

CHEWTON CHAT

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CHEWTON DOMAIN SOCIETY
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MONSTER MEETING COMMEMORATION



On the 152nd anniversary of the great meeting of miners at the Shepherds Hut, Forest Creek a special celebration was held. 4 p.m. on the 15th of December 1851 saw 12-14,000 (and one report said 20,000!) miners gather in hot and dry conditions to protest over a proposed doubling of the miner's licence. (Imagine everyone in the entire Mount Alexander Shire gathering on the rise near Golden Point Road - that would put 17,000 there!) 4 p.m. on the 15th of December 2003 saw the same weather conditions -plus competition from heavy traffic that the original miners would never have contemplated! Two projects joining together made this a special event. Stage one of the entrance to Chewton project was completed with the erection of a bush flag

pole. This project was planned by Mount Alexander Shire and the Chewton community; funded by the State Government and MAS and included donations from Coliban Water and Col Webster of Aussie Flags and Flagpoles. The path, ford, mulching and plantings under the coordination of Steve Van Orsouw (MAS Parks and Gardens) have set the scene for further stages of development. The second project is the granting of a Commemoration of Historic Events and Famous Persons Program from the Federal Government, to allow interpretive signage and a reproduction of the digger's flag flown at the monster meeting. This is formal recognition of the importance of the Monster Meeting in Australia's history!

About 40 people gathered at the corner of Golden Point Road and the Pyrenees Highway, at a site overlooking the original meeting place. Col Webster had already erected the pole, and had the Australian Colonial Flag flying by the time the first people arrived. This was then replaced with a replica of the digger's flag. This was borrowed for the occasion from the Friends of Mount Alexander Diggings, who fly the flag regularly at the Forest Creek Mine site.

CDS President Jim Jones introduced Mayor Jim Norris who launched the flagpole with an outline of the importance of the Monster Meeting, the values demonstrated by the meeting being very dear to his own heart. Col Webster assured the gathering that the new pole was very similar to the original of 1851, being cut and fashioned from a yellow gum especially selected for this purpose. When the bark on the pole weathers off Col will be returning to paint and protect the pole.

The proceedings then moved onto a series of readings, including some from the original speeches of the day. Doug Ralph did an outstanding job organising this, providing the text and selecting the speakers. Morgan Kurrajong, David Bannear, Pat Milthorpe, Howard Penberthy and Ivan Gilbert all joined Doug in presenting excerpts relating to the area and the meeting.

During proceedings Doug made the point that the Monster Meeting history is relatively simple and unadulterated, and its importance is such that an annual celebration each anniversary is warranted. David Bannear supported this concept, and pointed out that by contrast Eureka was now the site of a MacDonalds!

The new year should see the digger's flag reproduced and flying regularly at the entrance to Chewton. An interpretive sign explaining the background and significance will be placed at the base of the pole. (Col had not just donated the flagpole, he and his mates Doug and Wayne (an ex-Chewtonite) had prepared damper, boiled mutton and billy tea but the weather conditions and fire restrictions prevented this happening!)

Top left: The gathering at the commemoration.

Bottom right: Jim Jones, Col Webster and Cr. Jim Norris beneath that flag.



AND ALSO INSIDE...Swimming safely... Andre calls in...Water levels dropping...Social Spotlight on the School...Earthworks...
...Church Outdoors...Assembly Hall action...Snakes...Congratulations Green Corps...Gold in them thar vegies...Patto Curses...
...Folk Festival...Antique Fair...Early days in Chewton...Grass ID...and CDS membership leaps by 81% after the mail-out!