



The Society and its Members acknowledge the traditional landowners, the Wurundjeri People of the Kulin Nations and their Elders Past and Present.

Plenty News & Views

Volume 3, No: 13

August 2025

President: Kerry Fitzmaurice

Vice President: Helen Zull

Secretary: Annemarie Webb

Treasurer:

**Committee Member—Newsletter:
Kerry Jones**

A Word from our Vice President...

Plenty Historical Society

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Plenty Historical Society will be the open day at Nilgiris on

Sunday 12th October at 2pm.

Keep the date free!

It has been a while since our last newsletter so we hope this issue holds something of interest for you.

Since our last issue Plenty has farewelled some long-standing members of our community. There is much to celebrate and learn from the lives that these individuals have led. As is often the case you only learn things about people after they are gone. They were from an era where life was less complicated and revolved around your family and local community.

The Historical Society was appreciative of the number of visitors we had on the Open Day in May and the positive feedback received. Thank you to Ian and Sharyn Berkefeld for helping in the church on this day.

Also thank you to those who supported our Biggest Morning Tea from which we raised \$706 for Australians impacted by cancer. Thank you in particular to the craft group who were strong supporters.

The Historic Church is used on a regular basis by a few groups. Each Wednesday afternoon the Plenty craft group meet, chat and create. On the second Tuesday of each month the PHS book club meets to discuss our current book and many other topics.

The church is also used on a regular basis by a group who celebrate through the traditional Latin mass. Community members are welcome to join existing groups or perhaps start one of your own. The church is suitable for small meetings, gatherings and passive activities. The space and acoustics are ideal for a community choir if there are any starters out there.

Please contact me on 0491023157 if you wish to join a group or you have a proposal to start a new group.

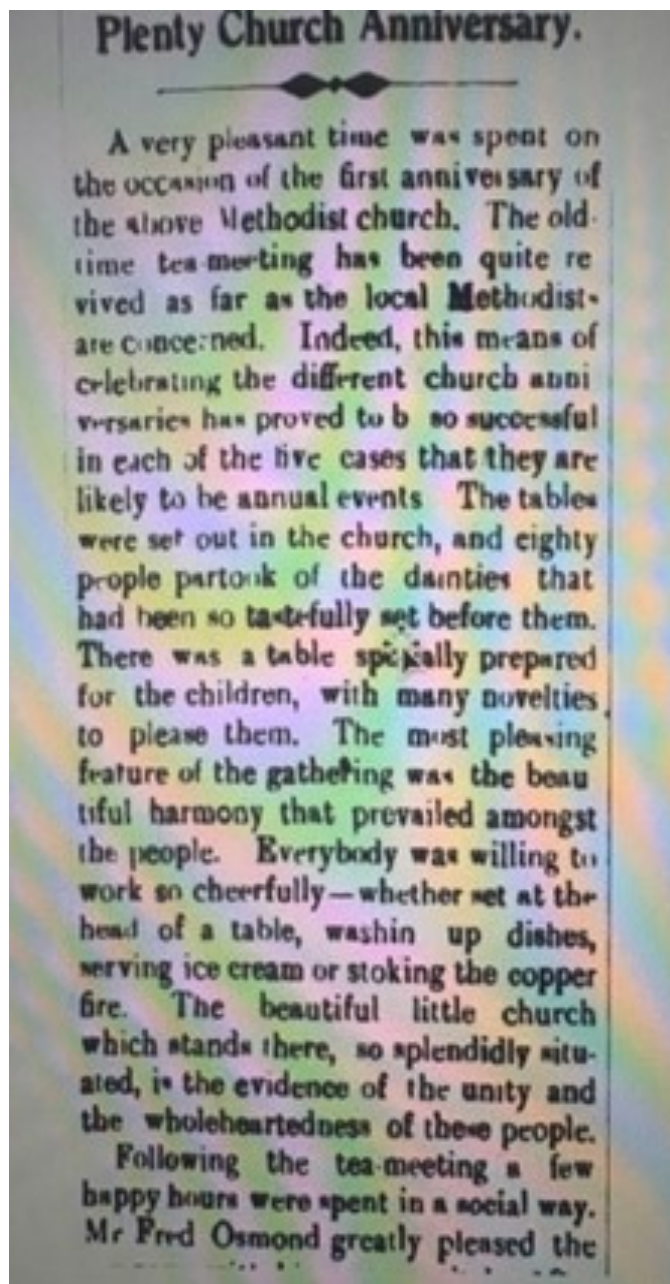
Vice President's Report continued...

The PHS book share box in front of the church is being well used with a steady turnover of a range of literature. We would love more people to use this facility. There are some great reads to be discovered.



I would like to thank Leanne Hindley our outgoing Treasurer who has been very generous with her time and expertise in helping put our finances and accounts onto an online platform. We are now looking for a new treasurer to join our committee. Leanne will provide full support during hand over. If you have a head for numbers and a heart for history, we'd love to hear from you.

Last but not least, the Plenty Historic church originally The Plenty Methodist Church will be celebrating 100 years of existence this December. The accompanying article was in the advertiser on December 17 1926. The Society will be organising an event to celebrate this milestone. If there is any photos or other documents out there relating to the church we would love to see them.



This article about the first anniversary of the Plenty Church is from the Advertiser (Hurstbridge) published on Friday 17, December 1926 (page 2).

Helen Zull
Vice President

Forthcoming Events

Sunday, 12 October - Nilgiris Open Day

The property, Nilgiris, has a long history in Plenty and the property will be open from 2.00pm to 5.00pm for members to view it and learn about its history. This is a special event for members so keep the date free!

Centenary of the Plenty Church - Sunday 30 November.

The home of the Plenty Historical Society will be turning 100! The Plenty Church has a rich history and there is much to learn about it.

Join members for a special afternoon tea from 2.00pm to celebrate.



Beautiful Quilt for our Historic Church



Thank you to the members of the Plenty Craft group who have crafted a beautiful quilt for the Historic Church. The quilt portrays some historic sites in Plenty. From the top we see Plenty Hall, Plenty Methodist Church, CFA sign, the Plenty Memorial Gates, the historical school bell and the Plenty State School.

The Plenty craft group has been meeting and creating for many years. The group was started after a meeting was called by Mrs Kath Heard in early 1983 and was originally called the Plenty Art and Craft Group. The group met at Kath's home in Heard Ave until 1985 when they moved to the hall. The crafters were at one end of the hall and the artists at the other. At this time there were 20 members who met on a Wednesday afternoon. Their children would head down to the hall after school to meet up with their mums. In 1992 the craft group met in an unused portable at the school and the art group met at Kath's. When the school closed in 1983 the craft group started meeting at the CFA. In 2021 when the CFA rebuilt their headquarters and the old Methodist church was moved to downtown Plenty the craft group started to meet in the Historic Church. The group still meets on a Wednesday afternoon from 1:30.

Helen Zull

Plenty Historical Society Open Day

3 May 2025

To coincide with the Federal election and voting occurring at the Plenty Hall, the Plenty Historical Society executive team made the decision to once again open the church. Helen Zull worked tirelessly to bring out all the collections and put them on display with Annemarie Webb, Kerry Fitzmaurice, Ian and Sharyn Berkefeld manning the opening hours on the day.



As soon as the doors opened at 10am we had some members come in – perusing the old newspaper articles and reminiscing about people they had known, as well as enjoying learning about the enterprises that worked in Plenty – including the printing factory and rabbit tanning business that were both situated on Yan Yean Road.

During the four hours, there was a steady trickle of people wandering in and out - enjoying

learning more about the history of Plenty and surrounds.

Tea towels were sold and membership forms taken – so all in all, a productive few hours.

During the afternoon we made the connection with the church's imminent centenary in December whilst reading some articles and photography dates, for which we look forward to celebrating later in the year.

We also lamented the lack of memorabilia and memories from the Plenty Tennis Club – which has been an integral part of the community almost since the establishment of the township. Helen is on the hunt for any historical artefacts, such as photos or old newsletters, and is hoping to hold a special meeting at the clubhouse later in the year to facilitate fact gathering etc. In the meantime, please let any past or present tennis club members that the society is hunting for anything that could be added to the collection.

Annemarie Webb



Vale - Des McQueen

Desmond Clive McQueen aged 94, a long-time resident of Plenty passed away on Friday 4th July just after the final siren sounded for the Pies at the MCG.

The following text about the McQueen family history and memories of early Plenty as told by Des McQueen to his granddaughter Alana and in an interview on Plenty Valley FM radio in 2002 with Thurston Bruce.

Des the oldest son of Innes and Ella McQueen was born in Yarto in the Mallee on a soldier settlement property on 19th October 1930. When they could not make a go of life on the land the family moved to Plenty.

Their first home in Plenty was in a shack on the property of Uncle Bill Connolly (married to Innes's sister) Bill was known as the horse man of Plenty and lived on Yan Yean Rd just past the Plenty Store. From there they moved to a



place down past the church for 12 months, then to a place next door to Mr & Mrs Jack Ross for two years and from there to the current McQueen property in Yan Yean Rd Plenty. They rented all these properties. The McQueens according to Des were very poor as was the case for many families at the time. The shack in Yan Yean Rd had tree stumps as the house stumps, the outside was tin and inside was lined with flattened kerosene tins. There was no power, and no running water. Bath water that had been used by the whole family was re-boiled and used to wash clothes. Kerosene lamps and candles were used for lighting. Horses and push bikes were your transport but you mostly walked.

The McQueen children attended Plenty Primary School. On the first day Des went to school he remembers getting into trouble. During the day he was talking too much so he had to stay back after school. Des was worried about being late home so made a fuss and got a hiding. He also got one when he got home for getting into trouble at school. The policeman's daughter at Diamond Creek was the schoolteacher at Plenty at one time. At 3 o'clock every day she got Bobby Beale to hitch her horse up to the cart for her, meaning he got out of 10 minutes early every day. Des was not happy about this so one day Des decided to stitch Bobby up. On this day after Bobby had completed his job Des went outside and unhitched the horse and put it on the other side of the fence, then hitched it back up. This placed the horse on one side of the fence and the cart on the other. When the teacher came out, she gave Bobby a hiding.

Des attended Plenty State School until grade 8 after which you received your merit certificate and then went onto Collingwood Technical School. He rode his bike to Greensborough and then took the train to Collingwood. Des was at school with Len Fitzgerald who later became Collingwood captain, he used to get Des into strife all the time. The strap was received regularly. Des left Collingwood on his 14th birthday in October as the family needed him to bring in an income. He got a job with a racing paper called The Guide for 5 or 6 years as a journalist. He had a couple of good bosses and got a good grounding. Once again, he had to ride to Greensborough, take the train and then walk to work. He earned 1 pound 10 shillings per week. It was a 48 hr /5.5day week. A train ticket cost 5 shillings and 10 pence per week. Des took sandwiches from home for lunch. He still managed to save.

The oval in Diamond Creek was popular for picnics as was Wattle Glen. People came out by train or in furniture trucks that had seats installed in the back. Lifestyle was affected by wars; there were not many men around.

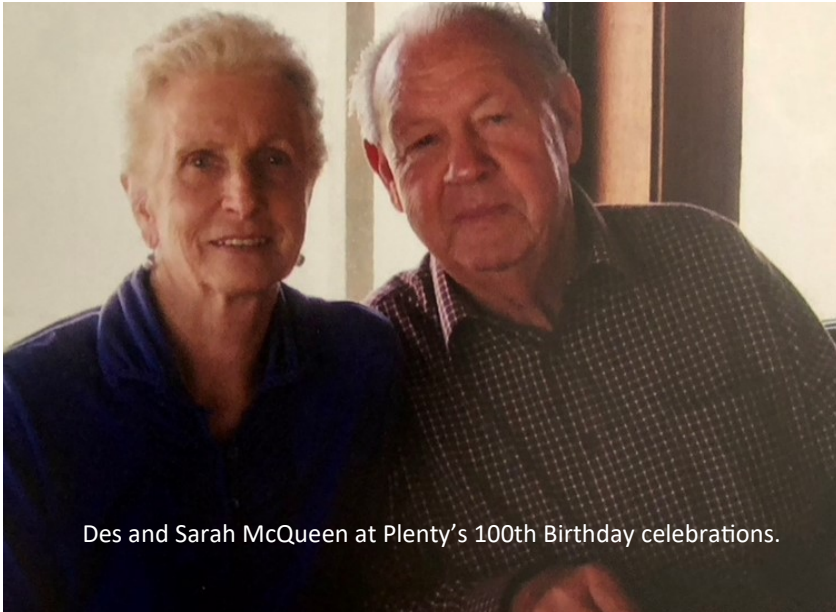
To be involved in or watch football you had to walk to Diamond Creek and cricket did not start in Plenty until Des was 18. Des was involved from the start of the Plenty Cricket Club. He was about 16 or 17

Vale - Des McQueen continued...

until Des was 18. Des was involved from the start of the Plenty Cricket Club . He was about 16 or 17 when it started. They used to play roughly where it is now, there was only one tennis court with a pitch next to it. There were two years of social games before they entered the competition. 1950 was the first year as official team and Des was the first captain They competed in the Eltham Cricket Competition. He remembers being in a 188 partnership with Geoff Heddle in a game against Diamond Creek – Des made 7 runs!

Dances were the main source of entertainment. Local dances were held at the Plenty Hall as well as in Yarrambat, Doreen, Diamond Creek and Kinglake. These occasions were the place to meet the girls. These venues were lit by kerosene lights. Des met his future wife Sarah at a dance in Montmorency.

Sunday and they would also sell the plucked chooks and eggs on Sundays. Des would come home from



Des and Sarah McQueen at Plenty's 100th Birthday celebrations.

The day Des joined the police force he bought the five-acre Yan Yean Rd property with a house and a shed for 1000 chooks on it for 750 pounds. Des and Sarah were married in 1956 and lived with Sarah's parents who were both Scottish. In 1957 they started to build their own home at the rear of the Yan Yean Rd property. They moved into their home in 1959 with little furniture and newspaper covering the windows.

Des and Sarah built extra chicken sheds and had a permit for 6600 but had about 7000 most of the time. The property had a dam where the sawdust car park is now. Des would pluck the chooks on a

work at 2 in the morning and feed the chooks. He paid people to come in and help. They had chooks for about 15-20 years. His three children used to help clean the eggs, but apparently hid the really disgusting ones.

He also became involved in the Diamond Valley Football league after he retired. Des is credited with helping to save the Diamond Creek Football Club when it faced extinction. His two sons and grandson played for Diamond Creek.

Des had a long and varied career in the Victorian Police Force. He retired in 1977. In those days Des said, "There was some respect between the police and criminals. Criminals never attacked the police." Des had a good career in the police force.

After finishing in the police force Des spent his time on his property on his tractor and worked a lot with horses. Des and Sarah bought into the Doreen milk bar after he retired and made a success of it. People used to line up out the door for their hot chickens.

Harness racing re-emerged as a passion after the Milk Bar. Des got back into breeding and racing. He was Victorian secretary of the breeders for 12 years and President of Australian Harness Racing.

He was involved in running bingo to raise money for sporting clubs in the local area. Des was proactive in saving the Diamond Creek Football club at a time when it was facing closure. His sons Andrew and Gavin and grandson Jed played for the club.

Des was a larger-than-life character who was known for rolling up his sleeves and getting things done. He was a community and family focused man. The tribute paid to him by his grandchildren at his funeral said it all. RIP Des.

Vale - Mildred French



Alan and Mildred French moved to Memorial Drive Plenty in 1973. They had three daughters; a host of grandchildren and the current count is four great grandsons. Mildred was a dedicated home maker and a great cook. The first stop when the grandchildren came was Mildred's pantry. They were especially looking for her famous Orange Cake. The family had many horses over the years who shared the paddocks with a mob of kangaroos. Mildred loved the kangaroos and horses on the property.

Mildred was a member of the Ladies' Auxiliary of The Plenty Guides. Some firm friendships were made within this group that stood the test of time. When life got tough for any member the others were always there to help in any way they could. Ailsa Fitzmaurice who ran the Plenty store for many years was a particular friend. At a later stage these ladies broke away from the official guide group but continued to meet regularly.

Locals Ivy and Tom Mullins christened them 'The Lost Angels.'

Mildred was a valued member of this group. She is described as a very generous, kind and caring person who had a genuine interest in everyone. Every year the group would go away for the weekend which became long weekends as their families grew up. Mildred always bought a box of Chocolatier Chocolates on this weekend as well as to other functions. When she was no longer able to attend these weekends, she still sent the chocolates. Mildred was farewelled in January by her family and friends.

Vale - Tommy Roberts

Tommy Roberts was born in Moonee Ponds on 14 October 1933, one of eleven children and eighth child of Arthur and Jessie Roberts. Tommy earned pocket money as a young boy selling lollies and papers outside the Pascoe Vale Hotel. Tom's early years shaped him in many ways: you had to do what you had to do to provide for your family.

A gunner in Royal Australian artillery at Puckapunyal, Tommy worked for Wormald installing and repairing roller doors.

Tommy and his best mate Darky (Tom had a nickname for everyone) met Winnie Roberts and her best friend Kath at the Diamond Creek football club. Tom and Winnie were married for 68 years. Tommy and Winnie had a double wedding with Tommy's brother Arthur and Winnie's sister Jean. Their wedding reception was held at the Plenty Hall. Tommy and Winnie made their home in Browns Lane and had four children and a squad of grandchildren. Tommy had a nickname for everyone—his was Coon.



The grandchildren spent a lot of time at the Brown's Lane property – school holidays and weekends. They had to check the rabbit traps at midnight with 'the worst torch ever.' If he caught a cat by mistake Tom told the kids to take the collar off.

Tom loved football, golf, cycling, fishing, rabbiting and the accompanying ferrets plus a range of sporting activities. He trained greyhounds who were loyal to him. Tom loved everyone's dog. Tommy and Winnie were keen caravaners.

He loved his family the most and taught the importance of humour. Tommy was described as a person with deep wisdom and kindness that made life bigger. He and Winnie were a rock for their immediate and wider family as well as much of the Plenty community. At Tommy's funeral in March the Plenty Hall and the carpark were full, a mark of respect and love.

The Biggest Morning Tea 2025

A morning tea was held again this year to support the amazing work that the Cancer Council does. Thank you to the group of supporters who came with their homemade goodies and generous donations. We have raised \$706 to date from online and cash donations, which has been a really pleasing result. Thank you to all who donated goodies and funds.



Attendees were asked to bring along a piece of tea-ware to share. Special items were shared with the group. A mug from the Sagrada Familia in Spain was fascinating and its proud owner Gail shared a wealth of information on this church. My favourite had to be the Collingwood Football Club coffee mug owned by Kay Green's grandmother.

Helen Zull



*Some of the special items of tea ware
which were brought on the day.*



Participants at this year's Biggest Morning Tea thoroughly enjoying the delectable goodies which were brought on the day.

Interview with Laurie Davies

Laurie's family moved from Pascoe Vale South to Brown's Lane in Plenty when he was 14 years old. There were five children in the Davies family. Laurie attended Collingwood Technical School for one year after they moved to Plenty then went to work. He started playing cricket at Plenty when he was 15. He remembers that when the club started, before he joined that all the games were played on Burns paddock where the Plenty tip is now situated. They played social matches not competition matches at that time. The first competition the club participated in was the Eltham District. Each club could only enter one team and young Laurie at 15 was often included in the team to make up

the numbers. In later years his brothers Max and Ray played. In Max's first B Grade game Plenty were all out for 7 against Diamond Creek. Ray who was 10 years younger than Laurie was more into coaching the juniors.

Laurie was primarily a bowler. He started off as an off-break bowler until he was 17 when one Saturday he became a fast bowler. Whenever it was anyone's birthday the team always celebrated with a glass of Benedictine before the match. One Saturday many of the drinks were left untouched. Young Laurie decided he would help out and finish them off. That afternoon he became a fast bowler.



Please note: L. Fitzmaurice should read J. Fitzmaurice.

Interview with Laurie Davies continued...

He took many wickets over the years. The match he remembers is a game against Montmorency where he took 5 wickets in a row (his best ever game) The score that day was 9-32.

For entertainment the club would hold progressive dinners and the kid's Christmas party was a huge annual event. Dicky Adie's father was always Father Christmas. A social cricket match against North Alphington was held annually. Some players from this club had moved to the Plenty area so started this tradition against their old club.

Laurie remembers the club sheds being built by Donny Beale on the east side of the ground. Laurie was one of the many who pitched in and helped. There was no fence around the ground back then and the pitch ran east/west. Laurie remembers a hole at the end of the pitch that became deeper as the season progressed, a bit precarious.

Many names came up as we spoke - Graham Berry (moved to Strathewen), Jim Beale, Eric Lierse, Jack Fitzmaurice who coached and played and came from a sub district team, maybe Brighton, Jeff



The old Plenty Cricket Pavillion

Heddle, Eddie Skiba, Frank Milne (made 160-170 in first Premiership), Hughie Cullen (captained 5 premierships), his brother Bruce who was a champion wicket keeper, Don Fisher a fast bowler who opened with Laurie, John Elliot who was also a champion football player who played for Prahan (Fitzroy wanted to draft him but Prahan would not let him go.)

Laurie's wife Beryl was heavily involved with the tennis club. Back then there were two tar courts, a good one where most of the tennis was played and another one where they had a hit of cricket. They were very run down.

Thank you for your time Laurie and sharing your memories with me.

Helen Zull

☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆
☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆
☆☆ **Potential Interviewees** ☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆
☆☆ The Historical Society is looking ☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆
☆☆ to interview more past residents ☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆
☆☆ and sports people to further ☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆
☆☆ piece together the history of ☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆
☆☆ Plenty through these stories. ☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆
☆☆ We are particularly interested in ☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆
☆☆ talking to people about the tennis ☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆
☆☆ club as we have scant document- ☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆
☆☆ ed information on this club. ☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆
☆☆ Please contact us if you can help ☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆
☆☆ or know someone who we can in- ☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆
☆☆ ☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆

CONTRIBUTIONS:

If you would like to make a contribution to a future edition of 'Plenty News and Views', I can be contacted on:

kerry@jones.id.au or 0414861557

Thank you,

Kerry Jones—Newsletter Editor

We gratefully acknowledge the generous support and financial assistance received from Nillumbik Shire Council in the production of this newsletter.



Note: The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the Plenty Historical Society or its members.