

A Chinese coat of many memories

[box] Welcome to Treasures: this is a new section where we invite you to tell us about an object or item that you treasure. It might be sentimental, it might be valuable, it might be part of a collection, or it might be something you just can't live without. If you have a treasure that we can feature here, let us know! Email us at editor@bluestonemagazine.com.au and tell us about it.[/box]

This week, well-known South-West Victorian **DI CLANCHY** – a former librarian, former Moyne Shire councillor, founder of the ex-Libris book festival in Port Fairy and now a travel consultant – tells us about a treasured item from her travels to China...



[quote]

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A5CECD;"] A [dropcap] treasure from China you ask? That would definitely be a coat made of richly embroidered blue silk, elegant, feminine, and stylish. I bought it at a Friendship Store in Guangzhou in 1990, happily handing over several Foreign Exchange Certificates (FEC) as payment.

The coat is a deep turquoise blue-green in colour, and hangs just below the knee. Panels of ivory-white circle the neck, define the front, and continue around the hem. Wider panels of the same colour trim the sleeves. Black silk piping separates white from blue.

But all over the entire coat is embroidery! Pinks, greens, oranges, reds, blues, yellows, so many colours and shades. Large peonies are surrounded by circlets of narcissus, violets, daisies, roses, irises. Chrysanthemums decorate the wide sleeves.

The coat is wearable art.

I was in Guangzhou in February, 1990 with a group of women, just friends travelling together, nothing organised formally. We stayed at hostels and cheap hotels, travelled by train to Xi'an and back (3 nights each way), rode local buses with packs on our backs, ate out in local restaurants, used the local currency as well as FECs and wore out our shoes and our Lonely Planet guides as we walked the streets of Guangzhou and Xi'an. It was so special to have my 13-year-old daughter, Alice, sharing the adventure with me.



Di Clanchy catches up with a local during

her trip to China in 1990.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A5CECD;"] T
[/dropcap]hat was 1990. No Foreign Exchange Certificates in China now, just one currency and the concept of Friendship Stores for foreigners and the elite has also gone.

Cars have mostly replaced bikes on the roads, and you can find your way now more easily with "Pinyin" (our alphabet) signage, and English is spoken more widely. Instead of the severe Mao suits we saw on our early trip, Chinese women of 2014 wear elegant contemporary clothes.

Speaking of fashion: I have this treasured 23 year old coat which I hope will never go out of style. I have worn it to special events, operas and dinners. It graced my wall for a time, until I worried that the colour would fade.

Treasured for its beauty- and the many memories it holds, I hope that the coat will continue to be worn, appreciated, and loved, into the future. It's a treasure that is up there with my daughter's letter to the tooth fairy, my grandmother's christening mug, a lock of my son's hair, and lots and lots of photos."

– Di Clanchy

[box type="bio"] Di Clanchy specialises in affordable women's travel to China and Vietnam through her business, China Birds. You can [visit her website here](#) (and maybe find a treasured coat of your own!)[/box]



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A well-travelled junket

Bowlin, bowlin', bowlin'...

Lunch order, 1975?

signed, Fletcher Jones