

GEOFF HOCKING

The Monster Meeting Interviews #3 Geoff Hocking interviewed by Jan 'Yarn' Wositzky

Approximate running time: 17 minutes

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Funded by **Ballarat Reform League** with assistance from the **Vera Moore Foundation** & the Australian Government's **Your Community Heritage Program** (Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities).

Geoff Hocking

Geoff Hocking is a Castlemaine based author, publisher, historian and artist. His books relating to gold rush history include *Early Castlemaine: A Glance at the Stirring Fifties* (New Chum Press, 1998), *Castlemaine: From Camp to City* (Five Mile Press, 1994) and *Under the Southern Cross* (Five Mile Press, 2012). Two of Geoff's large scale sculptures adorn the entrance to Castlemaine: one at Chewton, opposite the Monster Meeting site depicts the meeting, and the second in Castlemaine itself, depicts a gold digging scene.

Overview of Interview

In the spirit of the Monster Meeting, Geoff provides a dissenting interpretation of the current Monster Meeting flag and talks of the history of Chartist monster meetings in Great Britain, and of the values we inherit from our Monster Meeting.

Part 1 Introduction to Geoff Hocking

0:00 How family came to gold rush and lived near Monster Meeting site, Geoff was born and bred in Bendigo and grew up with gold fields influences all around him.

Part 2 The Monster Meeting Flag

2:09 Discussion of the flag flown at the Monster Meeting, comparison with flag flown at Bendigo in 1853, and Geoff's argument as to why the design of the Monster Meeting flag as used today is incorrect: why the kangaroo and emu are the wrong way around; how pick and shovel image should also include gold cradle; how the scales should be scales of justice not gold scales; the bundle of sticks, an image that come from the Roman Centurions, should be sticks, not twigs as on our flag (including Roman history and how Fascists corrupted this image); how colours would have been more earthy; how the journalist Howitt is historical source for his research.

(Editor's note: the colours of the current Monster Meeting flag – red, white and blue - were chosen on the notion that the diggers could well have made the flag out of what cloth was at hand, and that red and blue predominated on the gold field.)

Part 3 The Monster Meeting

11:38 Description of 14,000 at the Monster Meeting, how these events were common in Britain, the story of a monster meeting at Manchester in 1819 when demonstrators were massacred, how diggers here are empowered with cash, and Forest Creek Monster Meeting is compared to crowd at Bathurst 500 car race, firing each other up, but speakers educated men.

Discussion of how the Monster Meeting united the gold seekers into being a force – the Diggers – and how the word ‘monster’ may also be a verb, as in to monster the government.

Geoff's view that we owe the diggers our essential freedom.