Establishing Ararat Town
The goldfields at Canton Lead were becoming even more crowded, with wagons of goldseekers arriving hourly. The population had expanded to 40,000 to 50,000 people and as water was scarcer than ever and it became very expensive to buy. In August 1857, laws were introduced which made it mandatory for the Chinese to live in prescribed areas on the goldfields. These areas became Chinese only camps for their own protection. Prior to this, although their stores were grouped together their tents had been scattered amongst the motley European army grubbing for gold. Some of these camps remained standing for over 40 years, with the last known camp eventually burning down in 1899.
Five months after the discovery of gold and the establishment of the Canton Lead goldfield, the town of Ararat began to grow from a tent city. The first solid wood, permanent buildings began to be built on Oxford Street which was later renamed Barkly Street after Governor Barkly's visit in 1858. This building boom continued and Ararat developed in a haphazard manner over the next two years into an established town. By this time the population of miners had leveled out and some had left or looked for other occupations in the area. They had discovered that the fertile soil was suitable for agricultural pursuits with Ararat as the regional centre of trade. In late 1857, a survey of the town was conducted so that the first land sales could occur in 1858. Although the surveyor would have preferred to plan the town of Ararat around the western side of Kangaroo Range, the goldfields were of primary importance to the commerce of Ararat, and he was forced to plan the town around the goldfields. A Town Council was elected and the first Ararat Council meeting was held in October 1858.

Oppressive taxes and charges
The residence tax had always been contentious and although notices were posted saying that Chinese miners should pay it, no one way paying the tax. On 24 November 1857, the Victorian government doubled and enforced the taxes on the Chinese male population. The South Australian government declared its own £10 poll tax on 1 December 1857, which meant that the Chinese needed to find another place to land if they wanted to avoid the tax. They sailed to Sydney & Two Fold Bay to avoid the tax and walked to goldfields that were closest to the tax free landing places available to the China ships. On 24 February 1859, even the option of walking to the goldfields from outside Victoria to avoid the Poll Tax was removed with the Victorian Government's introduction of a £4 Poll tax for any immigrant *who shall arrive in or enter Victoria from any place or by any means than by a ship*[1].
The European miners were having difficulty paying their lower residence tax, so for the Chinese who had to pay £4 a year extra, it was impossible. By 1861 many of the miners had left Ararat, including numerous Chinese. By July 1861 the population had fallen fro the highs of 50,000 to 1,476 people with gold becoming harder to find and no longer being the mainstay of the town. Local people, including many Chinese who had settled in Ararat, were worried that the continuance of the residence tax for the Chinese, on top of the cost of the miner's right, had become an impractical burden. If the town were to prosper the Chinese presence was needed to help boost the population and keep businesses open. The business people compiled a petition in 1863 calling for the residence tax to be repealed and collected signatures from both European and Chinese residents of Ararat. Finally on 30 June 1865 the Act was repealed and no residence ticket was required. Ararat's population had nearly doubled from the 1861 census to 2,740 by 1881 partly as a result of the Chinese returning to continue to mine. Chinese mining finally ended in Ararat in 1926 when the last group of Chinese miners left for the coal mines at Wonthaggi. Unlike many gold mining towns that disappeared completely when the gold ran out, Ararat had already established itself as a regional centre of a trade.

Chinese society in Ararat

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[1] Murdoch, Judy; *Apsley at the Crosswords*, 2001, Hansen Print, Naracoorte, South Australia, page 33

Many Chinese miners found other occupations in Ararat including unskilled work as hawkers, draymen or carters, painters, labourers and storemen. A number of them resumed or developed professions such as doctors, druggists, tea dealers, merchants, interpreters and missionaries. Others developed skills as gardeners, butchers, grocers, jewellers, blacksmiths, cooks, bakers and fishmongers. Some Chinese made their living out of occupations more related to their culture and servicing the needs of their Chinese community as gamblers and opium dealers. The Chinese community was almost exclusively male as most of the miners who stayed did not marry. They had little hope of doing so as it was frowned on for European women to marry Chinese men. Those who did marry European women adopted European customs, even using European names. Most of the family names of the Chinese miner's descendants in Australia are corruptions of the Chinese miner's given names and not real Chinese family names. This was because the Europeans did not realize that a Chinese person's given name is their second name with their first name being their family name. The Chinese community were also great fund raisers, and contributed to many Ararat causes. The construction of Ararat's first and second hospitals were funded partly by the Chinese who generated money by holding concerts, plays and festivals. The last locally known original Chinese miner was Willie Ah Hon, who died in a house fire at the age of about 93 years. Willie is still remembered in Ararat for pushing his cart laden with vegetables around the town to sell to his many customers.

Chinese settlement and enterprises
A number of the Chinese who left Guichen Bay never reached the goldfields and many never returned to China after the rush was over as they had hoped to. The story is told about *a chinaman who didn't get to the gold diggings. He worked out that to make a lot of money he would buy pigs, and he drove them to Ballarat, to the mines. Owen (McKenna who told the story) was shown by his father where the chinaman had his pigs and he used to out them in a canvas guard at night, just near the 4 mile crossing and killed. Everyone had nice pork for a little while. That was the end of the fella. We known it wasn't black people who killed him either, but the people who lived in the area[2]*.

The Chinese often were made to work as gardeners and cooks at the various stations and they became renowned for their prolific and prosperous gardens. There were Chinese gardens at the *Kadnook* station and *Koolermurt* station, owned by the Willis and Swanston families. They became ingenious at defeating the rabbits that were in plague proportions in the late 1880's and early 1890's. At the time the owner of Kadnook station was JT Edgar. John Myers recalls that the chinaman's garden was being devasted and a solution was developed which was widely adopted. *Where carrots were being eaten out, he got some strychnine and spread a little on each carrot with his pocket knife. The next morning there were several dead rabbits close by. He then got the idea of filling his pockets with carrots and going to places where the carrots were numerous. He would slice off several slices of carrots with nothing, then a slice with strychnine applied with the blade of a pocket knife. Strychnine is extremely bitter and he was looking for a solution to his problem. It was some time before the idea of dragging a furrow and free feeding for a few nights before laying the poison bait was properly developed. But it was the Chinaman's garden at Kadnook Station where the idea of poisoning rabbits with carrots and strychnine first originated[3]*.

Other Chinese settled in various towns, built stone huts and developed Chinese gardens. About 6 kilometres out of Furner along the Woakwine Range there appears to be the remains of Chinese gardens which were developed with extensive terracing cut into the side of a hill. Each terrace has been cut to a 2 metre drop with the top terrace being excavated down to bare stone. Each terrace is about 30 metres wide and 100 metres long. Fraser Bowman says that there are legends that a Chinaman was buried on

[2] The Chinese Invasion, Transcript of a tape of a meeting of the Dunkeld and District Historical Museum held on 5 November 1990 pages not numbered
[3] *Hamilton Spectator*, 3rd November 1990, page 11

the property. This is feasible as the property was an overnight stop for bullockies and the Chinese could well have come through with them. Further proof could be the old, broken crockery and glass that has come to the surface over the years. Chinaman's Lane in Penola was named after the Chinese who stopped and established market gardens there. Another reminder in Penola is a grave in the old cemetery reputed to be a Chinese grave due to its odd shape. It has a square monument with a dome on the top. Local legend has it that the monument was covered with Chinese characters and there were numerous smaller Chinese burial plots surrounding it.

An area in Hamilton near Kenna Avenue was a Chinese garden. Stories are told of Sam Sing and Jack Lowe from Hamilton going around the stations with carts full of vegetables. John Woodburn recalls *Sam had a most amazing way of recording all the accounts. He was only paid by the month. He would get the order, go out to his cart and bring the things back and then he would write on a wall near the back gate, with Chinese characters*[4]. The owner of Warrock Homestead has been told that there were formerly gardens on his property which were irrigated by conduits and channels dug by the Chinese when establishing the plots. It is also said that Ah Wong ran a general store in Penshurst. Reports from papers in the South East of South Australia and Western Districts of Victoria reflect the Chinese dominance of the fruit and vegetable trade around 1877 through to 1889. *The Border Watch* newspaper recorded in October 1877, *we lately have had an influx of celestials, Ah Pin, Ah Tin and Ah Sin – who under the impression that we are not already sufficiently green, propose to supply Her Majesty's liege subjects, during the ensuing summer, with products of the vegetable world*[5]. The Chinese were obviously successful, for eight months later, on 25 May 1878, *The Border Watch* again reported *there is not much doing in the gardens yet, and really it scarcely worthwhile growing vegetable, as our local Chinese raise everything we want at a very reasonable rate, and bring it around to the door*[6]. Locals also remember a Chinese laundry in a house at Naracoorte and the commercial laundries in Mount Gambier run by Mr. Loo. In Penola, by 1889, the Chinese leased land from Mr. Riddoch and grew a tobacco crop[7]. By 1892, *The Border Watch* recorded that *James Ah Sue was one of the first fruit block owners in the Penola Fruit Colony, his block number 17/144 was a 10 acre allotment where he grew vegetables*[8].

An amazing feat
Overall 22 tall ships landed between 17 January 1857 and 25 May 1857 carrying 12,011 Chinese as recorded in the Robe Customs documents. In addition, some may have landed in Robe from steamers and other coastal vessels from Adelaide. It is said by some sources that 6200 Chinese sailed to Port Adelaide with 4300 of these sailing down to Robe, some as early as April 1856.

However eyewitness reports dispute this and there is no record of Chinese arrival or encampment in Robe before the *Land of Cakes* landing on 17 January 1857. The South Australian Government Restriction Bill was passed on 11 June 1857m which introduced similar restrictions on Chinese immigration as existed I Victoria, including a poll tax. The volume of arrivals dropped off almost immediately although a further five ships completed their journey to Guichen Bay arriving between 15 June 1857 and 10 November 1857. In September the Guichen Bay correspondent observed that *the China Ships that had previously made the streets teem with people were very scarce and would probably disappear altogether when the New Act came into operation… there had been no new arrivals for some*

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[4] The Chinese Invasion, Transcript of a tape of a meeting of the Dunkeld and District Historical Museum held on 5 November 1990 pages not numbered
[5] *The Border Watch*, 17 October 1877, page unknown
[6] *The Border Watch*, 25 May 1878, page unknown
[7] *South Eastern Star*, 4 June 1889, page unknown
[8] *The Border Watch*, 16 January 1892, page unknown

time and none were expected[9]. The Bill was repealed in 1861. By this time there were only 40 Chinese living in South Australia[10]. With the taxes lifted and free landing available, the Chinese started landing again as a further three ships arrived in 1862 and 1863. By September 1863, the Chinese ceased travelling through Robe to the goldfields as gold was becoming harder to find and the life for a Chinaman on the goldfields was even more difficult with excessive fees and the constant threat of violence against himself or his property. Overall 28 British, 5 Dutch and 10 American ships, carrying 16,261 Chinese men and 1 Chinese woman arrived in Robe between 1857 and 1863 in addition to the Chinese who may have landed from steamers and other coastal vessels.

Having landed, the Chinese walked at least 440 kms overland to reach their goldfield destinations. They encountered many hurdles. The unforgiving terrain which was either dry and desolate or flooded leading them to walk miles out of their way, and for some to die from exhaustion or exposure. The Europeans they encountered who promised to guide them and then abandoned them in the bush, blackmailed them into undertaking unpaid construction work, who drove them off their claims by assaulting them or burning their tents, or in the worst case, who murdered them.

Through all these hardships, the Chinese were a stoic, organised and dignified race, whose quiet industry and perseverance infuriated some of the bemused Europeans, but ultimately led to their success on the goldfields.

It is not known how many Robe landed Chinese were able to return to China with their gold to pay off their loans. Of the 62,990 Chinese who came to the Victorian goldfields, 48,000 left Australia returning to China on the same China Ships that had brought them a few years earlier. While a fair proportion of the miner's who didn't return would have died or been killed, the survivors settled in Australia to be contributing citizens and add to the cultural diversity we enjoy today.

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[9] *Our South Australian Past*, Book 1, 1958, pages unknown
[10] Bermingham, Kathleen; *The Fourth of Eleven Tales of Robe*, Kathleen Bermingham, Robe, South Australia, 1973, page 26