

# A Day to Remember



Members of CDCA and the Organising Sub Committee L-R: Margaret Guthrie, Alan Scarlett, Pete Ellerington, Bruce Stephenson, Mike Answerth, Linda Reid, Charles Uber.

An unexpected crowd of 2000 people came to enjoy the 50th birthday of Churchill. The weather forecast was not promising, but Sunday March 15 dawned fine and calm after rain through the night.

The sun peeped through and as people arrived in Philip Parade to set up their stalls, the day looked set to be a wonderful one to see the 50th birthday of Churchill's proclamation. It just got better and better as the day went along.

Philip Parade was closed off to cars to become a colorful precinct of gazebos and food vendors.

The Town Hall Plaza was ready for the formal unveiling of the official 50th anniversary plaque, with flags flying, the new service memorial in place, and seating for guests and members of the public.

At 10 am the Combined Churches of Churchill began their service in the Town Hall. Approximately 150 people attended, including past residents and former ministers/priests and Sisters of St Joseph. Darren Chester, Federal Member for Gippsland and Russell Northe, Member for Morwell were also there.

The service was prepared by the

Reverend Brenda Burney (Co-Operating Churches of Churchill, Boolarra, Yinnar), with help from Father Francis Otobo (Lumen Christi Catholic Parish) and Pastor Tony Marsden and Linda Whitney (Churchill Christian Fellowship).

Members of the churches, past and present, and our current chaplain at Federation University, Reverend Frank Lees, participated in the service and helped to lead the rousing singing.

Audio equipment was supplied by Peter Gray of AMPWORKS and music was played by John and Margaret Sunderland and Rosemary Abtez-Rouse.

Father Hugh Brown who was parish priest at Lumen Christi and Chaplain at Monash University Gippsland, gave the homily which presented us with a humorous account of our history, but with a challenge to continue the work of the gospel in this wonderful place of Churchill we call home.

Following the service a plaque was unveiled by our centenarian Eric Rowley, with a few words describing how this area looked when he first arrived in 1928 when he was fourteen. Alongside him was

his wife of many years. Eric told me that Dorothy would probably be the oldest living person to be born in this area.

Fitting Bible verses and a prayer of blessing were said over the plaque.

The rock on which the plaque was placed was generously provided by Adrian Hunter, who also placed the rock in its position of honour outside the Town Hall.

The day was warm and sunny and people were then encouraged to go below into Philip Parade to join with the many others who were enjoying catching up with former residents not seen for some years, visiting the stalls and enjoying a BBQ supplied by the Lions Club of Churchill and District.

There was a busy hum of conversation and lots of colour and activity to take in.

The formal unveiling of the official town 50th Anniversary plaque took place around 11.45. am, and Mike Answerth MC'd the proceedings.

He welcomed guests, who included early shopkeepers like Anne Avery (Van Rhine), fruit and vegetables, Tony Radford butcher, and Ross and Liz Ollquist Pharmacists, plus David, the son of the

first residents Graham Ayres and family.

Christine Johnson gave the Welcome to Country on behalf of the Gunnai/Kurnai people. Speeches were made by Russell Northe, Darrell White and Keith Hamilton extolling the virtues of Churchill, congratulating the organisers of the day, sharing memories of their early days in Churchill, and praising those who over the years have fought to improve the facilities in a town which started with nothing. The positive future for Churchill was also expressed in the many projects under way and because of the ongoing dedication of the town's people to continue to work for the community.

Stall holders reported lots of positive outcomes from the day from good profits for sales of items and interest in membership.

The day started at 9am and concluded at 2pm, but many thought that was too early to have such a wonderful occasion come to an end.

Thank you to our magnificent community for getting behind this 50th birthday and making the day such an outstanding success.

**Kurnai College.**  
*Junior Campus—Principal Matthew Jobling*  
 Kurnai College participated in the 50th anniversary celebrations. The Kurnai Music students gave performances in a variety of ensembles. The Kurnai College stand displayed photos from the opening of Churchill Campus and the University Campus, Yearbook covers, and copies of form group photos over the last 30 years. The form group photos proved extremely popular, although at times perhaps a little embarrassing considering the amount of laughing that was happening with former students showing their children or partner the older photos. There was lots of reminiscing and a great time was had by all as the town celebrated the history of Churchill.  
*University Campus—Principal Nello Carbone*  
 Kurnai College has been a member of the Churchill Community now for 30 years and helping to celebrate Churchill's 50th birthday on the weekend was a tremendous honour. We manned a stall with some of the older members of staff who had been a part of the Churchill Campus over the years. To encourage past students to visit our stall we prepared every class photo from 1985 onwards. This was a real success as parents and grandparents stopped to find their photo in the displays. Many were eager to have a chat about the old days when the Churchill Campus was in its infancy. Kurnai College prides itself on being a valuable and contributing member of the Churchill community and we look forward to many more community events that we can participate in.



The jumping castle was a great attraction for the children.



Mike Answerth, MC beginning the formalities.



Philip Parade busy with stalls and people



Keith Hamilton and Darrell White unveiling the 50th anniversary plaque.

**Hazelwood Rotary Club**  
 Ray and Leo:  
 The occasion provided Hazelwood Rotary Club with an opportunity to promote our existence at a venue where memories and celebration predominated. Our club has been a stalwart in Churchill's community over many years; therefore, interaction at "grassroots level" with people is vital for Hazelwood Rotary to remain relevant in achieving its goals. To this end, the day was extremely worthwhile.  
 Our photographic display generated plenty of discussion, mainly from those who wished to reminisce – which is important as it provided "a personal anchor" to call Churchill home.



Piston Car Club display



Churchill and District Lions Club cooked every sausage available in town.



Churchill's 50th Anniversary banner behind the rostrum, ready for the official ceremony



The altar used in the church service



Kurnai College ensembles entertained the crowds

## Churchill Primary School

Jacky Comber:

The newly formed Parents and Friends group have the aim of being more incorporated into the community. For Churchill Primary School the 50th anniversary celebrations were a great opportunity to start the year off with their new aims.

For them it was a great success as a public relations exercise and also a fundraising effort, which netted a tidy sum. The feedback and comments at the school have been positive. One of them was that Churchill should have something like this every year. Churchill Primary School choir sang a selection of songs in the Town Hall Plaza after the speeches and the plaque unveiling.

The day was excellent in all aspects, community, organisation and weather (how blessed were we). The CPS children seemed to enjoy performing in front of the audience and were appreciated. It was unfortunate the sound system did not work at first but then it did, with some tweaking from Peter Pooley. The system did not have a CD player and we did not have one handy, so we could not play the music. We all felt the kids compensated very well.

The cake stall run by the school's Parents and Friends was a huge success. While they raised a lot of money, a price cannot be put on the community spirit that was evident. It was great talking to people interested in our school. We had a number of past students who made themselves known to us.

We all feel that similar gatherings would be great. I have heard talk about a market once a month. Personally, I think that might lose favour quickly, but every now and then would be great for our community. I have also heard favourable comments about using the Philip Parade space, which till now has been what someone called a "dead space" - another person's words.



## The Churchill Tennis Club.

Elaine and Carol:

The Churchill Tennis Club is trying to organise a reunion so this was an excellent opportunity to catch up with past players and spread the word. They had a lovely display of old photos which caused much interest. They described the occasion as a happy cheerful time of catching up and interaction. The weather was beautiful and people were so enthusiastic about the reunion this year. Some visitors came from as far away as Bairnsdale. They congratulate the committee on a magnificent effort.





Photo courtesy of Anthony F. Reynolds Photography (lice)

The new Town Hall Plaza ready for the formalities.



Sister Maureen O'Kelly read part of the prayers.



Neil Terrill read the old testament Bible reading at the church service.



Father Hugh Brown gave the homily in the church service.

**The Combined Churches**  
 The Combined Churches tent was well attended with lots of reminiscing and making acquaintances again after many years. Some lovely bookmarks had been prepared and they proved popular with visitors to the stall. Information leaflets were also available. The highlight for the churches was the beautiful service at 10am which was attended by close to 150 people. It was so good to be able to celebrate 50 years of service to God and the community, and to pray for the future of our great town. Unveiling our plaque after the service by Eric Rowley was another highlight. Thanks go to all the organising committee and the churches committee who worked so hard to have it happen, and to all those who took part.



Eric Rowley, 100 years old, spoke of the days he first arrived in Churchill before unveiling the church's plaque.



Reverend Frank Lees, Chaplain at FedUni read part of the prayers.



Father Francis O'tobo gave the blessing. In the background is Peter Gray of AMPWORKS who generously provided the P.A. system.

### Andrea and Greg Strack

Reverend Greg Strack and his wife Andrea, were the ministers at the Co-Operating Churches in Churchill from 1987 for five years. Ministers then were rotated through the denominations each five years.

They had come from Canberra and found the way Churchill was organised was similar to Canberra. They were impressed by the way the Co-Operating Churches was set up with so many denominations working together, and the way the church worked with Lumen Christi. Andrea says she was surprised by the similarities between the liturgies used at both churches the first time they worshiped together.

The Stracks found the church people very welcoming. Andrea remembers fondly the Ladies Dinners provided by the men.

The Post Primary School began operation in Churchill buildings after starting in Morwell.

Andrea says it was an impressive school and organised well. Son Jason began Year 7 there and daughter Tina began her secondary education there.

Having the university close by allowed Jason to continue his education in town.

Andrea became very involved with the Neighbourhood Centre and enjoyed her time there.

The Strack children were involved with sport and Andrea says the town had great sporting facilities for families with children for a small town. The pool was built while they were here.

With access to larger shopping centres nearby and the train for Melbourne, the setting of Churchill was viewed very favourably. It was separated and had a lovely rural feel surrounded by farmland.

Churchill News was a wonderful asset with its focus on the town and its activities, giving a welcome to those coming into the town.

Andrea told of a special memory about thunderstorms saying you had a brilliant sighting of them and their lightning.

The Stracks enjoyed their time in Churchill calling Churchill a nice place to be, with access to other places for day trips not far away.

### Churchill's 50th Birthday Big Day

From CDCA members and the organising committee:

Heather Farley: Congratulations to you and the rest of the CDCA and company who put on a wonderful day yesterday. It was a really important event for the town and went superbly. You should all be VERY PROUD. I think lots who missed it would be very sorry they had!

Rob de Souza-Daw: I was happy with the day and the accompanying weather. I renewed acquaintances with many, and met others who were residents in the early years of Churchill.

Linda Reid: It was a party about Churchill for Churchill. Very friendly and nostalgic.

Alan Scarlett: Just the right mix of activities, food and memorabilia.

Bruce Stephenson: What a great day !!

Margaret Guthrie: Such a joy to see so many smiling faces and conversations. A happy reunion for many folk. The day made me feel very proud to be part of the Churchill community.

Peter Ellerington: It was really good. The crowds we were hoping for came. I liked the community spirit and the catching up. It was wonderful to have David Ayres present. It was hectic but it was a good old fashioned get together. The team worked well together, showing initiative and helping where needed. There was no trouble and no hitches, and only three minor first aid needs. It was fantastic!



Linda Whitney, Reverend Brenda Burney, Father Francis Otobo, Father Hugh Brown who led the service.



The hall filling up . . .



Watching the unveiling



Eric Rowley unveiling the church's plaque



Singers who led the singing at the service

# Celebrating 50 YEARS CHURCHILL 1965 - 2015 SPECIAL FEATURE



Darrrell and Keith unveiling the town plaque.

**CHURCHILL 50<sup>th</sup> JUBILEE**

This plaque unveiled on 15 March 2015 commemorates the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the proclamation of the town of Churchill. In 1963 planning began for a new town called Hazelwood. On 8 February 1965 the Minister for Housing Lindsay Thompson and President of the Shire of Morwell Les Hare announced the town would be named Churchill to honour the British Prime Minister during World War II Winston Churchill who died on 24 January 1965. The Secretary of the Shire of Morwell Reg Lord signed the proclamation on 15 March 1965.



The Town Plaza ready for the day's activities.



## Auskick

### Peter Ellerington:

For the Auskick group the occasion was a good way to promote the program and encourage young kids to have a go. The big inflatable goal posts were an attraction for lots of the kids who could have a go at kicking or handballing the ball safely into the inflatable. It was a wonderful opportunity to speak to the parents and inform them about the program.

There was a positive response and two signed up their kids to participate.

It was great to be able to interact with the public.



Mike Answerth - MC for the day.



Keith Hamilton presenting his speech.



## Churchill Junior Football Club Noel Hawkins :

It was a well organised day with good support from the community. Congratulations to Pete for such a good job of organising.

There were lots of kids who came to try out the handball and kicks. Some came back many times. The incentive was-three bull's eyes in a row won you a football. About 30-40 footys were given away on the day. Some prospective players were met and have returned to the ground for more information.

Lots of older players visited the stall and looked through the photo albums finding photos of themselves causing much reminiscing.

Noel said he had never seen such an event in Churchill before. Lots of people came to support the day. There was a great community feel to it.



Russell Northe giving his speech.



Peter Pooley and David Lees provided free entertainment.



Christine Johnson giving her welcome to country.



The seating for the official unveiling ceremony.



Gazebos and food stalls in Philip Parade.

### Churchill Braves Baseball Club

They had a wonderful day with positive outcomes. They were able to promote their club and the Come 'n' Try day on March 22. Lots of kids queued up to have a turn at pitching into the net. The kids were enthusiastic about the opportunity.



Photo courtesy of Anthony F. Reynolds Photography Moe

Captain Koala was a popular addition to the festivities.

### Churchill Scouts

**Peta Whelan:**  
They thought it was a fantastic brilliant day. They had a computer showing pictures of events they had attended. It was also a good recruitment day, with four new cubs coming to the scout hall three days later to check it out. Many people visited their stall and enjoyed talking with them. They were able to learn some of the Scout history from them. One woman from New South Wales (Kerry Sunderland), made herself known and told them she was the very first Venturer Leader. Churchill Scouts turn 50 next year. It was very worthwhile for the Scouts.



Photo courtesy of Anthony F. Reynolds Photography Moe

Lots of people came to look and chat.



Photo courtesy of Anthony F. Reynolds Photography Moe

Churchill Community Garden group had a successful event sharing their plans with Basil, their mascot.

### Victoria Police

**Phil den Houting:**  
It was a sensational day — great crowd, great atmosphere, fantastic for the community. They had a stand with people constantly stopping for a chat or information. The organisers did a fantastic job and it would be great to see something continue in the same vein. The sense of community spirit was tangible.



### Morwell Historical Society

The Morwell Historical society arranged a wonderful display of old photos of Churchill which was exhibited in the Hub. Many people came to view them as they enjoyed a cuppa, or out of interest.

Celebrating **50 YEARS** **CHURCHILL** **1965 - 2015** SPECIAL FEATURE



Rev Brian and Mrs. Barbara Egdar , ministers at the Co-Operating Churches from 1981-1985



Barry and Judy Twomey 1971-1981. Lived in Shaw Street



Roy and Eleanor James 1966-1971 Lived in McInness Crescent



Carmen Cook. Lived in Shaw Street



The Sisters of St Joseph started Lumen Christi School  
L-R: Sister Maureen O'Kelly (1st Principal), Sister Madeleine, Sister Audrey. Absent-Sister Bernadine.



The Alexanders. L-R: Julie Alexander Firmin Road 1967. She was a News Girl. Angela Alexander, Kym Alexander, 1966. Lived in Howard Ave. Front Riley Alexander.



Photo courtesy of Anthony F. Reynolds Photography

Federal member Darren Chester with Margaret Guthrie, President of CDCA.

### Churchill Fire Brigade.

Several members:

Surprised members couldn't believe how many people went to the fire station to look it over and see the trucks on show.

The new District 27 compressed air foam truck based at Churchill was there. It can be operated by remote control.

Kids and parents loved going up the wooden stairs to see the top of the tanker truck and to be shown and work with the monitor branch.

It was a great day for the members. Captain Koala was seen walking along Philip Parade also.



### Churchill Neighbourhood Centre.

The ladies were very happy with the outcome of the day saying it went very well. They too were surprised at how many people turned up. Late in the morning lots of older folks went to the Centre and sat and chatted, catching up with old acquaintances while having a Devonshire tea. This is the best event of this type Churchill has seen in their opinion. The location was excellent.



### Churchill Hockey Club

Carol Kemp:

They were in a good position on the grass near the Hub and thought that was an excellent place for them. They had quite a few young people come and try out at hockey, and some of them are prospective players. It was a fantastically successful day in that regard. It was wonderful to showcase what Churchill had to offer. The whole community was behind the day and really supported it. Community spirit could really be felt.





Celebrating **50 YEARS** **CHURCHILL** **1965 - 2015** SPECIAL FEATURE

**The Churchill and District Lions.**  
 Lions members:  
 The Lions were so busy cooking all day that they ran out of supplies, and had to go to all the supermarkets and buy up all their sausages, as demand was so great with the unexpectedly large visitor numbers. They were so surprised but happy that so many had come to celebrate the 50th anniversary.



**The Men's Shed**  
 Charlie Rawlinson:  
 The expectation was that maybe a few people might enter to see the facility, but the men were amazed at how many came in - men, women and children. Some asked questions, some just came for 'a sticky'; some showed interest in joining. Some members of other Men's Sheds came to visit too and compare. No machinery was working for safety reasons. It was deemed a good opportunity to inform the community about the facility.



**Mike and Marion Answerth**  
 The great turnout of people, the beautiful weather, the new facilities of the town and the warm spirit among people gave us a great feeling of community pride in the town.  
 The well-attended and moving church service was a great way to start the celebrations and the warm friendly spirit and co-operation continued through the day, with many former residents delighted to catch up with old friends and reminisce about the past. The fact that so many people travelled long distances to come back for the occasion meant that they had warm memories of their time in Churchill. The response by more than 30 community organisations, schools and sporting clubs in taking stalls and putting their achievements and history on show created a great feeling of collective pride in our town.  
 The unveiling of plaques to mark this significant occasion meant that we now have permanent reminders that we have come a long way in our community development and want to pass on our history.  
 Even the musical entertainment was genuine home-grown talent and the historical photo display created a great deal of interest.  
 In our almost fifty years of living here, it was for us, one of the highlights in the town's history. Churchill has arrived as a united, proud and active community.



L-R: Back Row: Pauline Prowse 1967-now, Leanne (Scholes) Maskeill 1966. Fiona Baptie 1967-1978. Now lives in Hawthorn. Front Row: Dael (Prowse) Jackson 1967, Janine Pollack 1967. Now living in Yinnar South, Irene Scholes 1966-1999. Now at Newborough, Kristina Davis Kitchingman 1971-1981 Hall Court. Now at Lal Lal



The Koedijks: L-R: Back Row; Paul, Caroline, Michelle, Andrew, Gus. Front Row: Toni and John

**The Koedijks:**  
 Toni says she couldn't believe how quickly fifty years has passed. For John and herself it was a wonderful occasion to have six of their seven children with them to remember and celebrate. Toni said she thought it was very nicely organised and she saw lots of people who came up and said hello.  
 For John the highlight was attending the church service and seeing the unveiling of the plaque to mark fifty years of service to God and the community. It was also good to have people come and say hello and say they remembered him delivering their milk.



L-R: Geoff and Lyn McKay 1967-1997. Visiting from Queensland. Bought the first block auctioned in the private sector Bond Court. Geoff and Yvonne Marland 1971-now, Don and Barb Flanigan 1968-1979. Lived in Williams Ave until moving to Hazelwood North.



L-R: Diane and Col Wells 1969-1999. Shirley and Heb Kennedy 1969-now.



Churchill Fire Brigade displayed their trucks and had lots of visitors.



Churchill's service memorial.



Boolarra Koffee Kart was well patronised.



Happy to be involved.



Bob Cooper provided entertainment.



A cute part of the Piston Car Club display.

## Mary Austin:

Mary Austin has been a significant part of our community for many years. She thought the day was wonderful. It started with having a good seat at the Church service. Looking around and seeing the hall fill up and enjoying the service itself. She reflected on the small number of people, who in the early days, had the energy to work hard to gain the facilities we have in town.

Mary was able to meet up with some wonderful people who remembered her. She remembered faces but some names escaped her. Mary loved going to the Hub which she hadn't been in for a long time. Mary says the committee did a wonderful job. She couldn't believe the number of folks who turned up.

## Charlie Rawlinson:

Charlie, a long standing resident of Churchill, said he thought it was a good day. He enjoyed wandering around and meeting up with people he knew, describing that as 'magic'. It was lovely to see people who had left the town come back for the occasion.

## Churchill Community Garden.

Cathy and Sheina:

Churchill Community Garden participated in these celebrations through having a plant stall and an interactive activity for a community-built sensory arch. We wanted to raise funds for our projects, develop our membership, create awareness about the community garden, and introduce the idea of our sensory garden. Our scarecrow "Basil" was a great hit. The members of this project were very happy with the day. They signed up thirteen new members. Good contacts were made and they found people willing to share knowledge about where to get equipment and ideas on drainage etc. It was a great way to showcase their plans and explain what has happened so far, and their plans for the future.

They are hoping to start to plant seeds and swap fresh produce when they get their gardens going. Many people said they knew nothing about gardening but members were able to say they had the expertise and were happy to share it. Attendance at the Thursday informal meetings at the Hub is a good way to learn and is encouraged.

## Churchill Cricket Club

Graham Harvey:

The Cricket Club aimed at showing the public that they were a great club which had been very successful in Churchill for a long time. Their stall featured a display of premiership cups and photos. For visitors it brought back many memories and there was lots of reminiscing. Two founding members, Herb Kennedy and Col Wells came from different directions and met up at the stall.

There was a lot of interest in the photos with family members looking for their relatives. It was good to catch up with family and friends. They produced a booklet about the club's history and statistics which they handed out. Overall they thought it was a very good day and are very happy with the outcome.



## Churchill and District News

The team:

As a significant part of Churchill for all its history, it was marvelous to have people drop by the stall and reminisce about the old copies of the paper we had on display, along with photos.

It was a wonderful opportunity to sell some of our history books and promote the fourth volume which will be out soon and launched on Sunday May 24, at the Co-Operating Churches at 2pm. We also had our 50th anniversary postcards on sale and they proved popular too. Books and postcards can be obtained by ringing Ruth on 5122 1961.



## Lumen Christi Primary School

Dave Cooper:

Deputy Principal Dave Cooper said there was a lot of reminiscing. For him it was a way to learn more about the Churchill story. Their photo albums were great conversation starters. They were so pleased at the number of people who called by. As a public relations event it was excellent for the school, making lots of reconnections and new connections.



## Churchill North Primary School

Churchill North staff who were at their stall had a wonderful time catching up with a lot of people. They were amazed at how many people turned up for the day and flicked through the photo albums on show. They also had a couple of examples of the old uniforms which brought back memories for those who visited their stall. It was hilarious watching people go through the photo albums looking for their photos. One of the staff was a former Churchill North Student who was able to catch up with many old school friends.

## Churchill Preschool at the Hub

Sue Scarlett:

It was a time of renewing acquaintances – people coming back to talk and remember. It was a lovely community time to talk and enjoy. A great family day. Thanks to all the organisers.

## Homily : Churchill Golden Jubilee by Fr Hugh Brown.

I am profoundly conscious that for today's great celebration there would be a multitude of people more equipped than me to speak about Churchill as you celebrate its 50 years of foundation. I have a sneaking suspicion that I was the only one who wasn't either dead or else engaged in other activities. Nevertheless it is a great honour to be with you today in what is an auspicious day in the life of this great, little town – thank you for the invitation.

About nine years ago Jeremiah Coffey, the then Catholic Bishop of Sale, asked me to come to Churchill. I was living very comfortably in Berwick at the time and my first question to him was: where the hell is Churchill? A couple of miles off the highway near Morwell, was Jeremiah's response in his mischievous Irish brogue. I said: can I have a few days to think about it and he said: No! I've learned since never to trust a bishop, especially an Irish one!

After over 40 years in ministry, I have found that people often ask me: did you find it hard to leave a particular place? Although I have been very happy in a multitude of ministries, I find myself saying these days that the one place I have missed the most is Churchill. And you know why? It's because of you - its people. You have become so important to me because you accepted me as I am, and in you I found people who are simply "the salt of the earth".

A homily is not a place to give a history lesson but I learned very shortly after coming to Churchill that this town and you its people were forged in a "pioneering way". You are a people that came here to a new frontier and you had the exciting, and at times, frustrating task of creating a community from its grass roots.

Needless to say, Hazelwood was already peopled by the myriad of farms and soldiers' settlements prior to Churchill's foundation. But in founding this town, the state government had high hopes, never fully realised, for a thriving metropolis at the foothills of the Strzelecki ranges.

We all know that Churchill was established to replace the township of Yallourn and to support the neighbouring Hazelwood power station and possibly to replace Morwell.

It was in this new community that you and many who have predeceased us, married, raised children, educated them, worshipped together and created your own identifying characteristics, especially in the football and netball clubs as well as the ever growing soccer club. You formed your own service organisations and you were proud to be the precinct of the Gippsland institute which later morphed into Monash University and, more latterly, into Federation University of Australia.

Without being disrespectful I have to smile at the thought of how the name of the university is abbreviated among the students and the locals.

So too, you saw your hotel come and go a number of times, something which irked me considerably when I moved here because the pub was derelict at that time, which forced me into having to cook for myself. I'm glad to see that it appears to be thriving again!

You only have to drive around Churchill to garner something of its history in the many street names associated with individuals and families who were part of the pioneering experience. So too, the Australiana of Churchill is to be found in so many streets that are identified by the names of the local flora.

The identity of Churchill was strengthened by the establishment of the Churchill and District News and it's a marvellous testimony to some of you here that this publication is not only still going but has always been a source of proclaiming with pride the happenings in the township and surrounding areas.

Churchill has had its pain and sorrow. The two things that come to my mind are the privatisation of the Hazelwood power station with the dismantling of the SEC, and the subsequent loss of employment for so many people and, in more recent times, the Churchill fire that was part of the holocaust that swept Victoria on that dreadful black Saturday. Both events, different in nature, only seemed to reinforce the pioneering spirit of the township.

In those early years of its foundation, Churchill was blessed by the presence of different religious communities and fellowship groups based on Christian principles. Some names tower in the memory of these groups, for example, Reverend Peter Arch and his wife, the founding minister of the Co-Operating churches, Father Noel Daly who had the foresight to buy land for a Catholic Church and school, Jeremiah Coffey, that irascible parish priest and bishop that I mentioned at the beginning. So too the pastors associated with the Churchill Christian Fellowship group such as Steve and Remy Gunsser, Steve and Sandy McNeilly, Tony and Hermanna Marsden. Each of you could add many other names to that list and I trust you will. The important fact is that the Christian associations



and churches were not just places of worship and fellowship, they also contained individuals who initiated so much of what we have inherited today in the life of the community.

Churchill has also been blessed by the presence of three primary schools and the Kurnai educational precincts which have survived despite the population vagaries that have marked the town. On a Catholic

note,

I would also mention the foundational presence of the sisters of Saint Joseph and their involvement in the foundation of Lumen Christi Primary School.

This variegated history of the life of Churchill brings me to the reason why we are gathered here today. Most importantly, we acknowledge the past but we live in the present and in the future.

So what is the future for Churchill? No one here can predict that with any certainty but I can share with you what this community, if it is truly to be a community must be. Saint Paul gave us a very clear indication in today's first reading:

"I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace"

Saint Paul is saying to each of us that we are called to live a life worthy of the calling that we have received. And what is that calling? It is primarily to acknowledge that each one of us is a brother and a sister and that is the way we need to treat each other. It doesn't just apply to those who may attend any of our Christian churches; or to those who acknowledge some religious affiliation on a census form. No, it extends to a relationship of fraternity and solidarity with every member of the Churchill township. You may well think that's not possible and to an extent, it's true that we cannot always have a relationship of solidarity to others if they don't want it. But we can always be the first to make an attempt even at the risk of being rebuffed or scorned.

Look around you –some of the people here may give us the "irrites" or worse. So what! That doesn't mean we can't extend a hand. You know as well as I do that there are parts of the town where we feel less comfortable or perhaps even a little fearful. Again, so what! Doesn't it take just a little courage to visit people who don't live in the same blocks as we do? What about the people who live here but are from other cultures. We have plenty of them in Churchill but, sadly, at times, we also have a certain xenophobia relating to people of different religions and cultures.

Well, that's not what the gospel says. It was Jesus himself who could sit by a well and talk to a Samaritan woman; nor did he refuse to heal the child of a Roman centurion, a man who worked for an army of great oppression. Jesus himself didn't flinch from touching a leper, from refusing to condemn a woman caught "en flagrante", from entering the home of a tax collector, nor from dining with whoever asked him in for a meal. That is the calling that each of us is challenged to live up to.

Saint Paul was right: such a way of living requires humility and gentleness; it demands patience and above all a love that puts the dignity of every other person above our own. It is a daunting challenge but it's not impossible.

The gospel of Saint John today reminded us that we, as a community, are to live as people who believe with all our hearts that God will protect us and be with us in whatever we do together in his name. I suppose that means that Anglicans, Catholics, Protestants, the Christian Fellowship groups, SDA's, Muslims, Buddhists, atheists (who may not acknowledge our God but who share our common humanity) all of us have the responsibility to work together for the good of this beautiful and God-given piece of earth we call Churchill.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this homily, you are "the salt of the earth". So too, you are also a "light for the world". Be proud, in a humble way that you have done well and will continue to do so into the future.

Finally, please remember that "Churchill is a very good place to live; it is also, at least for me, a very difficult place to leave". If might I would just recall an incident that happened to me very many years ago when I was stationed in New Jersey, USA. It was my last mass before going to Rome and at the end of the mass, a very beautiful but large Afro-American woman, Bea Campbell, came waddling up the aisle of the church. She had a heart and soul bigger than anyone I've ever known. Well, she grabbed me in this very powerful bear hug and nearly asphyxiated me. Then she gave me a little banner – it was simply a piece of cloth between two pieces of wood. On the banner itself there was a rainbow and below the rainbow were the words: "When they try to run you out of town, get in front of the crowd and make it look like a parade!"

May you have a wonderful parade today!  
Thank you.

# Celebrating 50 YEARS CHURCHILL 1965 - 2015 SPECIAL FEATURE



Churchill Primary School choir which sang in the Town Hall Plaza after the unveiling ceremony.



The Piston Car Club had a successful day with a diverse display of old cars.



Above and below: Kurnai College music ensembles entertained the crowds during the morning.



First Churchill Scouts had a successful day recruiting future members.



Piston car Club cars.



Photo courtesy of Anthony F. Reynolds Photography LLC

Churchill's iconic symbol.



## Peter Cook

Peter Cook shared this special story. Up until he was eighteen, Peter's Dad had always cut his hair. However, when he was eighteen, and about to start work, he wanted a 'professional' haircut. His brother Robert, who lived in Shaw Street, recommended that he go and check out Wally Lacy in the new barber shop in Churchill. Peter says Wally treated him very well. As it was Peter's first experience in a barber shop he didn't quite know what to expect. A clean cloth was draped around his neck instead of the old rag Dad had used, and the cut proceeded. It was the days of the square cut. On completion of the cut, Wally asked Peter if he would like oil or water. Not knowing what to say, Peter said, "Both". The haircut cost 60 cents. The only disappointing thing Peter disclosed was that he only had a motor cycle and had to don his helmet messing up the neat cut. However that didn't deter Peter who continued to regularly attend the barber shop.