

Jubilee Gems



Bringing you memories of the 50 year journey of celebration of the parish of St Joseph's and St Bernadette's.

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Parishioners speak of the strong feeling of being part of a team, working together to build a school where their children would be educated well and a place where they could come together to worship and socialise. Whether it be "Birds of a feather..." or the powerful force that comes with associating with others, groups muster a momentum and energy.



In 1964 there was no such thing as grants for Catholic schools, so the onus was on the parish to generate funds.

Father O'Neill established the Mothers Club (or Ladies Auxiliary) to help with fundraising for the building of the Church and school. Amongst the first members were: Maureen Green, Pat Chapman, Kath Dacy and Maureen Howard. There was also a tuck-shop to be run. "The group brought together," says Loreto Kelly, "a wonderful cross section of the parish ladies who set to work with zeal and enthusiasm to provide the money to equip the school. "The group ran street stalls, raffles, newspaper collections, balls, fashion parades, and parish picnics. "You name it, they ran it."

The ladies showed great resourcefulness. One example was that there was no place for a school canteen, so the ladies organised one. They cleaned out an old chook pen, which was next to the presbytery and installed a pie warmer there. As

someone commented at the time, thank goodness the health inspector was not around. Later it was moved to the factory kitchen.

Talking of food, Veronica Baum, a pupil from 1968 to 1974, well remembers the enticing smell of warming pies wafting from play time until lunch. "It made my peanut butter on home-made bread sandwich hard to look forward to, but it made the rare occasion of a lunch order very special. I used to swap play-lunch with my friend Virginia – she had the best homemade chocolate hedgehog slice and I had some kind of homemade biscuits she coveted. What luck for me!"

At its Annual Meeting in 1969 nine young mother's volunteered for the Mother's Club

One of the recurring themes that comes through as we relate these stories about the parish is the fantastic sense of community, particularly in the pioneering days of St Joseph's. In this edition we examine some of the groups over the 50 years. But before we do: think of a number between one and two hundred, then add fifty to it. Got it! That's probably the number of groups we've had in the parish over the years – and impossible to feature in 4 pages.

Committee. Following the election of office bearers, Father Laurie announced that the Mother's Club were going to run the parish Fete that year. Result: Several very traumatised young mothers! But they did it in fine style.

Mothers Club committee soon became an occupational hazard. Nelly Menting recalls how things had been going nice and stable until their President fell

pregnant followed by another committee member, and then another, and another. Soon most of the committee members were expecting babies. "Fearing that this condition could be contagious, there was a time when mothers were very apprehensive about joining and serving the Mothers Club," laughs Nellie.

Thanks for the great response and your feedback to **Jubilee Gems**. The next edition will be all about how people pitch in at the parish. If you have a story to add, let us know at jubileememories@yahoo.com.au



It was well and good that the women were doing the hard yards but they had to admit they needed the support – or muscle - of the men of the parish. The Men's Club was set up by Robin Keedle and amongst its first members were Cliff Kelly, Dick Lynzaart and Martin Baum, along with a host of past and current parish long-timers. This club came together through work and "social" get togethers for the big and small jobs of the Parish. One of its first projects was installing a sandpit for the 'school's littlies'. The group also transformed the factory into a classroom with a paint spruce and repairs. Another huge project was the building of the septic tank system which, said Loreto,



The Men's Club

was akin to building the Pyramids. "Father O'Neill invited me as president of the auxiliary at the time, to take the cup test. I declined the honour. One needed to be humble in times of great achievement."



When asked about the ubiquitous Men's Club, Phil Johnson says his memories tended to be "shrouded in the mists of time". It was a case of "Cometh the hour, cometh the man" proclaims Phil, of a time long gone where conviviality was a given after a tough day's labour. At any case, "The Men's club was the genesis of so much Parish activity in those early days, and acted to introduce so many families of the young undeveloped Boronia," adds Phil.

Sport has always been an important parish activity fostering team spirit and community and family involvement. The St. Joseph's Little Athletics Club was formed in 1968. The first season was held at the old Boronia High School ground in Tormore Road and according to an official at the time: "Every Friday a merry band would descend upon the ground with motor mowers and a not-so-willing ground marking machine, to lay out the tracks." The competition was against many local schools.

During the 1970's competition was first held at Chandler Park of a Saturday morning during the summer season. Mick Rankin says St Joseph's was one of the stronger clubs with our school's kids amongst the place getters in most events. The Dyer boys (Rick and Bill), Carol Stivala, Carla Lechner, Gerard White and the Rankin clan of Joanne, Geoff, David and Christine



Joanne Rankin striding to a Walk final win

were all fine competitors. Along with many other parents and helpers, Betty Dyer ensured all the kids made it to the start in the track events or to the field events on time. "Jamie Holohan," says Mick "was so small for his age that officials often thought he was lining up in the wrong age group". During the

Winter cross country season, St Joey's team once again was right up with the place getters. Some of the boys were in the St Joseph's football team as well so they had a very busy weekend ahead of them. Mick took the cross country team for training on Tuesdays, after school, using a track that did the perimeter of the school grounds, and around the school oval. "It was a fun time and everyone enjoyed the training, even though it meant running around the course five times or more during the training session!"

In 1967 the St. Josephs' School football team competed in its first game against another school. It was an eagerly awaited match and the Mens' Club had worked hard to cultivate an oval of sorts behind the old Factory. With school and family finances low and a set of new footy jumpers for the kids out of the question, improvisation was the key. Although the school colours were green, gold and grey, twenty brand-new navy blue windcheaters were cheaply acquired. The colour problem was solved at the last minute when Maureen Mason sat up most of the night before the game sewing a combination green, gold and grey sash on the front of the new 'jumpers'.



The 1973 Football team

Numbers on their backs was something the kids could wait for. She noted with some pride that improvised jumpers didn't look too bad as the inaugural St. Joseph's football team ran out to play. The match went well and the jumpers survived, although some of the players became bored waiting for the ball to come up their end and picked their way through the sashes!

The football team provided lots of enjoyment. Early supporters remember a game at FTG when the ball came hurtling towards Matt Osborne's position. With players from both teams in pursuit Matt's desperate scream could be heard: "Which way is our end? Which is our end?"

Netball was also a popular sport in our parish with many premierships at all levels being won over the years. Many folk during the eighties recall the Netball masses at the beginning of the seasons and at one time St. Joseph's parish had ten netball teams. Veronica Baum has vivid memories of training in the 'Bird Cage' for St Joseph's Netball Club, and being so proud to wear the "stiff, uncomfortable green and gold uniform" on Saturday home and away games. Tricia Purchase fondly recalls the Monday Night Competition conducted at our courts by Jill Morse in the 70's for six to seven years. It was a great fund raiser for the parish and a good way of making friends. On cold winter nights Peter Parlevleit and some men from the Men's Club would cook up some Dutch oliebollens generating revenue for the Parish. In the mid 1990's some of the netball mums, including Sue Green, Pat Arms, Claire Dowling, Leanne Reid and others, formed their own netball team and played for many years, on a week night before age and injuries caught up with them.

The kids' sporting clubs provided ancillary benefits. Tricia and others said they were a great way for parents to interact and socialise. And Brian & Joan White draw on fond memories of the fun and companionship attending the Dinner Dances associated with both the Football and Netball. Peter and Mary Asquith saw the Dinner Dances as a highlight of the social calendar. "Mary & I attended all of these while our boys were at St Bernadette's and a few after they left. They were originally conceived as a social night that was to be a bit classier than some of the others, with everyone dressing up, and with touches such as champagne before dinner, and port on the tables," says Peter.



Youth group beach weekend 1986

Youth have been catered for with a variety of groups over the years. In 1968, the Boronia group of the YCW was instrumental in setting up a coffee shop where teenagers could regularly go. YCW members were

also involved with parish discussion groups. Marie Unkles was chosen to lead one of the Renewal of Faith discussion groups in the parish in 1972.

Youth Groups at St Joseph's have come and gone, dictated by level of interest and what was 'cool' for that age. In 1986 a handful of energetic families collected together their resources and skills and reformed the youth Group. It was run on Friday nights for year 7 and 8 students from the parish. A range of events was on the menu: ten pin bowling, games in

the old green shed and movie outings or trips to the Chadstone Don Bosco Centre. Rosemary and Graham Gibson remember how a few adventurous parents got together to organise a week-end away to Sandy Point. "We had as much fun as the children," recalls Graham. "The highlight of the weekend for us was celebrating Mass with Father Tony Shallue, sitting together in a circle on the beach."

Getting some Co-op
Brian White would like to acknowledge a particular group – the former Bayswater-Boronia Co-operative Credit Society. The Co-op, as it was called, operated in the front of the Factory. Brian said it was only after a chat with one of the directors was he in a position to set himself and his family up financially. He never looked back from there. In return, Brian offered his support to the Co-op as a volunteer for 20 years.

The Youth Club run by the seminarians from Croydon Monastery enjoyed some great times, particularly at Shoreham at the Sacred Heart fathers holiday house. The youngsters enjoyed a range of activities from exercises geared to their spiritual development to running free on the beach. The parent committee on each camp faced the challenge of trying to cook meals on a slow combustion stove that, remembers Loreto Kelly, belched smoke into their faces and had to be plugged with mud.



It is worth recognising that the Mother's Club of 1969 consisted of the ladies in the picture (from left): Margaret Henderson, Aileen Kennedy (R.I.P), Elsie Meehan, Joan Emerson Beth Holohan, Carmel Burmeister, Kim Lucas, Marie Harmen and Anne Wettenhall. Today, after all those years, these women still meet regularly over lunch, and celebrate what they call a "Christmas Orgy", to which husbands are invited. As Beth says: "We are there for each other in times of joy and in times of sorrow. How lucky were we that we volunteered to help with the building of our Parish!"

For many years there was a school camp for schools in the FernTree Gully District on the banks of Lake Eppalock. St. Joseph's attended their first camp in 1972 and St Bernadette's joined and had their first camp in 1983. The children came up with the name YUMBUNGA which means "good camping place". Parents from the school served on the Management Committee and these good people helped run the activities such as boating, orienteering, damper making and billy tea and the flying fox. Keith and Nellie Menting ran the camp for many years as cook and caretaker. The camp had to be sold in the early 90s due to declining numbers and the removal of camping from the colleges curriculum.

Playgroup has been an important part of parish family life. The first playgroup was started by Carmel van Brakel (McGough) and Tillie de Bie in 1977 in the Factory. Beginning modestly using their own toys from home, they had books and fruit and a drink for the children. Soon they were able to purchase equipment and toys from the small donations from members. On rainy days Carmel and her team had to arrive early to sweep out the water that came in. "All in good fun," recalls Carmel. Firm friendships were made between mums and children during those years.

Leanne Reid remembers taking her older kids to Playgroup in the early 80s when it was run by Annette ???. She returned a few years later where she was greeted by a different group of just as welcoming mums, and a more structured program. When numbers dropped, the group was looking for extra kids and a new leader to make it viable. Leanne reluctantly filled the breach. But the job grew on her. "I really enjoyed the 11 years I spent running the group," says Leanne. "We celebrated birthdays, Easter and Christmas with the highlight always being a year 6 student filling in for Father Christmas, usually with an elf to help him. The look on the faces of the children was always priceless."

One of the most vibrant and active groups is the Social Justice Group (SJG). Inspired initially by John Commin's great desire to help East Timor, the SJG has been instrumental in a number of projects over the years. From facilitating bicycles and sporting and educational goods in the early days to donations to the orphanage in Los Palos (via Club26) and its assistance to asylum seekers and refugee women at Wellsprings for Women, the group is a beacon for justice in our community. They have also held parish

dinners to raise funds. One year the stars of Timor Leste's first feature film (Beatrice's War) attended. "As a group we continue to be a focus for justice in our community," says organiser Anne Schmid. "Asylum seekers still need our help, and Timor Leste is still struggling from the aftermath of war."

Trish Purchase remembers the Charismatic Prayer Group introduced by Fr Grant O'Neil and the many friendships that subsequently endured. Also, the Women's Outreach Group started by Fr Tony Shallue. "This was a great support for women and provided a special welcome to new women in the parish," recalls Trish. Looking back, Father Tony subscribes to the on-going impact of the Outreach Group: "Many women from this group are people I still journey with in life."



A Pastoral Council meeting.

The mission and outreach of our parish and schools is kept alive by various Councils. The Parish Pastoral Council represents the people of the parish and has served as the consultative group for the Parish Priest for many years.

Many of the visible – and less than visible - parish initiatives have passed by the PRC. And of course, the School Advisory Councils and their Parent Committee offshoots are currently doing fantastic work, as they always have.

To cater for the maturing population, the Friendship Group started in 1998 at the suggestion of Betty Unsworth. Betty, Maureen Howard and Trudi Lechner were the founding members. Sadly, Betty passed away some years ago but Maureen and Trudi still attend. The group, which meets each Tuesday afternoon, now includes many people from the wider community. Nettie Shanahan was the treasurer for 15 years and contributed greatly to the group.

Fifty years has brought us many other groups and stories of their own that can't be told in the limited space we have here...like the Family groups, the Prayer and the Catechumenates, the sponsoring teams for the RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults), the St Vincent de Paul Society (although Vinnies will be featured in the next edition!). We haven't delved into the Baby Sitting clubs, the Basketball and Cricket teams, the Men's Table Tennis club and the 4th Knox Scouts...and many others that have passed though the memory over time! We just couldn't. But if you have a story that must be told about a group, we're all ears and we'd love to capture it next time in the final edition. See you then. ##



Special thanks to the people who have contributed to, or supported, this edition. The final Jubilee Gems will be published in November. It will focus on Pitching In—How we've worked together.

