

Help for Chinese heritage

STAWELL-BASED mineral exploration company Navarre Minerals has made a \$5000 contribution to a project to restore Chinese gravestones at Ararat Cemetery.

Friends of the Gum San Chinese Heritage Centre have been trying to raise \$35,000 for the project to place gravestones to mark the hundreds of Chinese migrants buried at Ararat.

Navarre Minerals managing director Geoff McDermott handed over the cheque to Friends of Gum San chairman Henry Gunstone and committee member Ian Carman last week.

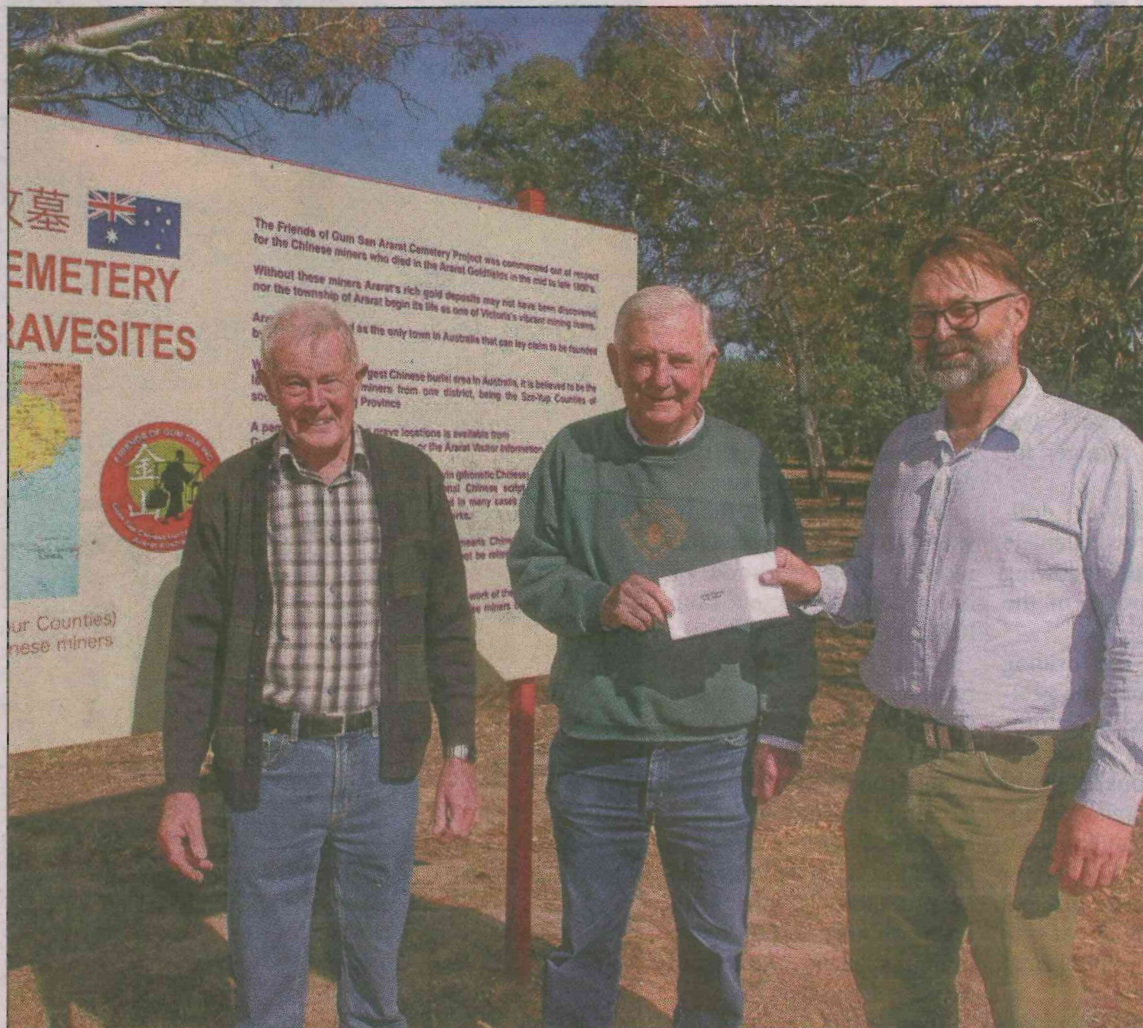
The project has so far raised \$28,000.

Nearly 280 Chinese miners found their final resting place in Ararat during the Victorian gold rush and the years that followed.

The average Chinese miner travelled thousands of kilometres by boat and hundreds of kilometres more on foot from South Australia in a bid to avoid punitive arrival taxes at Victorian ports.

Mr McDermott said the rich history of gold mining in the Ararat to Stawell corridor was a heavy influence on the exploration company.

Navarre's exploration teams, while working in the region, have come across evidence of the history of exploration and mining, particularly that of Chi-



HISTORY: Navarre Minerals' Geoff McDermott hands a donation to Friends of Gum San.

nese miners.

Small pits dot the landscape where the original miners were often up to their knees in water while looking for golden riches.

"Sometimes I feel I am walking in the footsteps of our early settlers, the original

explorers and miners," Mr McDermott said.

"The history of gold exploration in the region is amazing.

"We need to learn recognise this history and learn from it and preserve it."

Chinese migrants were

known to be exceptional surface gold miners and Navarre has been examining the richest Chinese workings for clues to help find their primary gold deposits.

Mr McDermott said Navarre owed a debt of gratitude to the hard-working

Chinese miners, whose 19th century efforts have helped guide the company's recent success.

Whilst Ararat does not have the largest Chinese cemetery in Australia, the region has the largest concentration of people from

the Southern Guangdong Province and the region surrounding the city of Taishan, Ararat's sister city.

In December, Jimmy Li and his father WanDong, originally from Taishan, donated \$10,000 towards the gravestone project.



AT REST: One of the Chinese grave sites in Ararat Cemetery. **Picture:** PETER PICKERING



Friends of Gum San president Henry Gunstone accepts a donation made by Jimmy and WanDong Li in 2017.