



# Australia-China Friendship Society

Victorian Branch (Inc).ABN 39 746 574 225

## NEWSLETTER

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### President's Report

With the Australian Federal election looming, we should remind ourselves of the positions of the two major political parties as regards China. The incumbent Labor party, in the aftermath of the launching of the recent "White Paper" on foreign affairs, has welcomed the U.S. to establish what can only be described as a foreign military base in the Northern Territory. The permanent stationing of 2,500 (so far) U.S. marines at Darwin is seen as Australia's contribution to the U.S. "pivot" in Asia and the Pacific.

Over the past week there have been media reports of U.S. plans to establish a special naval taskforce to support these marines in a provocative statement of Washington's commitment to the "ongoing military presence in Australia and the Pacific". The Coalition's policy is to fully support what it calls Australia's "enhanced defence co-operation" with the U.S. in our region.

At least in relation to foreign policy there appears to be no difference. The noted British historian Antony Beevor, in describing the 2 main political parties in Spain in the early 1930's said this:

*"Although there may be vicious rivalry between liberals and conservatives, there was virtually a gentleman's agreement between their leaders. Whenever there was an unpopular measure to carry out, the conservatives retired and the liberals, who had now become almost indistinguishable from their opponents, came in. The two parties resembled those little wooden men who appear alternatively to indicate the weather."*

The increased militarisation of our region by the U.S. and our country's support for this is unequivocally aimed at one target – China.

In 1952 the ACFS was founded in the circumstances of the Chinese people finally defeating foreign imperialism and internal reaction. Our Society is very proud of the contribution we have made to improving relations between the people of Australia and China and we fully support an independent foreign policy that is conducive to security and stability in our region.

Unfortunately neither major political party in this country appears to share these views. We live in dangerous times.

### New Chinese Consul-General Mr SONG Yumin

Mr SONG Yumin was appointed Consul-General of the People's Republic of China in Melbourne in July 2013. Prior to this posting, Mr. SONG was Deputy Director-General of the Department for Diplomatic Missions Abroad, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China.



Mr. SONG was posted to Japan as Second Secretary of Chinese Embassy in Tokyo from 1996 to 2000. He was Deputy Consul-General of the Chinese Consulate-General in Mumbai, India from 2003 to 2005 and Counsellor of the Chinese Embassy in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago from 2005 to 2007. The ACFS welcomes his appointment and looks forward to a long and rewarding relationship.

John Breheny

## ACFS Winter Hot Pot Lunch

Of Winter Hotpot and Chinese Opera

On 14 July 2013, the ACFS held a Winter Hot Pot lunch at No. 1 Steamboat Restaurant to chase away winter chills. The timing for a hot pot lunch was apt as Melbourne weather dipped in July, with a reading of only 17 degree that Sunday. Approximately 20 guests arrived rugged up for a sumptuous luncheon derived from two mouthwatering tom-yam and chicken soup stews. As the hotpots slowly came to a boil, the special guest speaker - Clarissa Belanti - regaled the audience with delightful and oft-times humorous anecdotes of her travels and study in China. Clarissa is soon to take up studies at the Conservatory of Music in Beijing.

She first visited China as a school leaver and was suitably culture-shocked by the fast-paced and loud behaviour of the Chinese at that time. Subsequently she visited China again after mastering Mandarin and was more mentally prepared for her visit to a different China which had by then, opened her doors to more foreigners and was receptive to Western influences.

Since that time, Clarissa has moved on to

studies at the Conservatory and made good friends in Beijing who gave her a Chinese name as a form of induction. Clarissa was so well-adjusted in China that she performed on China's largest national television network – CCTV, for the popular New Year 2013 countdown. Clarissa performed her operas and rubbed shoulders with top Chinese performers and the famous Canadian singer, Celine Dion at the highly-watched event.

In April 2013, Clarissa also performed for the then-Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, who led an Australian government delegation to China. Her performance was warmly received by the audience and also led to tears for some Chinese, touched by her rendition of a Chinese classic song.

ACFS members in Melbourne too were treated to Clarissa's talent when she sang an operatic version of a perennial favourite Chinese song – Jasmine Flower. It was a heart-warming performance with perfect diction and technique, so much so one could forget Clarissa is a bubbly Melbournian with Italian roots! Everyone present enjoyed her performance which was a special bonus to her presentation.

The luncheon continued with generous servings of meat, sea-food and vegetables accompanied by good conversation and exchanges among guests. It was an enjoyable afternoon that left everyone with their hearts full and their hunger filled.



Promoting Friendship and Understanding Between the Australian and Chinese People

## *Live to ride, Ride to live.*

By Kate Francis

I moved to Nanjing, capital of Jiangsu province almost 12 months ago. I'll start by saying I'm not a hard core, lycra clad cyclist, I'm just somebody who loves to ride. I arrived in Nanjing to an incredibly hot, humid August from a cold Melbourne winter.

I was moving to live with my partner – a fellow bike rider (and my always reliable bike mechanic). The day after arriving, I found myself on a ride to Purple Mountain (紫金山, Zǐjīnshān); I was drenched in sweat and simply dragging the pedals. I assume

and across Xuanwu lake (玄武湖). It also has Dr Sun Yat Sen's mausoleum (中山陵), Linggu Temple (灵谷寺和灵谷塔) and the Ming Tombs scenic area (明孝陵).

Despite getting straight on the bike, there was then a large hiatus before I rode by myself on the roads. I was scared – the roads looked chaotic, maps aren't to scale and my sense of direction is woeful (even after 12 months I easily get lost in Nanjing). I was struggling with the move to China, the sense of loss of identity that comes with feeling like I was just trailing my partner (despite the fact I was still working remotely two days a week in my same profession).

The frustration of being dependent on a driver



This is the standard welcome when you move halfway around the world to be with somebody!? After that experience, I still have not attempted the ride to the top again, but I have spent much time riding through this wonderful lush mountain of trees, greenery and the sound of insects and birds – a great break from the traffic and concrete of downtown Nanjing. On the mountain bike tracks deer have even been spotted.

Purple Mountain affords views back to the city

(first world problem!), and feeling trapped in my apartment was not helping. I'm not sure what triggered it, but I realised it was time to get back on the bike. It was one of the best decisions I have made here. Timid and slow to start with, it quickly gave way to a new level of confidence that comes with learning about my local area, then the city, then the roads to visit my friends. I felt the independence of being able to 'get up and go'; I got to see new areas that cars on

expressways don't see; and I got to feel like me again – Kate the bike rider.

To anybody becoming an expat, there are many challenges, but one piece of advice – don't forget the things you love to do – and keep doing them – it keeps you happy in often challenging times!

I remember the first time I appeared on my bike at the weekly mahjong session (the wonderfully helpful Nanjing International Club have organised a weekly group I attend), and the response I got. However, I still get the same query "Did you ride?" with a look/ tone of 'are you crazy?' every time I turn up – which is probably a reflection on the growing number of expats, not some type of Nanjing-based, short-term amnesia. I say "Yes, it's great fun" and try to convince the sceptical faces.

One of the main points to emphasise is it is safe, very safe. People find it hard to believe, but compared to Melbourne, the speeds are slower and most importantly, other road users are used to cyclists and are often cyclists themselves too. They respect us on two wheels and know how to drive accordingly. There is often the use of horn – not in an aggressive way, but just to alert you that a car is passing. Sure, they don't use indicators, but if they're slowing and veering towards your side of the road, you can guess it's to park, or make a turn, and you simply navigate your way around. Simply worry about what people are doing in front of you – move in a predictable manner and (generally) all is fine.

Another reason I smile when I talk about riding is the little daily events you get to notice – people selling fruit, home wares, ducks and all sorts of things; watching the train with its sleeper carriages go by at the manned level crossings (and racing to be the first through when the gates get pulled back); the small brown poodles in the front basket of your fellow riders bike (or the massive Labrador with its tail hanging off the electric motor scooter and dragging along the road); seeing the new trees being planted, new buildings being built, new roads, new shops; and not to mention the benefits of keeping fit and doing your bit for the environment. I cannot count the times I wished I had a camera or stopped

and used my phone to try and capture a moment. (My worst injuries came from falling into bushes while trying to get the phone out to take a picture of a passing event.)

Sure, it's not always smooth sailing; there are some things you want to look out for, or avoid.

Remember, you steer where you look, so when other bike lane users stare at you for wearing a helmet, be prepared to drift further away. The fellow bike user on the mobile phone is also an unpredictable road user and be aware of riders who smoke, flicking a cigarette butt. Don't get frustrated with people coming down the wrong side of the road (you even see the police doing this), it's actually good inspiration to make the most efficient trip you can (do try to change to the correct side of the road when you get a chance). Unfortunately I cause confusion, being



from Oz - when people come towards me I always seem to avoid them by 'keeping left', which is often exactly where they are heading!

The biggest threat to actively avoid would be the numerous water trucks. They cruise the streets making futile attempts to flush dirt from the road surface using high-pressure sprays of water. Thankfully they play music to give you a warning of their presence. When you hear the music you know you have to come up with a strategy not to get coated in water, which hopefully wasn't from the Huangpu river (where 1000 dead pigs were retrieved recently). Not only do you have to avoid the spray, you then have to try and avoid coating yourself and your bike in the freshly made mud now covering the road.

If the streets still seem too much, you can also go to quieter places and be a bit of a tourist! One trip I took was to Jiangxin Zhou (江心洲) – an island in the middle of the mighty Yangtze River with few cars, known for its grapes. We arrived on a ferry and did a half lap of the island before stopping for lunch and buying grapes. The grapes were still in their bunches on the vines. You could wander along and taste, before deciding on your preferred bunch, then they were weighed, paid for and ready to be enjoyed.

Sadly, a return visit allowed me to witness firsthand how fast things move in China. The island had been ripped to pieces and huge apartment buildings were popping up. Most of the vines were gone and those that remained were a scraggly mess. On a trip to the area around SheShan Reservoir (佘山) I got to see a small country town very different to Nanjing. There were water buffalo used for ploughing, wallowing on the outskirts of town. On the main road in, freshly harvested rice was being dried. The town had lovely brick buildings, but the aesthesis I see will count for little, as I'm sure they will soon be replaced by concrete dwellings. The impact of the pollution is another query I'm often bombarded with. Yes, I am concerned. I recently was riding home at night and looking through the beam of my friends front light, I could not understand what was happening – there seemed to be rain, but I wasn't getting wet. It genuinely took me a minute to understand the 'rain' I was seeing through the headlight was simply air pollution. I use a buff (brand of mask-Ed.) to cover my mouth and nose and try to avoid over-working my lungs when the air is particularly bad. You can also use proper filter masks too. My advice is to buy what you need to make you feel safer and enable you to get out and ride. If you get one, just make sure you get something that allows

you to breath comfortably.

More recently, the confidence and familiarity of riding in city traffic of Nanjing encouraged me to use the wonderful bike share in Hangzhou (杭州) to discover the city and lake. I've also taken my bike to Nei Mou (内蒙古) and took part in the 2013 Genghis Kahn MTB event.

You don't need to spend a lot of money to get a bike here in Nanjing – less money spent, the less likely it is to go missing. Invest in a helmet from a quality bike shop - accidents do happen. For those coming back to Australia, think carefully about the type of electric bike you might purchase as the rules at home are very restrictive.

I really encourage people visiting China / moving to China getting out on a bike and see what's around them – it will always surprise.

## **Bo Xilai stands trial for bribery, embezzlement, abuse of power**

JINAN, Aug. 22 (extract-Xinhua) The trial of Bo Xilai, former Communist Party of China (CPC) chief of Chongqing Municipal Committee, opened Thursday morning at Jinan Intermediate People's Court in east China's Shandong Province. Bo faces charges of taking bribes, embezzlement and abuse of power.

According to the indictment, it is alleged that from 1999 to 2012, Bo was asked by Tang Xiaolin, general manager of Dalian International Development Co. Ltd and Xu Ming, chairman of Dalian Shide Group Co. Ltd to help obtain preferential quotas to import cars and work on petrochemical projects. Bo allegedly took advantage of his posts as Mayor of Dalian, Secretary of CPC Dalian committee, Governor of Liaoning Province and Minister of Commerce to do so. In return, it is further alleged Bo accepted bribes worth 21.8 million yuan (US\$3.5 million) from Tang and Xu directly, or through his wife Bogu Kailai and son Bo Guagua.

Bo denies the charge of bribery.

The trial, which opened at 8:43 a.m. on Thursday, was attended by relatives of Bo, lawmakers and political advisors, as well as journalists.

An official microblog account of the court updated the proceedings. During the adjournments in the morning and afternoon, a spokesman for the court briefed the media on the proceedings.

(At the time of writing, this was current, but the trial is due to conclude on Wednesday 27 August. Ed.)

from: <http://www.news.cn>

## THE AUSTRALIA-CHINA FRIENDSHIP SOCIETY'S AIMS

Cultivate friendly relations with the people of China by fostering the study of China's history, language, culture, social and political structure.

Promote mutual understanding through friendly exchanges between the people of China and Australia. Strengthening ties with travel, the exchange of ideas, information and trade between the two countries.

To seek to clarify misunderstandings between the peoples of China and Australia, which may arise from the misrepresentation of information.

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