

# The 15th of December...

What a day! The 166th anniversary of the Monster Meeting was celebrated in style, just off Golden Point Road in Chewton. There were many new faces among the estimated 200 sitting on the slope with eyes and ears attuned to the action on the dray.

A Parks Victoria sausage sizzle helped audience members settle in as equipment was set up and tested, video cameras placed, instruments tuned, voices readied and there were conversations all around. Spot the celebrity was on the go... is that John Romeril? Kavisha Mazzella? Derek Guille? (Can't tell until I hear his voice was the answer to that one!)

Stage Manager Leonie van Eyk was everywhere, making us wonder how we managed without someone filling that role in the past. The choir bus from Ballarat arrived, bringing the uniformed Italian Women's Choirs La Voce Della Luna and Coro Del Oro. Our federal and state members of parliament mingled, and Parks Victoria's Peter Foster was there with our local PV people Noel Muller, Brendan Smith and Colin Lyons.

Then a hush! The bagpiper came over the hill in a dramatic entrance – as Langley has done so often and so well in the past. And the show began. MC Jan Wositzky was on the microphone and it wasn't long before the familiar banjo was introduced. The Monster Meeting story was told in word and song, and enhanced with cameo appearances by Derek Guille (who had "pusillanimity" down pat), Lisa Chesters, Andrew Pitcher and Sam Thomas.



*From the publicity photo taken by Eve Lamb and featured on page 1 of the Midland Express (top photo) through all the performances to the aftermath in the town hall - a huge success! And hang on to any Geoff Hocking designed MM 17 poster you have – they appear to have become collectors' items in Chewton central!*



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# Monster Meeting 2017

Maree Edwards spoke about the state government's role in purchasing the additional land at this site, and the integration of that land into the Castlemaine Diggings National Heritage Park. "As managers of the Monster Meeting site, Parks Victoria will ensure that it is preserved for future generations to commemorate our colonial history. We want to ensure that the story of what happened here can be told and shared. We encourage people to come and visit the area and learn more about the events that have shaped our history." Maree also congratulated the community and the Chewton Domain Society for the successful campaign to have this significant site heritage listed.

Maree was followed by Peter Foster and the two of them unveiled the new Monster Meeting sign that is to be installed on the site.

A concert then followed... John Flaus presenting a John McGlade poem, Loz Lawrey singing his own "Chartist" composition, Sue Ingleton with her own poem and one penned by John Romeril and then Keith McHenry putting an alternative emphasis on September the 11th in one of his own poems. Remember September the 11th? In 1973? <http://unionsong.com/u197.html>

Then it was Kavisha and the choirs. "Tunc Justus", and it was easy to appreciate why they received a standing ovation at Eureka for this. Thus justice indeed...

Too soon it was all over, and time to move off – or perhaps to sit on the Monster Meeting rock and reflect.

The choir moved to the Chewton Town Hall for some Chewton Domain Society hospitality before the journey back to Ballarat. The varied accents were joined by a Scottish one when James McLardy took a break from readying the Red Hill Hotel and dropped in to say hello. The town hall was filled with unbridled enthusiasm... and words! And more words! And "Tunc Justus" filled the town hall as a fitting encore, and bringing a fantastic day to an end!

***Put the 15th of December 2018 in your diary now...***



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It was really moving to be part of my first Monster Meeting on the 15th of December 2017. The way Jan Wositsky told the story linking the chapters with music and poetry was educational and great fun. I loved listening to experienced actors like Sue Ingleton with her women's poem (see page 19) and John Flaus with a rendition of his friend John McGlade's poem to Loz Lawrey singing. That, together with the handing over of the land was the least boring gathering with a politician I have ever been to!

Although I have only been in Castlemaine three and a half years, it made me feel proud to be part of a community that cares enough about its history to put on such a warm show and in a way that is a sort of community ritual that honours the story of democracy in our community. The hospitality shown to me and my choir Coro del Oro, who had hired a bus and come all the way from Ballarat, was also touching and it ended with a delicious vegetarian dinner and singing round the table before we waved them off home knowing we had made a meaningful connections that will fortell more happenings in the future. I think that the Monster Meeting could grow into a small community festival with the day starting with the re-enactment, and then carrying on with music, poetry readings, games, festival stalls and maybe a community banquet! Maybe next year? In any case, I will see you there next year with bells on!

Thanks to one and all who made it so good!

Kavisha Mazzella.

It was a great pleasure to sing a song of mine at the Monster Meeting, which has become Castlemaine's annual celebration of democracy.

I tip my hat to Jan Wositzky and all who took part in organising and participating in the event. Jan is a great MC and storyteller and he set a wonderful tone on the day with his narrative and songs. I always love the speech re-enactments and I particularly enjoyed the



performance of *Tunc Justus* by Kavisha Mazzella and the Italian Choir from Ballarat. All in all it was a joy to be involved, and I hope that next year's event will be even bigger.

Loz Lawrey.

## Stage whispers...



As the Federal Member for Bendigo I have always been very proud of the fact that the path to democracy in Australia started right here in Central Victoria.

The Chewton community and volunteers put on another fantastic Monster Meeting commemoration this year, keeping that history alive and celebrating the passion, commitment and comradeship of those 15,000 diggers who gathered in Chewton in 1851.

This year, I was honoured to be able to re-enact the part of Laurence Potts. Even though it's been 166 years since Laurence Potts spoke at Chewton, his words would not sound out of place in the 45th Parliament.

Despite their differences, these diggers stood up together to fight for a fair go.

Each and every year the energy and passion of the commemoration inspires me as I stand in parliament to speak about the issues facing today's workers - penalty rates, labour hire and wage theft.

Lisa Chesters MP, Federal Member for Bendigo

Shadow Assistant Minister for Workplace Relations

Shadow Assistant Minister for Rural & Regional Australia



It was a fantastic event and wonderful to see so many people participating. With the site now managed by Parks Victoria, and on the heritage register, it means that the Monster Meeting re-enactment will grow in stature and popularity and more and more people will attend each year.

The important acknowledgements of this site to our social, political and cultural history were eloquently made on the night. Chewton really can claim to be the home of democracy in Victoria.

Congratulations to all involved in the event – it was enormous fun but also an important occasion and opportunity to celebrate Chewton as the Monster Meeting place.

Maree Edwards, State Member for Bendigo West  
Deputy Speaker of the Victorian Legislative Assembly

I was delighted to be invited to be part of the 2017 Monster Meeting event, to read aloud the poster that was distributed to call the diggers together. It was particularly rewarding to be part of a day that also saw the official announcement that the land on which the Meeting was held is now formally recognised as part of the Castlemaine Diggings National Heritage Park. There is an old saying that those who forget their history will be doomed to repeat it, and knowing what happened here 166 years ago should be a constant reminder that our hard-won democratic rights and responsibilities are precious elements of the vibrant country we have become.

Derek Guille.



It was a great honor to be invited to read Mr Booley's speech by Jan at the MM event this year.

Such a significant moment for the local community to share the news that this historic site will be remembered and celebrated by future generations. A real testament to those who bravely fought for their human rights with morality, justice, and truth.

Sam Thomas.



## ...and even some asides!

At the Monster Meeting of 2017, I found myself opening up to a history that filled me with a new understanding of how people had fought for their rights in a place where corruption and greed were the strongholds. Suzanne Ingleton's poem about women and their experience of Eureka, shed new light on what I had only heard to be a male history. Kavisha's passionate singing, along with her choir also giving voice to the women who were cast aside, without any rights, and the many who existed throughout this grueling time. A time, where whether you earned any money or not, you were forced to pay taxes that equated to \$1000 a month in today's terms, which of course was unmanageable, and those who didn't hold licenses were penalised in some form or another. The words of different writers who had thought long and hard about our history gave us valuable insight into the experience of lives lived in this fraught time of settlement and annihilation of the land particular to this area.



I left the Monster Meeting site standing taller and more connected to the land in which I currently live, with a refreshed sense of curiosity to place. Thanks to all those involved.

Leonie Van Eyk.



There were people who knew and those who didn't but the Monster Meeting 2017 drew a good crowd and the feeling all round held an undercurrent of Rebellion! Maybe we were touched by the physical memory held in this historic place but maybe also, we are all champing at the bit for another Rebellion. Maybe anticipation was high for the Bennelong election, due the next day, to bring down the government that has failed us so many times and has kept the struggling poor and refugees under the yoke or maybe the spirit of freedom just got fired up in the sight of the Flag?

Sue Ingleton.

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