jeering, falling here and there and everywhere". According to Judith, the achievements of Barbara, Margaret and Mary Yan overshadowed those of many other women competitors. On 9 August 1895 the *Cooma Express* described Miss M Yan as "a perfect artist on the shoes".[64]

Maggie married Jacob Wilson, a Lebanese-born hotelier in Kiandra, and in 1927 they both moved to Tumut to run the Commercial Hotel. From 1937 until the 1960s they

[63] A son, George, a storekeeper, carrier, selector and grazier, retired in 1945 and lived in Tumut, as did three of his sons. Yan, George (1871-1952), Obituaries Australia, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, http://oa.anu.edu.au/obituary/yan-george-1679/text1802. Discussions with Cynthia Richards, (née Yan), Canberra, February 2015; Rhonda Sturt and Pat Howard, Tumut, June 2013; and Gwen Skeers, Adelong, October 2013.

[64] Judith Hickson, "Chinese Skiers of Kiandra: Object and narrative", *reCollections*, Vol.8, No.2, 2014, pp. 3-4. Lindsay M. Smith, "Cold Hard Cash", A Study of Chinese ethnicity in archaeology at Kiandra, New South Wales, M.A, ANU, 1998, pp. 51-55.

managed a dry-cleaning and laundry business. The Wilson family story provides an excellent example of the importance of intra-family relationships to Chinese-Australian people in the Tumut -Adaminaby region and the importance of middle-class values to their lives. Although Maggie and Jacob's decision to settle in Tumut was driven by commercial and educational opportunities, rather than family and clan ties, the family had been on close personal terms for many years with the Tumut Chinese. One of Maggie's grand-daughters, Rhonda Sturt, recalls the close relationships between her family and other Chinese families. All her siblings were invited to the Doon family banquets and social functions, including the family weddings, and to functions at the Loon and Young family homes, and reciprocated this hospitality.[65]

Grace Ching (née Doon) recalls that at Chinese New Year her mother, Esther, made an extra special tray of dumplings for the Wilson family. Maggie had a very happy disposition and a contagious friendly smile. The epitome of middle class respectability, she wore beautiful long jade earrings and was always impeccably dressed, even while doing the housework. The double wedding of Grace Doon and Ray Ching and Betty Doon and Gordon Hang Gong in Tumut on November 6, 1950 drew the Doon and Wilson families even closer when Marie, Maggie's eldest daughter (and Rhonda's mother), represented Charles Doon's deceased wife, Esther, at the reception. [66]

The Wilson family also had very close relationships with the Yen family from Adaminaby. Following the closure of the Kiandra school, two of Maggie's sisters stayed at the Yen family home during the school term. Arthur and Dill Yen and Arthur's sister Maude ran a general store and butcher's shop in Adaminaby, an "Aladdin's cave", with all types of goods, some hanging from the ceiling. A brother, Geoff, a 'larger than life' character, had a garage and picture theatre. Rhonda remembers Geoff as a large, tall man, very flamboyant and gregarious, friendly and always smiling. He often visited Tumut as a member of the Adaminaby bowling team and stayed with the Wilson family. Pat Howard, one of Rhonda's cousins, also recalled the very close personal relations between her family and other Chinese families at Tumut and the Yen family at Adaminaby. When her family lived at Kiandra, the Tumut Chinese families would visit for snow picnics and skiing.[67]

The Yen family

Charles Yen (formerly Charles Chun Yen) came to Australia on the same boat as John Booshang (Du Boo Shang). Both men joined the gold rush to Kiandra in the early 1860s. John Booshang married Anastasia Casey Thomas at Cooma in 1881. Charles Yen married a twin sister, Jane Thomas, at Cooma in about 1881.[68] Anastasia and John had three children and Jane and Charles had two, before both families moved to Adaminaby in about 1888 and opened stores there. Jane and Anastasia had four and five more children respectively.[69]

Charles Yen's family-operated businesses included a general store, butcher shop, picture theatre and service station/garage. Family members, Arthur, Bella and Barbara were employed in running the store and shop. Frank, a son, ran the local garage and was later joined by his son Geoff, who had completed a motor mechanic apprenticeship in Sydney.

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[65] Information from Rhonda Sturt, Tumut, June 2013.
[66] Information from Grace Ching, Melbourne, March 2015.
[67] Geoff Yen was an active cross-country skier, who led groups on cross-country expeditions in the 1940s and 1950s. Hickson, "Chinese Skiers of Kiandra: Object and narrative", p. 7. The National Historical Collection of the National Museum of Australia contains a pair of Geoff Yen's wooden skis. Information from Pat Howard, Adelong, October 2014.
[68] www.monaropioneers.com
[69] Information from Harry Thomas, Beechworth, November 2014. The name Booshang was later changed to Booshand. www.monaropioneers.com/nimmitabel/pioneers/booshand. Historian Trixie Clugston recalls that the Booshang shop had pies and lollies and the Yens, groceries, clothing and a butcher's shop. Trixie Clugston, in Laura Neal, *It Doesn't Snow Like It Used To...Memories of the Monaro and the Snowy Mountains* (Sydney, NSW Department of Technical and further Education; Cooma, Cooma Community Contact Centre, 1988), pp.15-16.

The Yen family imported and sold a very wide range of goods, including imported Chinese products.[70] They also bought two nearby grazing properties, Speedwell and Collingwood. Arthur lived at Collingwood, where he bred and trained race horses, often winning prizes at the local shows. He was well-known as a bookie at the Adaminaby race course.[71]

According to Hickson the Yens were actively involved in community events and routinely attended services at the Roman Catholic Church. Charles was a regular entrant in many of Adaminaby's early agricultural shows and won awards for a diverse range of livestock and activities. He was also honorary secretary of the Adaminaby cricket club, and family members regularly volunteered their services at community events such as shows and race days. Arthur Yen often played the piano at local dances and balls and was a member of the Adaminaby brass band. Despite this assimilation, however, discrimination and vilification were not far away. In 1908 an axe was thrown at Charles's son after abusive and racist remarks were made to the young man while he was driving sheep along a road. A local farmer's son was later charged with inflicting grievous bodily harm, but despite the overwhelming evidence against him he was later acquitted by a jury in Cooma.[72] What distinguishes the Yen family from the three other families discussed above, was their appearance in Patrick White's first novel, *Happy Valley*.

The Yen family were among the first, if not the first, people in town to embrace the advantages of the motor vehicle. This caused bitterness in itself. White caught this moment in his book when the overseer, Hagan, was sprayed with mud from the brand-new Ford of Walter Quong (from Rhonda Sturt's description White's Walter Yen is almost certainly Geoff Yen).

> The yellowish face of a Chinaman looked out from the steering wheel, tried to frown, but smiled…. Hagan swore, "To be run over by a bloody Chow right in the middle of the street." It made him angry again…He would like to feel that Chinaman's jaw".[73]

Following an article by David Marr about *Happy Valley*, the *Sydney Morning Herald* received a response from Laurann Yen Charolles, who wrote:

> In *Happy Valley* White does indeed steal my grandparents and report them spitefully: they are without humour, without grace, without respite from the bleak town and their bleak relationship; two dry peas in a miserable pod. But there is wonderful White as well – a sense of place, where every tree, every verandah, every small comforting pretension gets into your bones. I know, more from White than from memory, every person.[74]

While White's racial hints may seem overstated, they were real enough. Locker recalls that there were two football teams in the town, one primarily European and the other mainly Chinese, that is, members of the Yen family, and their supporters. To this can be added a touch of sectarianism, which lasted well into the 1950s in many country towns, for the Thomas, Yen and Booshang families were members of the Roman Catholic Church. Perhaps more relevant was the reality that the Yen family, in particular Geoff Yen, was economically very successful, and besting their European competitors. With their motor car the Yens could get people into Cooma and back for shopping excursions far more quickly than the coaches. According to Locker, John Freebody had the main coach run between Adaminaby and Cooma. Soon he had no passengers, and by 1912 the mail run was closed.[75]

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[70] Hickson, "Chinese Skiers of Kiandra: Object and narrative", pp. 1-12.
[71] Hickson, "Chinese Skiers of Kiandra: Object and narrative", pp. 4-6; Leigh Stewart, *Historic Adaminaby. Book of Photos* (place of publication unknown, the author, 2004).
[72] Hickson, "Chinese Skiers of Kiandra: Object and narrative", pp. 4-6; Stewart, *Historic Adaminaby. Book of Photos*.
[73] White, *Happy Valley*, p. 59.
[74] Marr, *Patrick White. A Life,* p. 546; Bagnall, "The Tiger's Mouth: Happy Valley"; *Canberra Times*, 26 May 2012.
[75] White, *Happy Valley*; discussions with Neville Locker, October 2014 and Harry Thomas, Beechworth, November 2014. Neville recalls stories of conflicts between bullock and horse teamsters and truck operators, who often had to endure road blockages on their way to the Cooma railway station.

The attitudes of some local town folk towards the Yen family may seem at odds to the generally more friendly picture of race relations in Riverina towns such as Tumut. Nevertheless, perhaps too much can be made of the race theme – the Yens were actively involved in many community activities, and overall must have enjoyed a strong degree of social acceptance – but this reality was at best an inconvenience in White's novel.

Fig. 17 Ladies on skis, Kiandra, Yan and Yen families, Maggie on far right with white blouse
(Courtesy of Rhonda Sturt)