



**CHEWTON DOMAIN SOCIETY**  
(INCORPORATED)  
Reg. No. A0034364L  
P.O. Box 85, Chewton, 3451.

# CHEWTON CHAT

[www.chewton.net](http://www.chewton.net)



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## CELEBRATING 158 YEARS

The 158th anniversary of the Great Meeting of Gold Diggers at Forest Creek was again celebrated in style. The very hot conditions ensured that there was only a small crowd gathered in Castlemaine's Victory Park at four o'clock when Doug Ralph gave a short reading. Doug was involved in the very first Monster Meeting anniversary celebration in 1995, which co-incidentally was also held in Victory Park. After some photographs for the *Castlemaine Mail* were taken, the group moved around the front of the market building for more photos for the *Bendigo Advertiser*. With these preliminaries out of the way four walkers set out for Chewton in the hot and dry conditions. Richard

Piesse was again leading the group as he had done in 2008.

Meanwhile at Chewton the site was being prepared. Parks Victoria Ranger Noel Muller had arrived with the traditional dray to serve as the stage for the event. The back of a dray was used for the stage at the original 1851 meeting, and we are fortunate that Parks Victoria is able to borrow an original dray from the Maldon Museum each year. And each year the bales of hay appear on cue to prop up the dray and serve as steps up onto the stage. Master of Ceremonies Bernard Slattery welcomed everyone and set the scene as people settled onto the chairs or the grassy slope in the shade of the trees that provided the backdrop to the stage. Two apologies were read out. Shire Mayor Philip Schier pointed out that Tuesday is a regular





obligation for councillors and he was unable to attend - although he did say he enjoyed last year's event. Premier John Brumby was also an apology, and he provided a letter of support which Bernard read.

Guest speaker Heather Holst made the precarious climb onto the dray and took over the microphone. Heather spoke of the justice system as it operated in Chewton in the 1800s. She mentioned many of the magistrates and justices of the peace by name, and how they were often community members with no legal training. Living in the same community and in close proximity to those people on whom judgements were being passed led to some interesting situations but as Heather explained there were often advantages for people in business to be on the bench. From the stage Heather pointed out the house that her forebears had lived in and referred to the Live and Let Live Hotel. This latter reference intrigued some

members of the audience and questions about its location arose, and later in the evening there were many anecdotes related about life in the Live and Let Live.

The now traditional readings from the original speeches took centre stage. Deirdre Slattery read the Diggers Notice, the notice signed by "A.Digger" posted around the goldfields during the week preceding the Monster Meeting. This reading is notorious because of one word - pusillanimity! Each year at the celebration the pronunciation of that word is eagerly awaited. Cheers always await its successful negotiation. The characters of Mr. Booley, Mr. Potts, Mr. Lineham, Dr. Webb Richmond and Captain Harrison came to life as Helen Kelly, Harry South, Howard Penberthy, Ken McKimmie and Jan Wositzky read from the original speeches.

The Monster Meeting celebration is about passing on history in a participatory way. There are always good-natured interjections punctuating the speeches as members of the audience get into the roles of participants at the original 1851 meeting.

In conclusion it was pointed out that pod tours are available at no cost (just a deposit to ensure their return) at the Visitor Information Centre in Castlemaine's Market Building. The tour "Gold Rush to Mount Alexander" actually visits the Monster Meeting site and sets the scene. For anyone wanting to know more about the Monster Meeting this is a terrific resource to begin with.



There is also a DVD available at the Visitor Information Centre that contains this same information - and more. These DVDs are free, and the few copies available at the Monster Meeting celebration were quickly snapped up.

Many of the Monster Meeting participants then took up the invitation to retire to the Red Hill Hotel's beer garden where a barbecue was provided by the Chewton Domain Society and the Red Hill Hotel management. There was a wonderful atmosphere as people socialised.

Two of the most enthusiastic participants in the Monster Meeting proceedings were John Semmens and Margaret Rich from the Ballarat Reform League. They have been involved with the Monster Meeting for many years, the Ballarat Reform League



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**CHEWTON DOMAIN SOCIETY  
MONSTER MEETING RE-ENACTMENT**

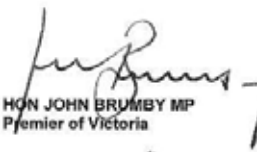
**15 DECEMBER 2009**

**MESSAGE FROM THE PREMIER**

It is with pleasure that I send this message of support to the Chewton Domain Society and the people of Chewton as they celebrate the 158th anniversary of the Monster Meeting.

The Monster Meeting has a special place in Victoria's history as the first of the major protest meetings on the Victorian Goldfields, preceding Bendigo's Red Ribbon rebellion and Ballarat's Eureka Stockade. Commemorations like the re-enactment raise the profile of local communities in regional Victoria and ensure that important events in Victoria's history are remembered for the benefit of our State and our democracy.

Historical groups and societies play an important role in our community. They promote and contribute to the identity of local communities and keep historical events alive. I would like to congratulate the Chewton Domain Society, for showcasing the history of Victoria through the re-enactment of the Monster Meeting. I send you my best wishes for a successful event and an enjoyable day.



HON JOHN BRUMBY MP  
Premier of Victoria



working in conjunction with the Chewton Domain Society and the Vera Moore Foundation to install the rock and plaques that now mark the site. More recently, the Ballarat Reform League has been including information on all the goldfields' uprisings on their website

[www.ballaratreformleague.org.au](http://www.ballaratreformleague.org.au).

On this website the Monster Meeting takes its place proudly amongst the other uprisings that were the stepping stones to Eureka - amongst the important stepping stones that marked the path towards democracy in this country.

2009 was another successful Monster Meeting celebration that owes much to many contributors. Doug Ralph has had a pivotal role in every commemoration, and Parks Victoria has provided critical (and enthusiastic) support since the original site was located and the event moved



there. And each year the contributors and audience make their own special atmosphere for the occasion. And of course there were just so many complimentary comments about the food and effort put in by Di and her staff at the Red Hill. Thanks everyone!

*Photos: Page 1 (clockwise from top left): Gathering in Victory Park, Heather Holst with MC Bernard Slattery doubling as a microphone stand, Jan Wositzky, Ken McKimmie, Harry South, Helen Kelly and Deirdre Slattery.*

*Page 2 from top (courtesy Bettie Exon): "Dr." Howard Penberthy, crowding into the shade, hospitality in the Red Hill's beer garden.*

*Page 3 from top: Catching up at the Red Hill, Ben and Charlie.*

History spans the generations - roll on the 15th of December 2010!

**Happy New Year!**

We welcome in 2010 and wish everyone joy, peace, health and happiness.  
Your host Onn Ho and all the staff at Bold Café.



**Bold Café will be opening  
Saturday 2nd January and  
Sunday 3rd January  
10am – 4.30pm**

Regular hours resume from  
Wednesday 6th January 2010

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