

CHEWTON CHAT

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CHEWTON DOMAIN SOCIETY
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MONSTER MEETING 2005

"There are few people who properly understand what a Government is, or what it ought to be. It should be the chosen servants of a free people." These words were spoken in 1851 at the Great Meeting of Miners by Mr. Booley. They are now set in stone on the site of that Great Meeting.



The rock arriving...

The search for suitable rocks resumed. Eventually a very large rock that could accommodate both plaques was located - and it was for sale. The large piece of sandstone was marked with quartz veins and was so spectacular it selected itself! Transport to Ballarat was again arranged, and Daryl Wilson of Rockworks prepared it for the unveiling ceremony on the 15th of December. On Tuesday the 13th the rock was transported to Chewton and laid near the site of the former Shepherds Hut. Representatives of the Ballarat Reform League joined with locals to watch the rock's arrival.

Over the next two days preparations for celebrating the 154th anniversary of the Monster Meeting went ahead. The site was

In August, after the Ballarat Reform League unveiled a plaque on the site of the 1851 Bunninyong uprising, an approach (thanks David Bannear) was made to Parks Victoria for permission to place a stone and plaque at the site of the Monster Meeting at Forest Creek. As land managers of the site, Parks Victoria granted permission (thanks to Regional Manager Trevor Miles) and the search for a suitable rock began. Two large rocks were selected and donated, then transported to Ballarat only to be rejected because of flaw lines in them. The rocks had to be shaped to hold two plaques, and the flaws made the shaping impossible.



Set in stone...



The band strikes up...

mowed and cleared (thanks Glenn), a path slashed down to Mount Street and a temporary foot bridge installed across Forest Creek (thanks Noel). As the 4 o'clock celebration on the 15th approached a dray appeared (thanks to the Maldon Museum, and thanks again Noel), a brass band assembled (thanks to the Bendigo Evergreen Concert Band) and enlarged photos showing scenes of Forest Creek in the 1850's appeared down at Mount Street (thanks Parks Victoria, Allan Dry and Jack Cocks). The scene was set. At 3.30 the band struck up, and shortly after people began walking upstream from the Mount Street carpark. At 4 p.m. Doug McConville (President of the Friends of the Mount Alexander Diggings, and MC for the day) climbed the dray and welcomed everyone. David Bannear (Archaeologist with Heritage Victoria) gave in interpretation of the historic site acknowledging the work done by Glenn Braybrook in locating the site of the Shepherds Hut. Doug Ralph took over the microphone and introduced readers who presented extracts from speeches and descriptions of the day.



Gathering..

President of the Ballarat Reform League John Semmens introduced Professor Weston Bate to unveil the plaque.

And also inside...A Late-night Crossword...Lighting up Christmas...Plan to Survive...2005 memories...
...BBQ Pics...Stan's Milestone...CSMP PE...The Pool Volunteers Make a Splash...Assembly Hall Memories...
...Peggy Seeger's Coming to Chewton...Fundraising...Early Schools...Taxi Tales...and more, much more!

Professor Bate spoke of the importance of the role of the Monster Meeting in the democratisation of Australia. He



Weston Bate orating...

explained how gold was the democratic mineral that provided the opportunity for the discarding of social structures - allowing new freedom as people worked for themselves. The Monster Meeting was a significant step along this path, being followed by other steps on other gold fields. Professor Bate referred to the Bendigo's Red Ribbon Rebellion and the Eureka Uprising in Ballarat.

Professor Bate left the dray and moved across to the rock that was draped with both the Monster Meeting Digger's flag and the Eureka flag. The flags were removed and the plaque unveiled. He then read the wording of both plaques.

"Great Meeting of Gold Diggers at Mount Alexander 15 December 1851. A massive protest erupted here against the

Government's unjust and exorbitant tax on gold diggers. Earlier at Buninyong the Ballarat and later at Bendigo the issue of basic rights led to the Eureka rebellion of 1854.

The Booley quote from 1851 (as above) is then printed.

This plaque was placed on 15th December 2005 by the Ballarat Reform League Inc in association with the Chewton Domain Society and with the assistance of the Vera Moore Foundation."

The second plaque features the David Tulloch illustration of 1852 with the words "Right here a crowd of 14,000 protested against the outrageous licence system."

With the unveiling over Parks Victoria Regional Manager Trevor Miles took the opportunity to present Professor Bate with the Monster Meeting flag that had been draped over the rock. The band struck up, a "gold mining pail" was passed around the crowd in an attempt to get "bucket loads of money for the band" (and collected \$128 - thanks everyone!) and the long walk



Unveiled at last...

down Forest Creek to the carpark began.

Speeches at the 1851 meeting were delivered from a dray, and a cartoon of the time depicts this. The 2005 dray drew comparisons, and Gadget captured this photo.



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