

# AUSTRALIA-CHINA FRIENDSHIP SOCIETY

ACT Branch Inc.

澳中友好协会

PO Box 530 Civic Square ACT 2608

*Promoting friendship and understanding between the Australian and Chinese people*

## ACT Branch Bulletin 2009/4 May 2009

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### Coming events

**Conversation evening 17 May**

**Photo exhibition "Tibet of China, Past and Present" 11-17 May**

**Film evening at the National Library 27 May**

**Presentation and dinner at the Chinese Embassy 19 June**

**Happy Year of the Ox!**

## Coming events

### Chinese – English conversation Sunday 17 May 2009

One Sunday evening each month there is a Chinese–English conversation at Shirley Johns' home, from 7.30 to 9.30 pm. One hour is spent speaking English for practice of Chinese speakers who wish to improve their English, and the other hour speaking Chinese. If you would like to attend please phone Shirley Johns on 6254 4305 (after hours).

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### Reel McCoy film evening – Wednesday 27 May

In association with the Reel McCoy Film Society and Friends of the National Library of Australia, ACFS will hold a film screening of *A River with no Navigation Marks (Mei Yu Hang Piao Ti Ho Liao)*, a film by Tian-Ming Wu, at 6pm Wednesday 27 May 2009, at the National Library of Australia, Parkes PI, Parkes ACT.

Three men raft up and down a river, picking up business when they can through trade, transport and fishing. Life is that much more difficult because the Cultural Revolution is in full swing and when a good-hearted district director is persecuted and jailed by the Red Guards the three friends rescue him from captivity and load him on their raft. More details on the flyer in this Bulletin.

Contact: Teck on 62546814 or email to [tekclee@hotmail.com](mailto:tekclee@hotmail.com)

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### Tour to China in October–November

The itinerary for the proposed tour has been finalised and includes Beijing, Tianjin, Hohhot (Inner Mongolia), Jinan, Qufu, Mt Taishan, Jinan, Qingdao, Suzhou, Hangzhou, Yellow Mountain and Shanghai. Please contact Teck Lee for further details and the full itinerary.

### C Radio – FM 88

A new radio station was launched on Friday 8 May: FM 88, a community radio station connected with China Radio International., China's overseas broadcaster.

The station features talk show, news, music, Chinese stories and English and Chinese learning programs and aims to provide a multicultural platform for the promotion of understanding and friendship.

Several Committee members were privileged to attend the launch at the National Museum on the Friday night: a lavish affair with many balloons and flowers, song and dance, a three-course meal and toasts – and an official count-down to begin the first broadcast.

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### Evening at the Embassy

Members are invited to the Embassy for a presentation on Chinese culture and a buffet on Friday 19 June at 6.00 for 6.30pm. These evenings are always enjoyable so be sure to book with Teck on 62546814 or email to [tekclee@hotmail.com](mailto:tekclee@hotmail.com) by Friday 12 June.

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### Photo exhibition

The ACT Council for the Promotion of Peaceful Reunification of China is staging a photo exhibition entitled "Tibet of China, Past and Present" at the Canberra Centre from 11 to 17 May.

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### Asia Bookroom

The Asia Bookroom has several interesting talks on in coming weeks: visit [www.asiabookroom.com/AsiaBookRoom/events.cfm](http://www.asiabookroom.com/AsiaBookRoom/events.cfm)

## Shu roads – from the Qin Dynasty to the Sichuan earthquake

Talk by Dr David Jupp – Wed 29 April

David Jupp gave a fascinating presentation to 50 members and friends on the Shu roads in China, plank roads in the river gorges and paved roads in the flatter areas. Following is a summary of the talk and some of the many illustrations. David's passion for his subject was obvious and it was clear he could have expanded on every aspect covered, which ranged from geology to history to literature.



Reconstructed Plank Road at Mingyue Gorge in Northern Sichuan

The name “Shu Roads” is a general term applying to the historical roads that were built through the mountainous East-West barrier formed by the Qinling, Micang and Daba mountain ranges. They linked the Wei river valley (or the Guanzhong) with its cluster of ancient capitals, such as Chang’an, near present day Xi’an in the north and the Sichuan plain with its ancient capital at Shu (present day Chengdu) in the south. They pass through some of China’s roughest and most inhospitable terrain. The highways were built ifrom the Warring States (481–221 BCE) period and extended during the Qin (221–206 BCE) and Han (206 BCE to 220 CE) dynasties.

The rugged Qinling mountains are wilderness areas of great beauty.

In most cases they made use of natural corridors that had been discovered and used much earlier by ancient people. Some of the routes developed at that time have been maintained and consolidated up to modern times.

The establishment of these important traffic routes through difficult, steep and dangerous mountain ranges required the development of innovative road building technology known as “Plank Roads” by which ravines and steep sided gorges were traversed using trestles fixed into the rock face.

The Tang poet Li Bai (701–762 CE) travelled these roads to exile and wrote “The Road to Shu is hard, harder than climbing to heaven”, and described the Plank Roads as the “ladders to heaven”. But armies, traders, settlers and materials also flowed through these roads for more than 3000 years during which time the developments associated with the Plank Road technology, and the turbulent history associated with the Shu Roads, have together become part of China’s historical and modern culture.

Between the northern and southern sections of the Qinling and Daba mountain ranges is the Hanzhong basin through which the Han River flows to meet the Yangtze River at Wuhan. The course of the Han River provided an East-West corridor to the Hanzhong Basin and Hanzhong provided a welcome staging point between Guanzhong and Shu since ancient times.

The strategic importance of the rich and productive land and environment of Hanzhong is well known in history but apparently forgotten in the relative anonymity of Hanzhong even in China until recent years. But interest in the history and archaeology of the Hanzhong



Basin has increased in recent times. For example, the Museum at Hanzhong is preserving and making known the rich heritage of the region including the cultural and historical aspects of its ancient Plank Roads and increasingly Chinese people are coming for educational and historical tourism to the place where the Han dynasty began.

Mountains, rivers and lakes have been subjects of Chinese art and literature since ancient times. In the history of the Shu Roads the terrain has been the ruling factor and the rivers the agents of change as well as communication. Ancient people learned how to navigate the great east-west divide of the mountains and the north-south passages to travel and transport goods between the Wei River valley and the Sichuan plain. Throughout the dynasties that followed, the Shu roads linked north and south China with the Hanzhong basin as a middle ground and haven from the hard crossings of dangerous mountain systems. The roads attracted a population of people servicing the traffic and travel as well as maintaining a hinterland of people dependent on the materials they supplied and the trade they could take out. The history of the area through which the roads passed has been as hard as the travel but the heroism and high adventure of the events that took place have put the region into a place in Chinese culture and literature occupied by few others.

The arrival of modern road building and communications provides both another chapter for the complete discussion of Shu Roads as well as an urgent reason to manage the history and archaeology of the ancient systems. Starting with the road building of the period of war against Japan, modern roads have, in many places, obliterated relics and in other places, due to the actions of agencies and individuals, have led to relics being preserved in museums or as photographs, copies and rubbings rather than the original materials. Balancing preservation and exploitation has always been difficult and it is no less an issue for the Shu Roads as it is for any system of historical communication paths.

But because of the conjunction of human innovation that found ways to traverse the difficult sections and the spirit of the ancient and modern road builders which saw them extend the road system across the major mountain systems that surround Shu/Sichuan, the Shu

roads provide a relatively unknown but waiting area where western travellers can open up the history, environment and culture of the “Shu Roads historical and eco-tourism route” for people all over the world and spread the word to others who wish to visit and be entranced. The recent events of the Wenchuan earthquake have provided this opportunity with greater impact as such a development will also directly support will help rebuild the damaged infrastructure and shattered lives of people, including the Qiang people, who have been living along the Shu Roads.

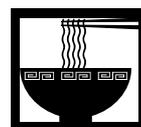


The US Library of Congress has a 55 foot long painted scroll map showing the route and places along the way between Baoji in Shaanxi to the Sichuan border.

The detail above shows the walled city of Fengxian. The road passes through this place (which may be present day Fengzhou) and then joins the Lianyun (or “Cloud linked”) route to the Bao River and from there to Baocheng and further to the Shaanxi/Sichuan border.

The website at:

[http://members.iinet.net.au/~jupps\\_22@ozemail.com.au/](http://members.iinet.net.au/~jupps_22@ozemail.com.au/) contains all this information and much more.



## Cookery corner

### Yu-shiang Shredded Pork

#### Ingredients:

lean pork meat, 200 g

black fungus soaked in water, 25 g  
bamboo shoots  
pickled chilies, 40 g  
chopped ginger, 10 g  
scallions, chopped, 15 g  
garlic, chopped, 2–3 cloves  
soy sauce, 10 g  
salt, 3 g  
sugar, 10 g  
vinegar, 8 g  
chicken essence or MSG, 1 g  
cooking wine, 15 g  
cornstarch mixed with water, 50 g

### Method:

Cut the pork into 6–7 cm slices. Place in a bowl and marinate with salt, cooking wine and cornstarch.

Clean the black fungus and bamboo shoots, cut into slices about the same size as the meat. Boil for 20–30 seconds and remove.

Mix the sauce with soy sauce, sugar, vinegar, chicken essence or MSG, and starch.

Heat some oil until steam rises. Stir-fry the meat with pickled chilies until the chilies turn red, then add ginger, scallions and garlic. Add the black fungus and bamboo shoots, stir-fry in the sauce until cooked. Serve.

### A story about Yu-shiang Shredded Pork

Once upon a time there was a family in South China's Sichuan Province, and each member of that family liked fish. The family often added a sauce, made from ginger, scallions, garlic, wine, vinegar and soy sauce, when they cooked their fish. One day, the wife realised she had not used all of the seasonings. So she used ingredients to make the sauce she often cooked with fish, and added it to stir-fry pork slices. To her surprise, her husband liked the way the meat tasted. The sauce, which had been used to flavour fish, has since been referred to as 'yu xiang' (taste of the sauce used to cook fish.)

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### Cultural chasms

#### Letter from Zhànjiāng, Guǎngdōng Province

Having arrived in Zhànjiāng and got Roger settled and productive in his new job, his colleagues decided it was time to get me working too. I had hoped to find employment in

something other than teaching, so had ignored a passing comment from a very old Chinese friend of Roger's about working at Zhànjiāng Normal University. I assumed, in a culture that doesn't say 'no', not replying at all would indicate that maybe I was less than enthusiastic at the prospect of teaching oral English to classes of up to 50, and sometimes more, students. I obviously miscalculated this nuance of Chinese interactions as a couple of months later, and without warning, Roger's good friend announced he had visited the university and arranged an interview for me. So, he advised, he'd be happy to take me there in 2 day's time. We would be meeting someone from the Office of International Exchange and Cooperation and I'd need copies of my passport, visa, photos, and qualifications.

Our street in the financial district.



Two days later I'm ready in my best outfit, rarely worn as the environment and climate is just too destructive for expensive Australian fashion, clutching my documentation and feeling slightly bemused. I acknowledged that there seemed to be few other work options for me other than teaching and realized that a position at a university was probably a lot better than teaching 25 classes a week to 60

16-year-olds at a middle school. Yet I did wonder if I had explored other possibilities enough, and was feeling somewhat 'organised'.

However an opportunity is an opportunity and we head off past the hotel at the gate to our apartment complex, up the grand palm-tree lined avenue we live on and by the banks and government office buildings that line the road. Soon we enter Chikǎn), one of Zhànjiāng's two city centers, complete with a couple of modern shopping centers, the site of a local battle against the French 'imperialist invaders', a maze of little back streets, and the University.



**Narrow lanes of Chikǎn**

Arriving at the University administration building, where we are instructed by signs on the wall to speak Putōng huà (Mandarin) rather than local languages that include Guǎngzhōu huà (Cantonese), I realize Roger's colleague is going to join me in the interview. So, watched on by both Roger's old friend and the other staff in the open office, I have a 20-minute wide-ranging conversation, in English, with the Foreign Teachers' Manager. There is then a lengthy discussion, in Chinese, with Roger's work colleague, resulting in me being told that, given my visa type and the limited time we plan

to stay in Zhànjiāng, she will need to talk to her boss. I will be contacted in couple of days if I'm required to present a sample lecture to students and the Vice-Dean of the Commerce School.

Two days come and go, and, without me telling anyone about the interview, I keep getting asked by Roger's work colleagues, from the students to the Director, how it went and when will I start teaching. Two weeks after the interview I have still not heard and I learn that Roger's good friend has followed up with the University. He advises me I'll be giving a guest lecture early the following week and the day before the presentation he'll pass the topic on to me.

Having received the theme, 'Education', on the morning of Tomb Sweeping Day, a public holiday, and being told I will be speaking to up to 60 students, I find myself at the University the next day presenting to the Vice-Dean and the Manager, and five students! Most of the



**A tree lined campus road on a sunny day**

students have decided to extend their long weekend into Tuesday and not attend my non-compulsory lecture. The few students there, and the staff, seem to respond well and again I'm advised I'll be contacted in two days.

Four days later I'm invited to come into the office to talk. Eagerly I attend and I finally manage to ask some of the questions I have, up until this point, had no opportunity to ask. I am offered a position and find there is no expectation that I might refuse the job. That evening I'm rung up and told, for reasons I could not understand but involve another foreign teacher hurting his foot on the Great Wall, that the plans have all been changed and

I'll be advised what was happening in, surprise, surprise, a couple of days. I do get called 2 days later, at 7.30pm as we are going out to meet a friend for dinner. I'm to let the University know by the middle of May if I want a position for the next academic year, starting in September, but could I fill-in for a teacher the next morning, at 8am!



#### University students reciting lessons before class

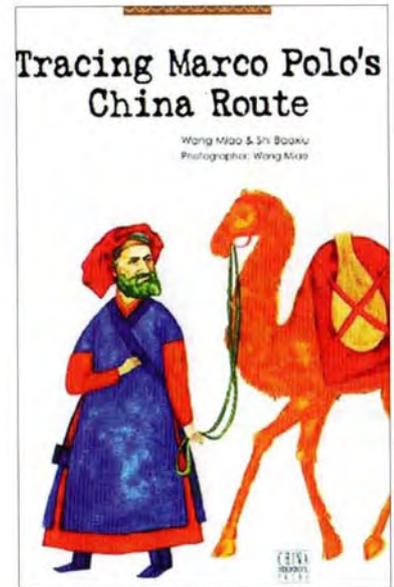
Life in China often leaves me bewildered and stressed. Frequently I feel I have no basis to interpret people's actions or modify my behavior to better reach the outcomes I desire, and I can't count the number of times I have had to race to meet other people's ridiculously tight deadlines. As far as I can tell organizational planning operates by a completely different set of rules, and usually on a just-in-time basis, and the nuances of social interaction constantly elude me. I fully understand that Roger's colleagues' interest and actions are heartfelt and intended only with kindness and to do the best for Roger and his 'family' (me), yet I am surprised at the differences in personal space and shocked at my emotional reactions when my boundaries are breached. It is a vivid lesson in the power of social constructs.

Catherine Evans, with Roger Arnold.

## Book review

***Tracing Marco Polo's China Route***, by Wang Miao and Shi Baoxiu, China Intercontinental Press

The story of Marco Polo's journey across the vast land of China has entertained and informed generations of people all over the world since it was first published nearly 700 years ago. His incredible adventures in Asia and the book he wrote, *The Travels of Marco Polo*, made the Italian merchant world famous.



*Tracing Marco Polo's China Route* is a magnificent book, a rediscovery of Marco Polo's northern route to China which passed along the north ridge of the Tibetan Plateau, from the Pamir Highlands, through the mountains, steppes and deserts of Chinese Turkestan, via Northwest China all the way to Beijing.

Photographer Wang Miao and friend and author Shi Baoxiu combine their talents and forces in this unique travel adventure, which is full of photos and heartwarming personal accounts of their quest to revisit Marco Polo's route.

The book is an intimate encounter with western China, the tribes and minorities of the ancient and still isolated west and north, and a journey along the old Silk Road and abandoned historical places.

A work of art as well as culture, the book includes maps of the routes and lively descriptions of villages and cities visited, with plenty of colour photos and background.

*Women of China*, November 2008

