

CHINESE CULTURAL GROUP MERTON

SPRING 2013 ISSUE

February 2013



蛇



Welcome to our Spring 2013 newsletter which brings among other things, a new editor taking over from Lee Monczakowski who has done an excellent job in publishing the newsletters for the past four years, the forthcoming celebration of the Chinese Spring Festival which marks the end of the winter season, an invitation to the Chinese New Year banquet on 19th February, a reminder to renew your subscription with the CCGM on 1st April, a fabulous recipe, Paul Hider's view on Christmas and babies following the news of the Royal pregnancy, a Word from the Chairman, British New Year traditions and Chinese poetry.

The forthcoming programme is packed full of activities, including the AGM in June, a chance to let your hair down on a day trip to the Royal Pavilion in Brighton in July and try out some of the Chinese food served at the other festivals. Having finished his talks on the History of China last year, Eugene Byrne will conduct a series of talks on Chinese poetry and literature.

Word from the Chairman-Eugene Byrne

There have been some changes in our committee membership since the last newsletter.

First, Maggie Woo has had to cut down on her many commitments and has decided to retire from the committee. Maggie was one of the founders of our Group's activity and its formation and from the beginning has been a leader in our activities, full of energy, drive, ideas and inspiration, so naturally we shall miss her greatly. Nevertheless, she will still be around to help with ideas and comments, and that will continue to be of great value to us.

Lee Monczakowski, for similar reasons, has had to give up the editorship of this Newsletter which she has made into such an attractive production. We are very grateful for all that she has done.

Helen Marti has kindly volunteered to carry this on for us: this is not an easy job as it is always difficult to get readers to contribute articles which might be of interest. So I do most strongly ask all members to let Helen have items, comments, news about China, personal experiences, that will make her task possible.

Meanwhile we have been able to co-opt Sissi Wong and Christine Evans on to the Committee. Sissi, from Hong Kong, is also a Mandarin speaker and Christine has had useful experience in the mainland and has useful contributions to make.

I do hope that more members will find time to join us on a Tuesday to enjoy the programme that we have put together for the New Year, and best wishes to all.

Inside this issue

| | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Paul Hider-Christmas & Babies | 2 |
| Chinese Year of the Snake | 3 |
| Ginger Milk Curd Recipe | 4 |
| BFI Southbank Film Events | 4 |
| British New Year Traditions | 5 |
| Poem by Li Bai | 5 |
| Our Talk Programme | 6 |
| Confucius Quotes | 6 |
| Poem by Meng Jiao | 6 |
| Forthcoming CCGM Programme | 7 |
| Royal Pavilion, Brighton | 8 |
| Poem by Du Mu | 8 |



Paul Hider 海德

**Life in China
Article #6**

For Paul's news see:

www.paulinchina.info

Christmas and Babies

Babies have been on my mind recently. Not so much baby Jesus though – signs of Christmas here in Kunming, SW China, are rarely seen outside a few western-owned department stores, and any Yuletide focus in China is on shopping and Father Christmas, rather than the religious origins. One of my students asked me “Who do you love more – Santa or Jesus?” To many of them, the whole mythology is a bit of a muddle. No, my baby thoughts started when my Chinese wife, Jiajia, fell pregnant 6 months ago. Neither of us is that young, so the prospect of being parents was a surprise, albeit a delightful one. If I was to sum up the pregnancy period so far in two words though, they would be “sickness” and “hospitals”.



Well, China doesn't have a system of clinics or visiting midwives, so all of our medical advice and testing has had to be done through huge hospitals, where the pregnant have to share crowded rooms with the diseased and dying! We chose the top hospital in Kunming, despite it being 40-minute drive across the city, as a friend of a friend of ours gave us an introduction to her friend – the top paediatrician there. After giving a rather expensive “early Christmas present” to our new doctor friend, we now find we can skip certain queues and get fast access to professional help. That's often how “business” is done here. Despite that, we seem to

spend ages in the hospital queuing for doctors, tests, scans, results, prescriptions, medications, etc. Last week alone we were there for over 18 hours, spread over 4 days. Thankfully the various tests have come back positive, and we look forward to the birth of our son in April with ever more confidence. In China, parents are not allowed to be told the sex of their child, in an attempt to try and avoid the country's shocking levels of female infanticide. But we have a friend of a friend of a friend....



The language school where I work has, this year, put together the best Christmas decorations I've seen in the 6 years I've worked there. As well as the usual tinsel, large soft toys and bells, we have bought a nicely lit tree, hung student-made craft angels and devoted one room to be a Santa's grotto. Teachers are busy preparing Christmas games and activities to play with their students over the Christmas weekend. And my British boss is inviting the foreign teachers to his large house for a traditional roast turkey meal with all the trimmings. Maybe this will be a Merry Christmas after all.

Very best wishes to you all. Here's to a 2013 with a minimum of crying, screaming and nappies!

Chinese Year of the Snake

By Maggie Woo

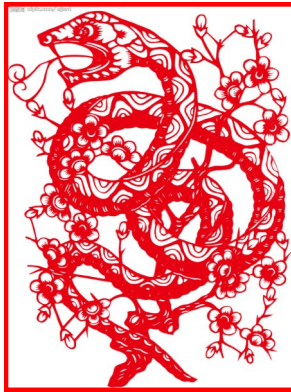
No sooner have we welcomed in 2013 than the minds of those of us whose roots are from Southeast Asia have already turned to the bigger event of Chinese New Year. We still fondly observe the festivities and customs in the lunar calendar.

The Water Snake is going to take over from the Wood Dragon from 10th February. In Chinese Astrology there are 5 elements: metal, wood, water, fire and earth. The next cycle is the water cycle.

Snake is the sixth sign of the Chinese zodiac. The snake sign contains mainly fire, yet, it is classed as a 'yin' i.e. female. Fire and water are opposite elements. Water is the destroyer of fire, so astrologists are predicting that 2013 will be a cycle of destruction and conflict. There will be international struggle, uprising and even revolutions. Luckily, yin water is like morning dew, moderate, gentle and flexible. If the energy is guided in positive directions, it could bring intelligent and innovative ideas and reforms.

The Snake is a travelling star, and water is an element of transport and communication. The Water Snake will trigger more travelling, but will also bring more accidents in air, land and sea.

The snake is regarded as cunning, quite intelligent



and wise. People born under the sign are great mediators, and have a good business mind. They are easily stressed, and need calm and quiet to thrive and succeed. The Water Snakes are influential and insightful. They are quite motivated and intellectual, very determined and resolute about success. They will have what they desire despite the outcome.

They yearn to be recognised by their efforts and to be rewarded well. They are affectionate with their families and friends but not with colleagues or business partners. They often appear as modest and gentle and accommodating. At time of confrontation they prefer not to argue, but do their own thing in secret. Hence they can be hard to fathom.

For people in general, they will experience a mixture of good and bad luck this coming year.

According to Feng Shui Practitioner Raymond Lo, the Water Snake Year, with water on top and fire below, symbolises optimism and enthusiasm for new innovations and progress. There is still conflict and disharmony in international relationships, but any clashes are less violent. Also there will be natural disasters such as tornadoes and hurricanes. Also, some fire disasters and nuclear issues and disease epidemics still prevail. 2013 is a year for implementing new policies and new phases in countries with new leadership.

Chinese New Year Banquet 2013

農曆新年庆祝午宴



We are celebrating the Year of the Snake with a ten-course Chinese banquet at Man's Chinese Restaurant, 92-96 Coombe Lane, London SW20 0AY on 19th February at 12.30 p.m. for 1.00 p.m. Tickets are available from Ivy Salvage, our Treasurer at £13.00 for members and £18.00 for non-members. If you are interested, please complete the attached booking form and return to Ivy with the fee by 12th February.

Ginger Milk Curd 姜汁撞奶

By Sissi Wong

It was such a long time ago in summer when I went on an excursion bus trip from Hong Kong to Canton with a group of young friends. I still remember vividly, it was in rural country-side near Panyu where I first witnessed this well-known dessert being made in front of my very eyes.

A slim young girl demonstrated and served us this delicate and magical dessert. She used a bamboo ginger grater to extract the fresh ginger juice and divided the juice into simple white porcelain bowls. She then deftly poured the hot milk, holding the pan very high, into each bowl without spilling a drop. The milk had been cooked on a small stove next to the bench and then cooled in the pan on the ground.



The taste was heavenly, silky and delicate. The girl emphasised that buffalo milk was a prerequisite in the recipe.

Being young and naïve, I left it unquestioned and only ate them in restaurants or dessert houses.

Many years later, my sister very

excitedly told me that we could make it using just ordinary milk. It was a summer day again, this time in London using British milk, but it worked.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ginger_milk_curd

Ginger contains protease. When milk is added to ginger juice, the protease catalyses denaturation of the protein in the milk, changing it from a water-soluble form to a water-insoluble form, and leads to the formation of milk curd.

Ginger juice crashed with milk 姜汁撞奶

Ingredients:

1 tablespoonful of freshly-squeezed ginger juice (please use the mature ginger)

150ml full-fat milk

No sugar or sweetening used in original recipe but you may add in the sugar after the milk has been boiled.

Cooking method:

1. Put the ginger juice in a china bowl
2. Cook the milk in a pan until it starts to boil. Remove the pan from the heat (add the sugar if used, and stir until dissolved). Leave it to cool at the right temperature, which is about 85° Celsius (185° Fahrenheit).
3. Pour the milk in the bowl. Watch it until it curdles, it takes few minutes.

There will be 3 Chinese films showing at the BFI Southbank to coincide with the Chinese New Year. Booking starts on 15th January at BFI Southbank:

<https://whatson.bfi.org.uk/Online/default.asp>

| | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| She, a Chinese | 9th February at 2.00 p.m. |
| Opium War | 10th February at 3.15 p.m. |
| Ping Pong: Seniors' Free Matinee | 11th February at 2.00 p.m. |

Membership Renewal Reminder

We would like to remind you our annual membership fee is due on 1st April.

Please complete and return the attached renewal application form with the fee to Ivy Salvage, our treasurer.

Any queries please call Helen Marti (Tues/Thurs) on 020 8946 0735.

British New Year Traditions

By Christine Evans

Britain celebrates New Year on 1 January, the first date of the first month of the Georgian calendar. On New Year's Eve many people hold parties in their homes or to go out to a meal. Thousands of people go to town centres and many towns and cities hold firework displays at midnight. The most famous of these is the



Vikings light their torches ahead of Edinburgh's annual torchlight ceremony, announcing the start of Hogmanay

display in London followed by Edinburgh's world-famous Hogmanay celebrations. The iconic view of Big Ben is shown on national TV and fireworks begin as soon as the midnight chimes end. People all over Britain cross arms and link hands with everyone close by and sing Auld Lang Syne which roughly translated from an old Scottish dialect means "times gone by". Auld Lang Syne is an old Scottish song first written down in 1700s by Robert Burns.

Another general tradition is to make New Year resolutions such as giving up smoking, dieting, doing more exercise or helping other people more. Not too sure how long these last!!

In England, there is a tradition of the opening the back door of the house as soon as the church bells are rung at midnight which signifies saying farewell to the old year.

Tens of thousands of people would take to the streets of Edinburgh for the Scottish capital's world-famous Hogmanay celebrations with a spectacular firework display from the castle ramparts. First footing, much more common in Scotland and Northern Ireland, involves a dark haired man (young and good looking) entering the house through the front door carrying salt (money), coal (warmth) and

bread (food). This is said to bring good luck. A blonde, a redhead or a woman are not welcome as they are considered to bring bad luck into the house.

New Year's Day in Wales is called "Dydd Calan". Calennig is the Welsh tradition of a New Year's gift which is given to friends and family on New Year's Day to bring them luck. It is an apple with 3 twig legs with dried fruit, cloves and a spray of evergreens stuck in the top of the apple. Placing a calennig on the window sill or shelf brings good luck to the house. The English word *calendar* also has its roots in this word.

New Year's Day only became a public holiday in England, Wales and Northern Ireland in 1974. Previously we all had to go to work on 1st January. I remember it well!! It was always a holiday in Scotland.



Li Bai

By Alex Roney

Eugene Byrne recently gave the group an excellent talk about Li Bai the Chinese poet who lived from AD701-762. He grew up in Sichuan province, and had a colourful life. He was appointed to the Hanlin Academy by Emperor Zuanzong, expelled from court, tried for treason, and pardoned. He was married four times, and was inclined to drink too much which frequently got him into trouble. The

session looked particularly at his four line poem "Night Thoughts". As a tribute to him I have written the following for your enjoyment.

*"Think of Me When You look at the Moon
Contented, I gazed up at the Moon
And the Full Moon smiled.
Now, think of me when you look at the Moon"*

Our Talk Programme

By Eugene Byrne

Last year we completed our examination of Chinese history from the beginning up to 1949, over twenty talks ending with a virtual reality visit to a Harvard University classroom to sit in on a Professor rounding off the conclusions to be drawn from the end of the Republic in 1949. We also deconstructed (to use modern cliché) perhaps the most famous Chinese poem, "Night



Lao She (1899-1966)

Thoughts", by Li Bai. I plan to balance this with a talk on his contemporary but quite different friend Du Fu (AD 712-770). And this year I hope to focus more on modern Chinese writers. Unfortunately these are not widely known: China has no Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky or Solzhenitsyn. But authors such as Lao She and Lu Xun deserve more fame than they receive. I hope that you can come to some of these.

Quotes from Confucius (551–479 BC)

Choose a job you love, and you will never have to work a day in your life.

Ability will never catch up with the demand for it.

Better a diamond with a flaw than a pebble without.

In all things success depends on previous preparation, and without such previous preparation there is sure to be failure.

When it is obvious that the goals cannot be reached, don't adjust the goals, adjust the action steps.

Song of a Travelling Son– Meng Jiao (AD 751-814)

By Sissi Wong

Meng Jiao (Chinese: 孟郊; pinyin: Mèng Jiāo; AD 751–814) was a poet of the Tang Dynasty. Meng was the oldest of the Mid-Tang poets and is noted for the unusual forcefulness and harshness of his poems.

I would like to share one of his popular poems from the famous 300 Tang Poems. This poem reflects the heart of a traveller just like myself. It is about a mother's greatest love and caring for her son and the son's gratitude in his heart. Filial piety is the root of Chinese culture.

Song of a Travelling Son

The thread in the hands of a fond-hearted mother
Makes clothes for the body of her wayward boy;
Carefully she sews and thoroughly she mends,
Dreading the delays that will keep him late from home.
But how much love has the inch-long grass
For three spring months of the light of the sun?

【遊子吟】

唐·孟郊

慈母手中線 遊子身上衣
臨行密密縫 意恐遲遲歸
誰言寸草心 報得三春暉

Although Taiji Qigong Shibashi sessions (practised to music among the members) are still popular, the meetings are attended regularly by a small group of people. We welcome new members who are interested in Chinese culture and the positive health benefits of practising Taiji Qigong Shibashi. On 5th March, the Taiji Qigong Shibashi will be conducted by a trained Qigong teacher, Leonie Tarrant, with a view to running the sessions once a month, apart from the regular Taiji Qigong Shibashi practices. Leonie is a very highly qualified Taiji teacher who has studied under a number of Taiji masters. Everyone is welcome to give it a go and experience the positive benefits of Taiji Qigong Shibashi with roots in ancient Chinese culture dating back more than 4,000 years.

FORTHCOMING CCGM PROGRAMME

All meetings are conducted in English for anyone interested in Chinese culture at the Guild House, 30 – 32 Worpole Road SW19 4EF, on 1st and 3rd Tuesdays and begin at 3.30 p.m. with 45 minutes of Tai Chi Qigong Shibashi exercises followed by a talk or activity. £3.00 per session (Tea & refreshments included)

| Date | Time | Programme | Speaker |
|---|--|---|---------------------------------------|
| 15th January | 3.30-5.30 pm | Taiji Qigong Shibashi Memories of Childhood | Ivy Salvage Eugene Byrne |
| 5th February | 3.30-5.30 pm | Taiji Qigong Shibashi The life of Li Bai's friend, Du Fu, the poet. | Eugene Byrne Alex Roney |
| 19th February- Half term break | 1 pm: Lunch at Man's Chinese Restaurant | Chinese New Year Celebration: The Year of the Snake 農曆新年庆祝午宴 | Sissi Wong Ivy Salvage |
| 5th March | 3.30-5.30 pm | Taiji Qigong Shibashi by Qigong teacher Qigong Taster | Alex Roney Leonie Tarrant |
| 19th March | 3.30-5.30 pm | Taiji Qigong Shibashi The History of Chinese Medicine | Sissi Wong |
| 2nd April- Easter Break | 3.30-5.30 pm | Taiji Qigong Shibashi 清明節 Qing Ming Festival tea party | Sissi Wong |
| 16th April | 3.30-5.30 pm | Taiji Qigong Shibashi by Qigong teacher Chinese Literature | Leonie Tarrant Eugene Byrne |
| 7th May | 3.30-5.30p.m. | Taiji Qigong Shibashi Birthday of Buddha | Sissi Wong |
| 21st May | 3.30-5.30 pm | Taiji Qigong Shibashi by Qigong teacher | Leonie Tarrant |
| 4th June | 3.30-5.30 pm | Annual General Meeting followed by buffet | Eugene Byrne Sissi Wong |
| 18th June | 3.30-5.30 pm | Taiji Qigong Shibashi Dragon Boat Festival party- 端午节 | Sissi Wong |
| 2nd July | 3.30-5.30 pm | Taiji Qigong Shibashi Chinese Literature | Eugene Byrne |
| 16th July | 10 a.m.-Meet at Wimbledon Station | Day trip to Royal Pavilion in Brighton | Alex Roney Christine Evans |

Royal Pavilion visit on 16th July 2013

Built for the Prince Regent, later King George IV, in stages between 1787 and 1823, the Royal Pavilion is remarkable for its exotic oriental appearance both inside and out. This magnificent royal pleasure palace was revered by fashionable Regency society and is still a distinctive landmark for vibrant Brighton & Hove today. The Royal Pavilion is also home to some of the finest collections and examples of the chinoiserie style in Britain. It is often referred to as the Brighton Pavilion.

Come and meet us at Wimbledon Station at 10 a.m. for the train journey on 16th July 2013 to discover

the exotic delights of the royal pleasure palace and enjoy fish and chips lunch in Brighton.



Qing Ming by Du Mu (AD 803–852)

Du Mu was a leading Chinese poet of the late Tang Dynasty. Qing Ming was frequently mentioned in Chinese literature, the most famous example is probably Du Mu's poem entitled "Qing Ming". Qing Ming Festival is a day of remembrance for the dead when people visit the graves of their ancestors to pay respect.

The Qing Ming festival holiday has a significance in the Chinese tea culture since this specific day divides the fresh green teas by their picking dates. Green teas made from leaves picked before this date are given the prestigious 'pre-Qing Ming' (清明前) designation which commands a much higher price tag. These teas are prized for having much lighter and subtler aromas than those picked after the festival.

Come and celebrate our tea party on 2nd April.

Qing Ming

A drizzling rain falls on the Mourning Day;
The mourner's heart is breaking on his way.
Enquiring, where can a wine house be found?
A cowherd points to Apricot Flower (Xing Hua) Village in the distance.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Qing_Ming_Festival

清明

清明時節雨紛紛
路上行人欲斷魂
借問酒家何處有
牧童遙指杏花村

We welcome your contributions and feedback, and would love to hear from you about Chinese culture, history, food and contemporary events. Please email to chineseculturalgroup@gmail.com or contact Helen Marti relating to any queries on Chinese activities.

Check <http://issuu.com/ccgm/docs> for our archive file.

Chinese Cultural Group Merton

**Guild House, 30/32 Worple Road
Wimbledon, London SW19 4EF**

**For more information, please contact
Helen Marti, CCGM secretary
on 0208 946 0735 (Tues/Thurs)**