



Monster Meeting 2013

Due to a hectic year for everyone, our first planning meeting of the MM Sub Committee of the Chewton Domain Society happened just six weeks out from the event! Initially there was some hope of getting funding to support the 2013 event but no guarantee, either way we wouldn't know the score until just before the event.

There were some changes within the Sub Committee and I was appointed as Convenor. We got straight to work on this year's event and Pat Healy put her hand up - offering to be Project Manager. What a fantastic job she did, keeping us all on track with our tasks, and communicating actions and developments between meetings. It was our intention to create plenty of colour and theatre for this year's event which was to fall on a Sunday. This we thought was a very family friendly day for this time of year.

Noel Muller from Parks Victoria, who is always a keen and active member of our MM project team, said that he was able to get some period costumes on loan from Werribee Park Mansion. Jan Wositzky said that he could get some of the MM Band members to perform on the day and his friend Mark to provide the sound system. Davide Michelin, who has been working with Jan as a filmmaker on our ongoing MM projects, was also able to do some filming of the event to add to our stock of documentary footage; this meant we were off and running.

Even though the hoped for funding didn't eventuate, our enthusiasm and creative determination meant that the show would go on as planned anyway! Lots of people volunteered for various roles so that on the day, all we needed was the crowd. What a wonderful sight greeted me as I walked down from the Red Hill Hotel after lubricating my voice box, a large crowd was already at the Soldiers' Memorial Park waiting expectantly for the march to begin and my role as MC to be activated.

This year we marched along Forest Creek to the MM site, after crossing the road at the Red Hill Hotel (an icon of all MM marches!). Langley, our piper, and two drummers from Maldon provided the rousing marching tunes, and Rod Hadfield led the way with his period wheelbarrow and distinctive beard. At one point he was heard to say, "I wonder when they'll invent a wheel with rubber on it". Not long after that my friend Mark from Collingwood,



who had (not unusually) been acting suspiciously, suddenly took flight and was dramatically tackled to the ground, arrested for failing to produce a licence and dragged away by our policeman for the day. Park Ranger Brendan Smith played that role well.

The march halted for a short time at the creek crossing for some photo and film opportunities, and these have already appeared in the *Midland Express*, *Bendigo Advertiser*, on Win News and on-line. What a great spectacle it must have been for all those already waiting at the MM site. At the MM site the show began and the performers, speech makers and musicians did a terrific job. An unexpectedly comedic highlight were the “Ladies” Bettie Exon and Kate Daly presenting cue cards for the audience to follow and respond to.

Lisa Chesters was with us for the day. This refreshing MP for Bendigo came up to say a few words, following her maiden speech to Parliament where she made the formal claim that Chewton, because of the Monster Meeting in 1851, was the “Real Birthplace of Democracy in Australia”. She will be presenting a bound copy of “Hansard” containing the speech to the Chewton Domain Society on another occasion sometime soon.

Following the show, the guys from Parks Victoria stepped up yet again to produce a much welcome BBQ - along with some vintage children’s games. A terrific day and even packing up was a joyous occasion! Enormous thanks to everyone involved for their wonderful efforts and generosity of spirit, which puts real life into our history and community culture. Next year we are starting the planning much earlier in order to produce something bigger and better for 2014.

Thanks to Pat’s excellent Project Management, promotion for the event was strong and the media coverage has been excellent and very rewarding and encouraging to us all.

The current MM Sub Committee (which is auspiced and continually supported by the Chewton Domain Society) consists of Doug Ralph, Pat Healy, Bettie Exon, Noel Muller, Jan Wositzky, Glen Harrison, Kate Daly, John Ellis, Gloria Meltzer and Phil Hall (Convenor).

The Monster Meeting Sub Committee is completely open to new members and volunteers who might wish to help out in 2014. All Are Welcome!!!

Phil Hall.





Trenches
Excavations
Landscaping
Poethole Digger
Rubbish Removal
Driveway Construction

Phone Call on 5470 5975 or 0417 509 699



What a ripper the Monster Meeting celebration was. People, colour, noise, music, local history and a great reminder of the fragility of democracy. Congratulations to the organisers, and to all the people who came and participated. MC Phil Hall was supported by an array of talent conveying the messages of the time. The impact of the songs presented by Jan Wositzky, Danny Spooner, Doug Owen, Loz Lawrey and Larry (The Ells) and Tony Ryan was profound. This momentous 1851 event took place on what is now an iconic part of the Castlemaine Diggings National Heritage Park and Parks Victoria staff pulled out all stops to ensure the success of the day - from the arrival of the dray to the closing barbecue.

As someone has already emailed, "What a great day it was, and a good turn out too. Am already looking forward to next year's."

John Ellis.

