



A CHEWTON CHAT
DECEMBER SPECIAL...

The 2010 Monster Meeting

Since 2003 the Monster Meeting has gradually been brought back into our collective memories by a succession of celebrations held on the December 15th anniversaries of the main event.

The Great Meeting of Diggers was on the 15th of December 1851 and it emanated from September 1851 when a Melbourne newspaper, the *Argus*, published a letter from a local shepherd, giving directions to where gold could be found at Forest Creek – and so began the world's greatest alluvial gold rush. To stop people deserting their jobs, the Victorian Government instituted a Gold Licence, a tax of thirty shillings a month on each digger - whether they found any gold or not. Thirty shillings was a substantial amount but the Gold Licence didn't work. By December 25,000 diggers were panning the creeks around Castlemaine. The government then moved to double the Gold Licence fee to stop this disturbance of the established social order.

In defiance, 15,000 diggers met at the Shepherd's Hut by Forest Creek, in what is now Chewton, on the 15th of December. They flew the Diggers Flag. This was three years before Eureka in 1854, and was the first gathering that set a course for democracy in Australia: when ordinary people who didn't have a vote demanded a say in the laws that governed them.

This initial step towards democracy and social justice was a very important event, probably the most important event in Chewton's history.

In 1995 a group of people decided that this event was so significant it warranted a re-enactment. This subsequently took place in Castlemaine, and was instrumental in reviving interest in the Monster Meeting after 144 years. It was Doug Ralph who was acknowledged for the idea

of that re-enactment, and although there was resolve at the time to make this an annual event it didn't happen that way.

In 2003 Doug again raised the idea and the installation of a flagpole on the Pyrenees Highway saw the celebration held there. The flagpole, the plaque beneath it, and some replica diggers' flags were funded by the Federal Government through the Commemoration of Historic Events and Famous Persons Program. Readings from the original speeches took place and the annual celebrations had begun.



***Doug Ralph - a driving force
behind the Monster Meeting
celebrations since 1995***

One of the difficulties in furthering our knowledge of the Monster Meeting is that researchers are dependent on the two contemporary Melbourne papers (the *Herald* and the *Argus*) for first hand accounts of the meeting. Add to these the drawing of the scene by David Tulloch, and engraved by Thomas Ham, and we have our base knowledge of that famous day.

In the Tulloch drawing a quarter of the diggers' flag is clearly visible. Letters published in local papers and a query in the *Weekly Times* about the flag design and colours brought no responses, so a group auspiced by the Chewton Domain Society (CDS) set out to draw up the "best possible" artistic representation of the flag. Working from what could be made out from the Tulloch drawing they came up with a design that was based on what was known and recorded about the goldfields life in late 1851. Hopefully, a diary record in a family history will come to light in the future and provide a more substantial knowledge base. Geoff Hocking has offered an alternative theory about the flag design and colouring in an article "Imagining the Diggers' Flag" which can be read on www.monstermeeting.net

A CHEWTON CHAT Supplement

proudly supported by Regional Development Victoria as part of Victoria's 175th Anniversary celebrations.



During 2004 interest in the Monster Meeting was growing, and the site of the Shepherd's Hut was being actively pursued. Glenn Braybrook played a leading role in this, and with the aid of maps from the Barbara James' collection the site was identified. A gathering of people under umbrellas met on the site on a bleak June day and celebrated the location. Among the throng was Professor Weston Bate who gave an enthusiastic impromptu address that was cheered from start to finish.

David Bannear was also there. As the Archaeological Heritage Advisor for Heritage Victoria he said that as an archaeologist he had a cynical approach to "discoveries" but the map and the layout of the land indicated it as

the site of the Shepherd's Hut, and it made him believe that this is the only rebellion site in Australia where the landscape remains as it was then. This makes the site one of significance to the nation of Australia! David also made the point that the community needs to work together to communicate the significance of this site, while at the same time ensuring it is not overwhelmed. The beauty of the site is to see the surrounding landscape as it was then (*June 2004 Chewton Chat*). Ian Braybrook of KLFM Radio recorded interviews with Professor Weston Bate, David Bannear and Glenn Braybrook that morning. Those interviews were subsequently broadcast, and a copy of the tape is part of the People and Places Display in the Chewton Town Hall.

This confirmation of the location of the Shepherds' Hut set the scene for the 2004 celebration which was held on the original site for the first time. This event attracted visitors from far and wide, and was well covered in the local and regional press. The Monster Meeting was really gathering legs.

By 2005 the Ballarat Reform League had begun their Monuments Project, the placing of plaques on the sites of all the goldfields uprisings. The Shepherds' Hut site in Chewton became a focus for one of these. A suitable local rock was sourced and taken to Ballarat for preparation, and was placed on site in December in time for the annual December 15th celebration. Professor Weston Bate spoke of the importance of the role of the Monster Meeting in the development of democracy in Australia. He explained how gold was the democratic mineral that provided the



Top: The Great Meeting of Gold Diggers drawn by David Tulloch and engraved by Thomas Ham.

Below: Weston Bate unveiling the plaques in 2005.

A CHEWTON CHAT Supplement

proudly supported by Regional Development Victoria as part of Victoria's 175th Anniversary celebrations.

opportunity for the discarding of the old social structures and 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 especially to Bendigo's Red Ribbon Rebellion and the Eureka uprising in Ballarat.

Professor Bate unveiled the plaques and read the wording on them:

"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, Ballarat and later at Bendigo the issue of basic rights led to the Eureka rebellion of 1854."

And on the second which featured the David Tulloch illustration, "Right here a crowd of 14,000 protested against the outrageous licence system."

The 2006 celebration featured Castlemaine Goldfields with Exploration Manager Wess Edgar detailing the contemporary search for gold in the Chewton area. In 2007 colour was added to the scene as the Castlemaine Theatre Company dramatized events, including the "arrest" of the then Police Minister Bob Cameron. Guest speaker was Geoff Hocking who had just published a new book "The Rebel Chorus".

In 2008 the day that is used for the stage, as at the original meeting, was moved down the slope to take advantage of the site's natural amphitheatre. Castlemaine historian Marjorie Theobald was guest speaker and Jan Wositzky began his association with this event as Master of Ceremonies. This event co-incided, almost to the day, with the 159th anniversary of the Chewton Town Hall so the large crowd retired there to continue the 2008 celebrations.

2009 saw Jan continue as MC with Heather Holst the guest speaker. It was at the subsequent barbecue at the Red Hill Hotel that Jan made a momentous suggestion. A Song Writing Competition! A great way to increase the awareness of the importance of the Monster Meeting, get the message out to all generations, encourage research – and from little things big things grow!

The Monster Meeting Song Award

A flurry of activity began in 2010. The Monster Meeting Song Award was to be a competition for the best songs about or based on the Monster Meeting at Forest Creek diggings (Chewton) on the 15th of December 1851. Prizes on offer were to be \$1000, \$500 and \$250, and entries could be in any musical style whatsoever. Anyone could enter but had to commit to being available to perform the song at the Theatre Royal at a Concert of Finalists.

Sponsors were sought and Parks Victoria undertook to fund the prizes. They were followed by the Chewton Domain Society and the *Chewton Chat*, ABC Centralvic, Castlemaine's Theatre Royal, Mount Alexander Shire, Maldon and District Community Bank, the Community Newspaper Association of Victoria (CNAV), Castlemaine Goldfields Ltd., the Lions Club of Castlemaine, the Rotary Club of Castlemaine, Dale's Discount, Burke's Music, InstrAmental Music Centre, Forest Creek Nursery,



Stoneman's Bookroom, WMAfm, the Red Hill Hotel and Appletown Party Hire. Geoff Hocking donated his design talents and prepared flyers during the process, and Green Graphics undertook to create a website before the launch on July 15th. www.monstermeeting.net is the result!

Song Award rules were drafted, judges and a patron sought and a timetable prepared.

- * July 15th Launch at the Red Hill Hotel
- * July 15th www.monstermeeting.net established
- * October 15th Entries close
- * November 15th Shortlisting of 12 to be completed
- * December 12th Concert of Finalists at the Theatre Royal
- * December 15th Monster Meeting celebration on site to include the winning songs if possible.



From top: Geoff Hocking's MMSA poster. Children from Chewton Primary School played roles in the Monster Meeting Song Award Launch.

A CHEWTON CHAT Supplement

proudly supported by Regional Development Victoria as part of Victoria's 175th Anniversary celebrations.



The search for judges began immediately and we were able to gain the services of well known local musical identities Charles Affleck and David Thrussel to work with Jan Wositzky on a three person panel (the short biographies of the three judges are on www.monstermeeting.net). We were elated when well known singer songwriter Shane Howard (*Goanna Band*, *Solid Rock* and much more) agreed to be patron and appear at the Concert of Finalists in that role.



The launch took place at Chewton's historic 1854 Red Hill Hotel. ABC Centralvic's Jonathan Ridnell was MC, David Bannear spoke and two Chewton Primary School children appeared on stage with Jan Wositzky in a performance taken from his production "Gold in the Heart". David Bannear was introduced as someone who knows "a heck of a lot about the Monster Meeting," and therefore the person to inspire us as to what the song could be about. David painted a word picture of the early 1850s. Victoria had just been declared a state, and about 25,000 of its 70,000 inhabitants were in Melbourne. Rural activity mostly involved sheep. Then gold was discovered. The proposed doubling of the licence fee to 60 shillings a month was a trigger for action. David pointed out that there was a lot at stake for the government as well as for the diggers who were fighting for their very existence. He suggested song-writers shouldn't ignore the thing humans crave for most - the concept of possibility.

The launch was videoed and a clip prepared and placed on You Tube

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_78JgpcPvj4



By the closing date for the Award, 38 entries had been received. The titles indicated the diversity of approaches taken: *Three Quid for the Privilege*, *Thirty Shillings a Month*, *Our Road to Democracy*, *Come Men of All Nations*, *The Cards That Fell*, *More In Our Hearts Than Gold*, *The Ballad of Forest Creek*, *The Irish in this Man*, *Golden Days*, *Fool's Gold*, *Stand Behind The Flag*, *Meet, Agitate and be Unanimous*, *The Quartz and the Clay*, *A Letter to Mary*, *Three Quid a Month*, *Forest Creek Lament*, *Monster Meeting Song (Birth of Democracy)*, *Eighteen Fifty-One*, *The Jilted Miner*, *The Diggers Proclaim*, *Something Good*, *Red Ribbon Rebels*, *The Basic Things of Life*, *Scratch'n For Gold*, *The Kings of the Mullock Heap*, *Our Rights Democratic*, *Let it be seen this day*, *Mr. Miner*, *The Curse of Forest Creek*, *Letter to Bessie*, *We are Starting Something here*, *We Stand for Our Rights*, *Fellow Diggers Side by Side*, *Me and the Boys*, *Father Dear*, *A Digger*, *Let the Diggers' Flag Fly* and *The Monster Meeting*.

A very impressive body of work! And possibly the largest body of goldfields songs since songster Charles Thatcher wrote so prolifically in the 1800s. It was a very moving collection of songs, expressing a lot of sentiment about the Monster Meeting of 1851. It was obvious there was a very high standard of songwriting throughout and that the judges faced an unenviable task shortlisting to twelve finalists.

And they didn't! Because of the quality of the entries received fourteen were actually shortlisted. They were:

Doug Owen
Martin McKenna
Colin Fraser
Jamie Roberts

Three Quid for the Privilege
Thirty Shillings a Month
Our Road to Democracy
The Cards That Fell

From top: Judges Jan Wositzky, David Thrussel and Charles Affleck. At the launch are MC Jonathan Ridnell, Jan, Helen McGeachin and Parks Victoria's Noel Muller. David Bannear depicting the 1850s scene in the state of Victoria.

A CHEWTON CHAT Supplement

proudly supported by Regional Development Victoria as part of Victoria's 175th Anniversary celebrations.

Mickey Levis & Annie Morabito	<i>More In Our Hearts Than Gold</i>
Patrick Killeen	<i>The Ballad of Forest Creek</i>
Pete Kenyon	<i>Fool's Gold</i>
Dave Maxwell	<i>Stand Behind the Flag</i>
Rod Willaton	<i>Eighteen Fifty-One</i>
Bill McAuley	<i>Our Rights Democratic</i>
Daniel Keohan	<i>Letter to Bessie</i>
Richard Lewis	<i>We are Starting Something here</i>
Kimberley Clemens	<i>Me and the Boys</i>
Frank Jones & Christy Wositzky-Jones	<i>Father Dear</i>

The shortlisted songs ranged from rock and roll to country, electronic music, folk and contemporary ballads. Thus the scene was set for the eagerly anticipated concert. As with the launch, the MC was ABC Central Victoria's Jonathan Ridnell who supported this Song Award for the whole journey.

More than 200 filled the Theatre Royal that night. From Bannit's explosive opening performance of Bill McAuley's *Our Rights Democratic* through to Rod Willaton's *Eighteen Fifty One* performed by Crosswind the range of songs entertained the crowd.

"The diversity of musical styles and approaches that have developed from a single starting point was amazing," said Jan Wositzky, one of the judges. "The challenge was to write the best song about, or based upon, the 1851 Monster Meeting of diggers at Forest Creek. The resulting diversity and concert showcased many, many talented songwriters and musicians."

In his role as patron of the Award noted singer-songwriter Shane Howard performed several of his compositions. Shane's great-grandfather was arrested at the Eureka Stockade, and he outlined that part of his family history. He also spoke of the challenges of writing historical songs, and offered words of praise and encouragement to the performers who had presented such a wonderful concert.



Above: The judges ready themselves for a long night of decision-making as the MMSA concert got underway, ready to **meet - agitate - be unanimous!**

From top: MMSA patron Shane Kelly shared his family history. Another of the Geoff Hocking poster designs that drove the MMSA during the journey from launch to finality. After the MMSA concert of finalists Eliza Tree, James Rigby and MC Jonathan Ridnell found time to catch up.



A CHEWTON CHAT Supplement

proudly supported by Regional Development Victoria as part of Victoria's 175th Anniversary celebrations.



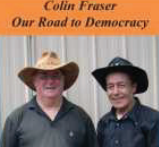






**Scenes from the MMSA Concert
clockwise from top left:**







*Doug Owen and crew will never
pay Three Quid for the Privilege.
Daniel Keohan writing to Bessie.
Lee Hunter with Dave Maxwell
standing behind the flag.
2nd placegetters Christy Wositzky-
Jones with father Frank Jones.
Micky Levis, Annie Morabito and
friends have more in their hearts
than gold.*

*A souvenir poster of the finalists.
3rd Placegetter Jamie Roberts
dealing with the cards that fell.*



 Doug Owen <i>Three Quid for the Privilege</i>	 Martin McKenna <i>Thirty Shillings a Month</i>	 Colin Fraser <i>Our Road to Democracy</i>	 Jamie Roberts <i>The Cards That Fell</i>
 Micky Levis & Annie Morabito <i>More In Our Hearts Than Gold</i>	 Patrick Killeen <i>The Ballad of Forest Creek</i>	 Pete Kenyon <i>Fool's Gold</i>	

Monster Meeting Song Award
Theatre Royal, 5 p.m. Sunday 12th of December

 Dave Maxwell <i>Stand Behind The Flag</i>	 Rod Willaton <i>Eighteen Fifty-One</i>	 Daniel Keohan <i>Letter to Bessie</i>
 Richard Lewis <i>We are starting something here</i>	 Kimberley Clemens <i>Me and the Boys</i>	 Bill McAuley <i>Our Rights Democratic</i>

Frank Jones & Christy Wositzky-Jones
Father Dear

Plus...

...Patron Shane Howard
Bookings 5472 1196



A CHEWTON CHAT Supplement

proudly supported by Regional Development Victoria as part of Victoria's 175th Anniversary celebrations.



*Scenes from the MMSA Concert continued clockwise
from top left:*

MMSA winner Martin McKenna

Gisborne's Pete Kenyon bringing Fool's Gold to life.

Kestrel performing Patrick Killeen's Ballad of Forest Creek.

Richard Lewis was really Starting Something here.

*Bill McAuley (photo courtesy Judy Jaques) who had Bannit perform his composition
Our Rights Democratic (unfortunately no photo of them on stage is available).*

Col Fraser was taking on the Road to Democracy.

Doug Owen and crew will still never pay Three Quid for the Privilege.

Kimberley Clemens performing Me and the Boys.

and centre: Crosswind performing Rod Willaton's Eighteen Fifty-one.



A CHEWTON CHAT Supplement

proudly supported by Regional Development Victoria as part of Victoria's 175th Anniversary celebrations.

At the end of any competition there has to be a winner. The \$1,000 Monster Meeting Song Award first prize was taken out by Martin McKenna with his song *Thirty Shillings a Month* prompting the headline “*Thirty Shillings a Month*” turns into \$1,000 overnight!



Martin was obviously thrilled with his win. He is a full time farmer and occasional song writer with an interest in the colonial history of Australia. He sometimes sings, usually unaccompanied, at a monthly session at the Trentham Hotel. His great grandfather arrived from Kilkenny, Ireland in the colony of Victoria in September 1854 and headed for the diggings, including Forest Creek, before settling in



Kyneton where he had a brewing and malting business. When the land acts were passed in the 1860s he took up land in the Baynton district where Martin and his wife Christine still live and farm.

Second prize went to Northcote's Frank Jones and Christy Wositzky-Jones for “Father Dear”, and third prize to Eaglehawk's Jamie Roberts with “The Cards that Fell”. In presenting the winners their cheques, Parks Victoria's Kate Millar congratulated not only the prize winners, but all the entrants.

The Monster Meeting Song Award gave us a memorable night, one where history was well and truly made!

And the best may be yet to come. Already some of the entered songs have graced radio airwaves, and the possibility of a CD(s) is being explored!

The Monster Meeting Day



Three days later the 159th anniversary of the Monster Meeting arrived. Jan Wositzky had prepared a script, selected and rehearsed a cast and production company WTFN had indicated they were going to film proceedings for inclusion in an Australian history series they are making – with Tony Robinson (*Blackadder*, *Time Machine*, *The Worst Jobs in History*) as the anchor. 90 people had pre-booked for a Monster Meeting lunch at the Red Hill Hotel, Parks Victoria staff had moved the Maldon Museum's dray to the Shepherd's Hut site, David Stretch had lent a large PA system to the outdoor setting, power had been arranged courtesy of George and Bev Ralph and

A CHEWTON CHAT Supplement

proudly supported by Regional Development Victoria as part of Victoria's 175th Anniversary celebrations.



their neighbouring shed.

And then the rain came! For a few hours a gentle rain persisted so people retired to the Red Hill for lunch. Tables the length of the verandah made an impressive sight as they



took the overflow of diners. Tony Robinson and the WTFN crew were busy gathering interviews and footage and a *Bendigo Advertiser* photographer was recording the scene.

Weston Bate spoke in his inimitable passionate way. The sounds of the goldfields! Starting with a rocking cradle ("like thunder when the sounds of thousands were going!") he went on to describe and imitate many other sounds common on the goldfields of the time. In closing his wonderfully entertaining presentation Weston called for three cheers for Victoria! The roof nearly lifted off the hotel.

Song Award winner Martin McKenna then stepped up and sang *Forest Creek Lament*, another of his compositions.

Jane Dubsky was then introduced, Jane being a descendant of Captain Harrison who was one of the speakers at the Great Meeting in 1851. Jane and other relatives had come to Chewton to be part of the proceedings. After a briefing from Jan Wositzky the crowd spilled out into bright sunshine! Flags appeared and a colourful scene erupted as the diners were joined by many others for the march to the Shepherd's Hut site.



Photos opp. page: Winning song-writer Martin McKenna thanking the organisers and sponsors, and back in the shearing shed.

The Geoff Hocking poster advertising the Monster Meeting celebration.

Photos this page from top:

Two groups dining and conversations under the Red Hill's verandah.

John Flaus (or Laurence Potts) toasting a successful day.

Descendants of the famous Captain Harrison, Jane Dubsky on the right.

Weston Bate with the sounds of the goldfields.

Martin McKenna's Forest Creek Lament.

Tony Robinson explaining what the filming was going to entail.



A CHEWTON CHAT Supplement

proudly supported by Regional Development Victoria as part of Victoria's 175th Anniversary celebrations.



To the beat of a drum the march headed off along Main Street, Forest Creek being too boggy after an incredibly wet late winter and spring. Shortly after leaving, the stirring strains of Song Award finalist *Stand Behind the Flag* could be heard. Dave Maxwell had been at the lunch.

At Golden Point Road the marchers regrouped and were joined by Tony Robinson for the police assisted highway crossing. This dramatic scene was filmed, as was the rest of the march to the site.



*Though a single twig
May be bent or broken
A bundle together
Yields not nor breaks.*



*Photos from top:
Memories of earlier marches re-kindled for the old
buildings of Chewton.
A flooded Forest Creek meant a street crossing.
United in the cause, marching, marching, marching!*

*The Diggers United...
...Will never be defeated!*



A CHEWTON CHAT Supplement

proudly supported by Regional Development Victoria as part of Victoria's 175th Anniversary celebrations.



The crowd continued to swell before the show began. And Laurence Potts (*my name is John Flaus and I live in Castlemaine, but back in at the Monster Meeting of 1851 I was Laurence Potts*) stepped up and read the A Digger notice that had appeared through the goldfield calling diggers to unite - *Meet - Agitate – Be unanimous*.

One by one the other actors played out their roles;

Angus Read-Hill as John Worley (*I am Angus Read-Hill and I was born and bred in Castlemaine, but I spent much of my childhood in Whitehorse Gully just over that hill. It is an absolute privilege to be here*).

Tim Heath as Captain Harrison (*I'm Tim Heath, and I was born and grew up in Castlemaine. My great grandfather owned the Freemasons Hotel on the Forest Creek goldfields*).

David Watson as Mr. Booley (*I'm David Watson and I live here in Chewton. I was here at the Monster Meeting. The newspapers said I was Mr. Booley but it just might be they got it wrong*).

The Song Award songs of Frank Jones (Father Dear), Martin McKenna (Thirty Shillings a Month) and Doug Owen's Three Quid for the Privilege were included in the presentation.



Photos clockwise from top left: The crowd settles (courtesy Sarah Peckham), a bundle of twigs waved at the cast, Jan and the Acafellas, Doug Owen still not paying, John McCann rapt and wrapped, a shovel raised, Martin McKenna, Frank Jones and Angus Read-Hill, and Tony Robinson as a face on the hill.

A CHEWTON CHAT Supplement

proudly supported by Regional Development Victoria as part of Victoria's 175th Anniversary celebrations.



With the Acafellas providing vocal backing Jan wove the threads of the story into an entertaining piece of theatre, one that will be remembered for a very long time.

The 2010 Monster Meeting has been a remarkable success. A Monster Meeting Song Writing Award has turned out to be an inspired suggestion thanks to many, many people and all of our sponsors. The talented people who came up with the 38 entered songs are to be congratulated – they have taken the knowledge and understanding of this significant part of Australia's history to a whole new level!

Long may their songs be heard.



Photos clockwise from top left: Jan Wositzky and Stephen Breheny, Tim Heath ((Captain Harrison), John Flaus (Laurence Potts), the closing scene, Janice and Weston Bate in the company of Eliza Tree (Lola Montez), David Watson (Mr. Booley) and Angus Read-Hill (John Worley).

Thanks to all who participated in the Monster Meeting events in 2010 ...

... long live democracy!



A CHEWTON CHAT Supplement

proudly supported by Regional Development Victoria as part of Victoria's 175th Anniversary celebrations.