

# The Monster Meeting...

December the 13th. Two days before the actual anniversary of the the great meeting of diggers was the day that was designated for the 2015 celebration. A horse drawn people mover from Sandy Creek Clydesdales was already attracting attention along the Pyrenees Highway, before taking a prime parking spot outside the town hall. Inside the town hall was a display of Monster Meeting material, including memorabilia from past celebrations. The horses and the display provided plenty of entertainment for those arriving early.

Noah and Brooke were the powerful horses according to driver Matthew Thompson. Noah, a 5 year old part Clydesdale was the senior partner, and Brooke, a two year old pure Clydie was the other half of the team. Their placid nature was on show as Matthew climbed over them, and as they patiently waited for the numbers to build up.

Inside the hall the conversations were animated as the display was browsed. The Monster Meeting CD, the new Monster meeting book and even small versions of the flag were on sale. All the while people arrived, many in outfits that are only seen on special occasions. Norm Harris from the Bendigo Historical Society arrived with a collection of the international flags they own. Inside the hall he was surprised to see a photo of himself in 2004 – holding a flag made famous by Bendigo's 1853 Red Ribbon Rebellion. It was great to see Doug McCann, our guest speaker from the 2012 celebration, in the hall – and Martin McKenna too! Martin was the winner of the 2010 Monster Meeting Song Award with that special "Thirty Shillings a Month" that has been heard so often around Chewton in the intervening years. And Howard Penberthy arrived in a head turning blue vehicle, apologising for missing recent celebrations. The decision to move to a Sunday was clearly paying dividends.

Then Phil Hall, MC for the day, called the gathering together. With flags flying, lone piper Langley Rowbottom led the parade along Chewton's only (lonely?) footpath to Mount Street, where Max Lesser was keen to assemble a group shot. Some confusion ensued as the horses were negotiated into view-finders and a motorist turned left



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## ...celebration 2015

across their bows. But eventually, it was smiles all around as the event was recorded - accompanied by the barking of a very local dog attracted by the strange activity.

Down Mount Street past the quiet CFA building and the fallen pines to yet another Max-inspired, hastily assembled group shot. Then it was off over a very dry Forest Creek and along its course – a very different picture to the ones preserved from the 1850s.

On the Monster Meeting site there was time to catch up with old friends (and some once-a-year acquaintances) before the entertainment began. This is always a highlight of Monster meeting celebrations. Then it began – Phil Hall acknowledging we were meeting on Jaara land, welcoming everyone and turning the stage over to a couple of legends of the entertainment scene who have devoted years to learning and communicating the Monster Meeting message. Danny Spooner and Jan Wositzky have been integral to Monster Meeting celebrations for many, many years and their presence is always infectious.

Then it was book launching time. This part of the proceedings is covered by Beverley Bloxham in Chat Art (page 21).

Then Martin McKenna took centre stage with that classic of his - “Thirty Shillings a Month”. Accompanied by Danny and Jan and the voices of many on the grass – that song is obviously very well-known and appreciated in Chewton!

Jan went on give an explanation of the Monster Meeting project, the new book's genesis, and an interpretation of its relevance to modern times. He and Danny then brought the entertainment to an end with "Good times a-coming" which was also well known to the enthusiastic audience.

A Parks Victoria-provided BBQ, and the opportunity to seek “colour” with gold pans allowed the day to wind down. Another successful one – one that ended with a massive heave-ho to get the dray on the trailer for the trip back to Sandy Creek Clydesdales - to be ready for 2016!



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