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ARCHAEOLOGY OF A CHINESE GOLDFIELD SETTLEMENT IN CENTRAL OTAGO

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Background

This paper reports on the excavations carried out by Southern Pacific Archaeological Research (SPAR) in partnership with the Historic Places Trust at the Lawrence Chinese Camp between February 2005 and March 2006. It is a preliminary report, describing the work that took place on the site and the various objectives, ideas and aims that drove it.

The Lawrence Chinese Camp archaeological site (H44/1018) occupies a hectare of low-lying flat farmland on State Highway 8, 1.2 km west of the township of Lawrence (Figure 1). The camp was established during the Otago gold rush of the 1860s. Following the discovery of gold at Gabriel's Gully in 1861 the Tuapeka District experienced a major gold rush that brought miners in from many parts of the world. Soon new discoveries of gold in Central Otago and elsewhere in New Zealand (Salmon 1963; Butler 1977) drew many of the miners away from the Tuapeka goldfields. Concern about the effect on the economy of losing this labour force led to Chinese being invited to work the goldfields by the local business community and the Otago Provincial Council (Hamel 2001: 184). At first they arrived from the Australian goldfields, later they came in directly from China (Young 2003: 4). Although they were initially invited to Otago, in this European dominated landscape Chinese miners were not always welcome. In 1867 the Lawrence Town Council passed a bylaw requiring the Chinese who were at that time camping on Crown Land within the Municipality of Lawrence to take up residence on a section of Crown Land just outside the Municipality (Lawrence Borough Council Minute Book 1867, 17 April). This settlement became known as the Lawrence Chinese Camp.

Archaeology in New Zealand 49(4): 253–274, 2006

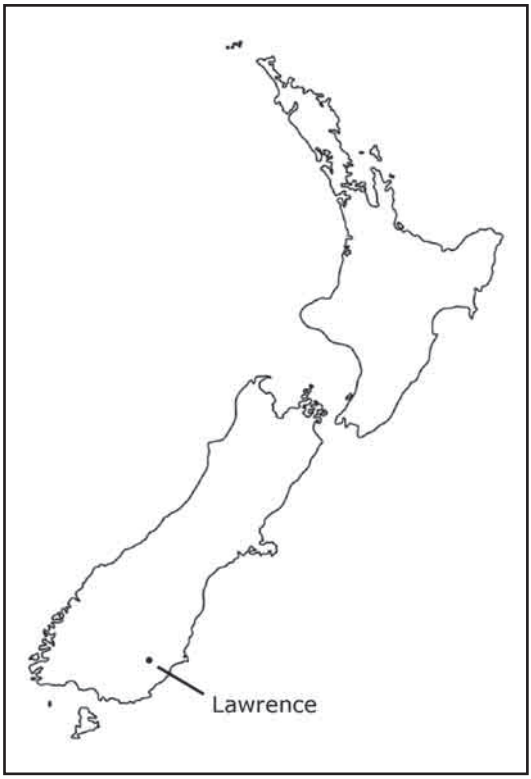

Figure 1. Location of Lawrence.

The term "camp" is misleading. In fact the settlement comprised more than thirty relatively well built structures including a brick hotel and stables. The first Chinese Empire Hotel was built in 1870. It was a large wooden structure which was rebuilt in brick in the 1880s on the same location, where it still stands. The population of the camp peaked in 1871 at 123 residents, enough to sustain six stores, a hotel, a doctor, a butcher, a hairdresser and gambling facilities (Ng 1993: 147). There were also gardens and piggeries. As this data implies, the camp was not occupied by miners, it was a service centre for the Chinese mining community. Another function of the camp was as a place where the Chinese immigrants coming to Otago could establish a temporary base. One of the largest structures at the camp was the Chinese Company immigration barracks.

The camp is fascinating anthropologically. Because of its permanence and diversity of structures and functions, it can be seen as a self contained Chinese village displaced from China. In this sense it is different from the Chinese goldfield sites, such as Cromwell and Arrowtown, which were single function sites: apart from one or two stores, the structures were mainly miners' huts. But there were also some major differences between the camp and other villages. For one thing the basic social unit of this village community was not the family, or extended family group. Since Chinese women were not allowed to emigrate, the camp was at first occupied solely by men. A number of European women later took up residence, some married Chinese men and others engaged in short-term liaisons. But even with a number of women based semi-permanently in the camp, this was never a family based community. Most of the Chinese came as sojourners, their kinship responsibilities lay in China and they were not intending to settle permanently and raise families (Ritchie 1986: 1). There were never many children in the camp and the settlement was not multi-generational as villages generally are. One effect of this was that the population aged with the camp. In the late 1860s the camp was occupied by young and middle aged men. By the twentieth century the average age was much older. These are the types of issue that guided the development of the Lawrence Chinese Camp research plan.

By the beginning of the twentieth century the camp was going into decline and by the 1920s was mainly deserted. The last Chinese resident, Chow Shim, died in 1945, and the Chinese Empire Hotel was converted to a residence. Figure 2 shows the camp, with hotel and stables, in its current state.

Various survey plans and historic photographs have contributed knowledge of the camp. The first survey was carried out in 1882 by the Tuapeka County Council and the names and occupations of people living in many of the buildings were recorded on the survey plan (Figure 3). In 1884 Chinese were allowed to buy land and some of the buildings saw improvements, including the Chinese Empire Hotel. In 1888 a fire destroyed the original joss-house, along with some of the residential buildings and shops on the site. Another survey, presumably dated to the early 1890s shows the post fire alterations.

The work at the Lawrence Chinese Camp continues a long history of research on the archaeology of the Chinese in Otago that began with Ritchie's work in the 1970s (Ritchie 1986; see also Bristow 1994). This work contributes a different perspective by moving out of the goldfields, and looking at a more diverse and complex settlement in its social and historical setting. Archaeological work commenced with a 2003 survey by Peter Petchey. This was to support a nomination for registration under the Historic Places Act. The site is now registered as a Historic Area but is the subject of a proposed

Figure 2. Lawrence Chinese Camp: Chinese Empire Hotel and stable, with excavations of Sam Chew Lain's house in the foreground.

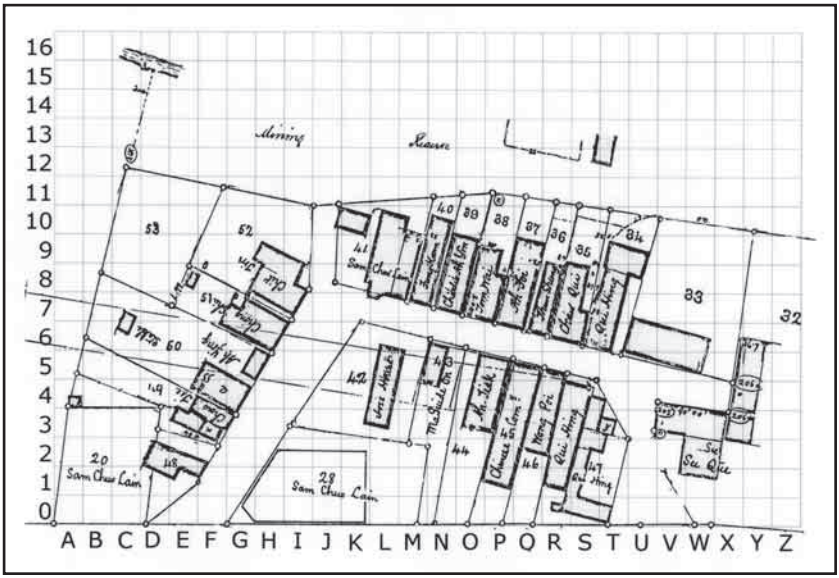

Figure 3. Lawrence Chinese Camp survey plan of 1882 with excavation grid superimposed.

development project. The current work was undertaken as a result of that development proposal.

The site is owned by the Lawrence Chinese Camp Charitable Trust (LCCCT) which was established to manage the site and oversee its development as a New Zealand Chinese heritage centre. The plans include the construction of a museum, as well as reconstruction and restoration of the hotel, stables and some of the original buildings (Lawrence Chinese Camp Concept Plan 2004). In 2005 SPAR was contracted to prepare a conservation plan and to carry out excavations to mitigate site damage and inform site development, interpretation and management. In three field seasons we have excavated 510 m^2.

Project aims

The work was directed by Richard Walter, Chris Jacomb and Rick McGovern-Wilson. The field crew was made up of University of Otago students, NZHPT staff and volunteers. The work had management and research aims and was integrated into the graduate programme at the University of Otago. The aims and objectives are outlined below.

Management Aims

- To identify any archaeological material that might be disturbed during development and to recover information that might otherwise be lost, as required under the Historic Places Act 1993.
- To gather archaeological information to assist in developing a conservation plan and designing a long-term management plan for the site.
- To gather archaeological information to guide in the reconstruction of the hotel and other buildings.

Research Aims

The research aims were designed to allow an examination of the Lawrence Chinese Camp as a displaced, specialised (service, immigration and distribution) community of predominantly Asian men located in a developing European colonial province. These aims included:

- An investigation of the organisation and use of space in the community as an approach to understanding social practice and organisation.
- To develop a comparative picture of material culture with a view to understanding patterns of commercial interaction within and between the Chinese and European economic spheres.
- To build on the study of ethnicity in early New Zealand which was the focus of some of the first University of Otago work in the Chinese goldfields and a topic of ongoing research in the Otago Anthropology Department.

Excavation Phases

To date, three seasons of excavations have been held at the Lawrence Chinese Camp with the third carried out in conjunction with the Anthropology Department fieldschool. A brief summary of each seasons' aims follows.

Season one

The first excavation (February–March 2005) dealt with management issues such as determining the nature and extent of the intact site fabric and the types of recovery strategies that were appropriate. It was also designed to serve the immediate needs of the LCCCT which was relying on the excavation work to support its planning and funding goals. However, the work was also organised so as to lead into and support various research aims.

To address the needs of the LCCCT the first season's work concentrated on land around the hotel that might be affected by development, and for which NZHPT authorities would be required. The hotel and stables lay on a land block once owned by Mr Sam Chew Lain, one of the leaders of the Lawrence Chinese Camp community. This land included the first joss-house as well as his private residence and so we concentrated or work on Sam Chew Lain's property with targeted excavations around the hotel to determine the original building footprint, an areal excavation on the joss-house site, and a larger exposure of Sam Chew Lain's house site. We also excavated a section of road between the joss-house and the private dwelling which would assist in orienting the excavations in relation to historic photos. In theory, the season one work allowed us to explore a range of different types of space: private domestic space (Sam Chew Lain's house), commercial space (the hotel), ritual space (the joss-house), public space (the road and hotel).

Season two

In season two (October–November 2005) we explored a wider diversity of structures. As well as aiding the research objectives this would also assist the LCCCT in understanding the problems and issues involved in building reconstruction. To complement season one's work, we targeted the immigration barracks, and a store owned by Mr Sam Yick Mong. We anticipated that the immigration barracks would be of particular interest as it was occupied by Chinese men coming directly from South China to live in a Chinese community in colonial New Zealand. We also excavated the foundations of the third joss-house.

Season three

In season three (February–March 2006) we started to explore the space around, between and behind the larger structures. In a small, and especially in a village, community many of the activities of life do not take place on the street, or in the houses and shops, but in the spaces behind and adjacent to structures. Furthermore, the houses had wooden floors so the middle of structures yields little in the way of features and material culture. Two structures (a dwelling and a dwelling that may also have contained a store) were targeted and we excavated the back and in-between portions of these structures.

Methods

From a datum close to the State Highway, adjacent to the Chinese Empire Hotel, a grid was laid over the site and labelled at 5 m intervals with letter–number combinations (A1, B1, C1 etc). Thus the site was divided into 5 m squares or 'Areas' each of which was made up of 25 1 x 1 m 'Units.' The Units were labelled with upper-case letters and each Unit could be identified using the Area–Unit designation (Figure 4).

All excavation was by natural layer and, within layers, by arbitrary spits. Excavation was by hand, all depths were taken using optical or electronic survey equipment and referenced in mm from Datum 1 (SE corner of Area G0), as well as by stratigraphic level (Layer–Spit). Information was recorded on level records and in field books. Plans, stratigraphic drawings and digital photos were used at each phase of the excavation. An electronic recording and labelling system running off hand-held PDAs and communicating wirelessly with a field server was used in season three. The software, ExMan, was developed for SPAR by Kognition Software. All recovered material was processed in the Otago Archaeology Laboratories at the University of Otago.

Results

The site is flat and the cultural layer well preserved under a light overburden of mixed humic soils. The preservation conditions are excellent and features show up clearly against the underlying clay soils. There are records of some systematic fossicking at the camp and local traditions of some not-so-systematic but still destructive artefact collecting. We found no signs of fossicking in the areas we worked in, although it seems that one of the main foci of looting may have been close to the stable beyond our area of interest. Below we describe the stratigraphy of the site and then some of the significant excavation results.

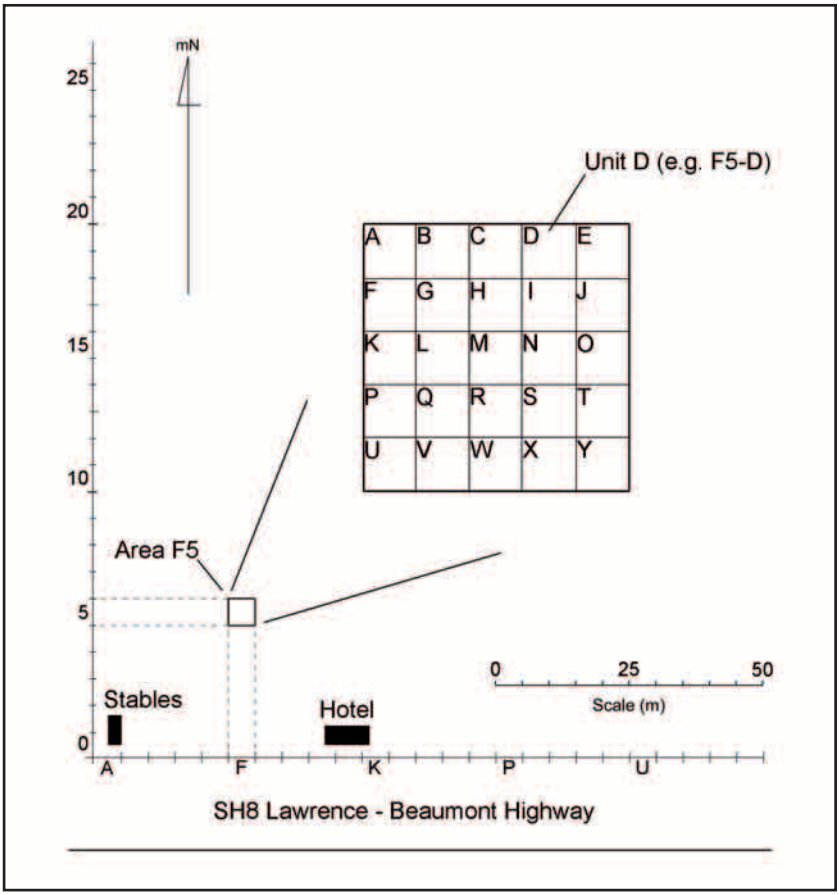

Figure 4. Grid system showing 5 x 5 m areas and the 1 x 1 m units within the areas.

Stratigraphy

The stratigraphy was generally consistent. There was only one cultural layer which spanned about 50 years of occupation and within which various phases of building and reconstruction can be identified. A general stratigraphic section is described as follows:

Layer 1 Dark brown top soil up to 150 mm deep with a turf some 50 mm deep. Layer 1 contains both modern and late nineteenth century material culture immediately below the turf.

Layer 2A Light brown gritty soil with gravel deposited throughout. Similar in colour and texture to Layer 1 but, due to the gravel matrix, it is coarser in texture. The density of the gravel is not continuous over the site and is therefore better described as a lens or series of lenses.

Layer 2B Dark brown clay similar in colour to 2A, but finer and more densely compacted. Layers 2A and 2B constitute the cultural horizon.

Layer 3 Sterile, yellow-brown mottled fine-grained tightly compacted clay.

Road and Drain features

The camp had a main road running east–west with a short dog-leg running south to the highway (Figures 3 and 5). The houses were arranged along either side of the road, which was cambered and with drains along the edge (Figure 5). In season one a short trench was excavated through the road to link the joss house excavation to that of Sam Chew Lain's house. This cross section showed the road construction and the well formed brick lined drains along the side. The road was formed of a densely compacted poorly sorted earth and gravel. We located the brick drains elsewhere on the site and used them to guide the placement of excavation units.

Figure 5. Main road of the Chinese Camp, looking west (early 1900s). Otago Witness 17 May 1911.

Joss-houses

A joss-house is a small community structure where ritual and religious activities take place. It is not a temple and is rarely managed by monks or priests. Joss-houses are usually decorated with Chinese characters depicting proverbs and sayings. The earliest joss-house at the camp had two panels with Chinese characters which are now in the Otago Settlers Museum. One says "People talking and laughing as kinsmen" and the other says "People coming and going are all close friends" (Lawrence Chinese Camp Concept Plan 2004: 18).

The first joss-house was known as the Naam-Shun joss-house and was built in 1869. It was located immediately behind the Empire Hotel and opposite Sam Chew Lain's house. A second joss-house was also located somewhere on the site but we are uncertain where. A third joss-house built around 1900 was located 30 to 40 m to the east of the first. It was relocated to Maryport St in Lawrence in 1947 (Figure 6). During the excavation of the immigration barracks (structure 45 on the 1882 plan (Figure 3), see also Figure 8) stone foundations were uncovered that overlay a charcoal lens and the remains of the barracks. This structure must have been built after the 1888 fire that swept along the south side of the road and destroyed the barracks and several other buildings. We measured the dimensions of the Maryport St house and found that it precisely matched the dimensions of the stone foundations.

The Naam-Shun joss-house site was targeted for excavation because it had been selected by the LCCCT for some type of reconstruction. From a research perspective it was interesting because of its association with Chinese religious and social life. Excavations, however, were only marginally informative as the site has been disturbed by septic tank lines and by kitchen gardening activities carried out after the conversion of the hotel to a dwelling. We recorded a number of square post holes, brick rubble and a mixed Chinese–European material culture.

Residential Structures

We excavated the site of several residential structures including those of Sam Chew Lain, Charlie Ah Yin and Tom Wai. As the wealthiest and most influential resident of the camp Sam Chew Lain's house was the largest on the site. A wide areal excavation exposed most of the house footprint, as well as some work and discard zones behind the building (Figure 7). The house had a wooden floor with bearers supported on brick and stone sitting on bare ground. The house was approached across a culvert at the road frontage and a schist paved veranda area was located directly in front of the front wall (foreground in Figure 7).

Figure 6. The third joss-house at its current location in Maryport St, Lawrence. The chimney and the lean-to structure on the right hand side are modern additions.

Figure 7. Sam Chew Lain's house during excavation.

At the north (back) end of the house a rectangular alignment of bricks with charcoal deposits marks a hearth or fireplace and heat-marked brick fragments suggest the presence of a chimney. This 'kitchen area' contained concentrations of broken condiment bottles, vegetable jars and celadon kitchenware. Something is known of Sam Chew Lain's cooking arrangements through oral tradition. Apparently his Scottish wife could not or would not cook Chinese food so Sam was in the habit of preparing many of his own meals himself.

A few metres north east of the house was a well preserved brick-lined well. This lay within the boundaries of Sam Chew Lain's property (Lot 41, Figure 3) but was probably a major focal point of the settlement. At least two other wells are known to have been present on the site, including one located behind the immigration barracks.

Sam Chew Lain's house was large with at least seven bedrooms – this was confirmed to us by a resident of Lawrence in his 90s who had seen the building. Many gambling tokens and Chinese coins (probably also used in gambling) were found near the front of the residence and the structure was probably used as a cheap lodging house and at times for gambling.

Excavations around the backs and fronts of houses occupied by Charlie Ah Yin and Tom Wai were revealing. As anticipated, the backyards were the site of a range of different types of activity. Areas of burning and rubbish disposal were located, and post-hole alignments suggested the construction of a succession of small structures or sheds. At the back of Charlie Ah Yin's a collection of stake holes are interpreted as evidence of an earlier rudimentary building that was later replaced by a more solid structure. A fire place was found in the back of Tom Wai's house, marked by a collection of charred bricks, a concentration of charcoal and several pieces of fire grate. Kitchen related materials were also found here suggesting some cooking taking place outside the main structure, perhaps in a smaller shed or shelter. This is similar to the situation at Sam Chew Lain's house although there the kitchen seems to have been located in a lean-to structure that may have been added to the back of the house.

A loosely packed, yellow orange and brown gravel mix ran from behind the back of the residential buildings and is thought to be a foot path. At the back of Tom Wai's property three very distinct drain features containing dense, compact, gravelly soil with fragments of charcoal were located. These drains lead to (or from) a concentrated discard area containing many intact artefacts including an unusual terracotta vase, a variety of bottles and metal objects. This feature was found where a wall was thought to be and it

is possible that this material may have accumulated between the walls of two neighbouring houses.

The immigration barracks

The immigration barracks housed the newly arrived Chinese migrants and was another structure identified by the LCCCT for reconstruction. Because of its association with newly arrived men, and the unusual social setting of barrack life, we considered it potentially interesting from a research perspective. Other barracks have been excavated in New Zealand, including the Armed Constabulary barracks at Runanga Stockade (Mitchell 1984), so the potential for comparison was intriguing. As indicated above, the immigration barracks was one of several buildings at the camp that was affected by a large fire in 1888.

We concentrated on defining the ends of the structure because we considered the middle of floored buildings less likely to reveal evidence of activities. To this end, large areas were opened at the north and south end. The excavations to the north (the front of the structure) uncovered the mortared stone foundations of a wall which was first thought to be the front of the immigration barracks. This would have meant some serious problems with our interpretation of the 1882 plan. However, this feature later turned out to be the third joss-house foundations and the front of the immigration barracks was located next to the road and drain (Figure 8). A thin but well defined charcoal lens marks the passage of the 1888 fire. A 500 mm wide trench was excavated down the west side of the building through to the back of the immigration barracks to link the excavation units. This showed that the west wall of the structure had a brick foundation. Towards the back of the immigration barracks a pile of rubble had accumulated, probably initially as part of the post-fire clearance. This rubble contained a quantity of intact bottles and ceramic jars. There was a well at the back of the immigration barracks, lined with bricks and situated on a concrete foundation.

Material culture

Nearly 3000 bags of artefacts and bone were removed from the site for further analysis. So far about a third of this material has been washed and analysed. This early work has informed the development of a set of sampling, discard and retention protocols which we will use during the next phase of laboratory processing. Some of the students involved in the 2006 archaeological fieldschool at the camp have written reports or dissertations on the material culture and more specialised work is in progress. Here we describe the range of material present, some observations on context and distribution, and some of the ideas that we are developing as the analytical work progresses.

Figure 8. The front (north) of the immigration barracks. The brick structure in the foreground is the drain feature along the side of the road. The stone walling in the background is the original foundations of the third (Maryport St) joss-house.

Glass

Glass is one of the most numerous archaeological materials uncovered at the Lawrence Chinese Camp (second only to metal) and Ritchie (1986:157) noted that this is also true for other Chinese sites in central Otago. Identifying and interpreting glass, and particularly bottle, assemblages is always problematic given the potential for reuse and the problems of quantification. We can offer a few quick observations which are worth fuller investigation.

Of the thousands of fragments of glass we have seen to date only two or three fragments of window glass has been recorded. We know some of the houses had glass windows (see Figure 5) but they may not have been common, and they may not have been replaced regularly once broken. If this is true it is unlikely to relate to cost – the camp community was not particularly poor.

Alcohol bottles were common, but they were found in higher densities in a small number of places, including in the vicinity of the immigration bar-

racks. The ratios of European to Chinese alcohol containers has not been investigated yet, but this could open up interesting questions. There seem to be a very wide variety of bottles that were probably used (at least originally) for pickles, sauces and jams. Patent medicine bottles are common and there is an interesting range of Chinese and European varieties. At least some of the most common Chinese medicine bottles from the camp are found in Chinese sites throughout the country, and elsewhere in the world for that matter (Figure 9). Yet these same containers are extremely rare in non-Chinese sites. It is possible that Chinese in Central Otago, while retaining a strong demand for Chinese patent medicines, were more likely to adopt European patent medicines than vice versa.

Figure 9. Chinese medicine bottles. These are sometimes referred to as opium bottles, but while they may have contained an opium based medicine, they did not contain opium for smoking.

Ceramics

The ceramics consisted of a wide range of European and Chinese wares. The most notable Chinese variety is "celadon ware" a term referring to domestic porcelain with a light green glaze (Ritchie 1986: 206). Celadon ceramics are linked to various aspects of food use, including transport, storage, preparation and consumption. Forms of celadon ware uncovered at the camp include bowls, tea and wine cups and spoons. No doubt there are also non-celadon Chinese ceramics in the Lawrence assemblage, and further laboratory analysis will enable a better understanding of this. The European ceramics also include table ware such as cups, mugs, saucers, plates, food jars and lids, ointment pots, as well as building bricks and drainage pipes.

Metal

Metal is the most abundant material uncovered from Lawrence and comprises a variety of artefacts including building materials, metal boxes and tin containers and coins (see below). An analysis of domestic metals can give an indication of what types of consumption was taking place at Lawrence: such items as opium, tobacco, baking powder, coffee, chicory, etc., are noted in this regard. Corrugated iron and large pieces of building material, along with tools and nails, were also uncovered and these should provide some information on construction practices. An oven door was uncovered at Sam Chew Lain's house among the charcoal and brick rubble at the north end of the building.

Opium Paraphernalia

Many of the newspaper and historic accounts of the day refer to opium smoking at the Lawrence Chinese Camp. In fact, opium smoking was fairly common in the Chinese goldfields and opium paraphernalia is not uncommon in the archaeological sites. This can consist of items such as opium tins, heating lamps, bamboo pipe stems with a connecting saddle, pipe bowls, needles, scissors and knives (Ritchie 1986: 360). Opium paraphernalia uncovered at Lawrence was limited. One extremely well preserved ceramic pipe bowl was recovered from the front area of the immigration barracks (Figure 10) and numerous fragments of the thin red pottery of these pipe bowls was found elsewhere on the site. Several archaeological and historic reports are available about opium smoking and paraphernalia (e.g., Ritchie 1986: 360; Wylie and Fike 1993: 253–259; Zheng 2003), and the archaeological evidence strongly reinforces historical observations that the practice of opium smoking was widespread amongst the Chinese at Lawrence.

Figure 10. Ceramic bowl of opium-smoking pipe.

Other Artefact types

Other artefact types not mentioned above include cooking utensils and household artefacts, buttons, fabric, footwear, gambling tokens along with Chinese and European coins. Items notable by their absence include ink stones and writing brushes or nibs but further excavations might reveal more evidence for the use of written communication.

Artefacts of particular interest include the glass gambling tokens (shown in Figure 11) and round Chinese coins with square holes in the centre (Figure 12). About 400 coins have been found so far and only a small handful were not Chinese – we found one Lebanese coin and a few New Zealand and British coins. One interesting find from the front of the immigration barracks was the two sides (heads) of a double headed coin, presumably used in the risky practice of cheating. We say risky because the only shooting we know of at the camp was related to gambling (and to a woman who liked successful gamblers, but only while their luck held).

It was suggested by Ritchie (1986) that the high number of Chinese coins found on Chinese Gold mining sites in Otago is an indication that they

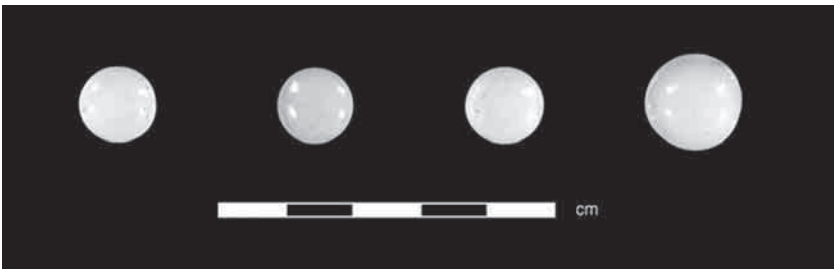

Figure 11. Glass gambling tokens.

Figure 12. Chinese coins.

maintained very little value in this country, and were used as gambling tokens rather than currency. Ritchie's suggestion certainly holds for the camp, where they were concentrated where glass gambling tokens were also found. Logan Coote has looked at the coins as part of his university course work and notes that they nearly all date to about the mid–17th to early–18th centuries (Coote 2006).

The glass gambling tokens would have been used in fan tan, a common Chinese gambling game that is still practiced. The south east corner of Sam Chew Lain's house contained an unusually large assemblage of Chinese coins and gambling tokens together, indicating the possibility of a gaming room in the house.

Faunal Remains

Only a small quantity of animal bone was found. Records note a butchery and piggery and we know from historic accounts that pork featured strongly in New Year and other celebrations. According to historic records Chinese miners may have had higher food costs than Europeans since they relied on rice and pork, which cost more than the bread, potatoes, mutton and beef of the European miners (Ng 1995: 36). For the Chinese at Lawrence, surrounded by a growing, and increasingly hostile, European community, keeping their traditional diet (despite the expense) may have been an important aspect of maintaining their connection roots (see Diehl, Waters and Thiel 1998). Not many bird bones were recovered, although we were expecting to find poultry and duck. We found more fishbone than we expected but so far no diagnostic fragments.

Discussion

The three season's work reported on here have achieved a number of the goals set out at the commencement of the programme. In other areas the analysis and research is ongoing and on track. Some of the original research questions have been abandoned as a more comprehensive understanding of the history and archaeology is achieved, and in other areas new research trajectories are emerging.

The management aims and statutory-based archaeology associated with the short term goals of the LCCCT have been satisfied. A conservation plan has been written and the LCCCT is now looking to commence work on phase one of the camp development as soon as practicable. The Lawrence community has bought into the project and SPAR have designed and installed a new display on the camp excavations at the Lawrence Museum.

The research interests of the directors centre around questions of social history. In particular we are interested in the social, economic and cultural dynamics of this community within the wider context of the developing province of Otago. Stated that way these aims might seem ambitious, but after three seasons at Lawrence we do not believe they are unrealistic. There are two dimensions to our approach. The first is to draw on the rich and diverse historical record that is available to compliment the archaeological resource.

This includes the written and pictorial archives as well as the oral histories and traditions of both Chinese and non-Chinese. Critically treated, this material forms the basis for a rich social history of the camp community within the Otago provincial landscape. The second is to use a spatial archaeology method and theory in the excavation and subsequent treatment of the archaeological record. In brief this builds on the idea that social life is patterned at a variety of scales and that these patterns are discernable in the archaeological landscape if it is examined using appropriate method and theory. Now that the immediate contractual obligations have been met the next phase of the Lawrence work is to complete the laboratory work and to develop these research directions.

Work at Lawrence is greatly facilitated by the presence of site plans and maps which told us where to dig, and who occupied the structures. But the plans also reinforce, to some extent, an existing tendency for the camp to be imagined as some sort of static historical entity: an odd phenomenon that existed for a while, then faded away. The archaeology shows instead that this was a dynamic settlement that in its brief 50 years underwent a multitude of changes and restructuring. The official account, and the formal plans with their surveyed sections and names of title holders, also implies an unrealistic level of formality and organisation to the settlement. The archaeology, and indeed some of the historic photos, show that behind the neatly laid out streets there may have been a fluctuating squatter population – miners in town for rest, refurbishment of supplies and for recreation.

It is also important to explore the true ethnicity of the camp. Newspaper records, court notes and other accounts make it clear that Europeans were constantly coming and going through the camp. We have records of visitors traveling to Lawrence to enjoy the New Year and other celebrations at the camp. In New Zealand the Chinese gambling "dens" were nowhere the exclusive domain of Chinese gamblers. They were often frequented by Europeans and it would be useful to gain a better understanding about what role the camp had in the wider life of the Otago goldfields and thus challenge the assumptions that this was a village of Chinese men living in some sort of near cultural isolation. Women too are misrepresented in the traditional accounts. There are references to prostitution but there were wives in the camp too – Sam Chew Lain was buried with his Scottish wife in the Lawrence Cemetery. What was the life of these women like? The economic networks of this community are also unclear, but they were certainly complex. It is likely that some of the Lawrence merchants were significant operators with direct links to Dunedin, Auckland, Australia and the Asian markets.

Finally, we are interested in critiquing other stereotypes. The Tuapeka Times' accounts of the 1870s include virulent racist attacks on the Chinese and the bylaw itself that resulted in the establishment of the camp is cited as part of the ethnocentric wave that swept New Zealand and resulted in the Poll Tax and other iniquities. There is truth in that. But New Zealand social history is more interesting and to depict the occupants of the Lawrence Chinese Camp as despised and disenfranchised outcasts is to misrepresent their complex lives. This was a thriving service town and, within a decade of its founding, a major tourist destination. Rather than crouching in fear on the outskirts of Lawrence these Chinese settlers celebrated their identity by erecting huge flagpoles along the main road flying the Imperial Dragon ensign.

Sam Chew Lain is buried in one of the largest mausoleums in the Lawrence Cemetery. A plaque in the Masonic Lodge St George, Lawrence commemorates his passing. It states: "Erected by the Brethren of Lodge St George No 1128 E.C. in the Memory of their late brother, Sam Chew Lain, who died at Lawrence on the 15th of March 1903, aged 65 years." This inscription alone suggests that life was somewhat more complex and interesting than stereotypical accounts of cultural interaction in early provincial New Zealand suggest.

The LCCCT with NZHPT support has just commissioned two large ensigns which we will shortly erect alongside the Chinese Empire Hotel. The Imperial Dragon will once again fly on the Lawrence–Beaumont highway as a celebration of New Zealand Chinese culture and history.

Acknowledgements

We acknowledge the support of the Lawrence Chinese Camp Charitable Trust board and to Jim Ng for his enthusiasm in driving the project. We would like to thank the people of Lawrence and the many students and other volunteers who worked on the excavations.

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