

St Paul's Opportunity Shop

(Written by Maurice Hayes at the time of the 50th Anniversary 2007)

In 1956, there was considerable optimism about St. Paul's Church. Also, there were several ladies whose children had become less demanding, and were interested in helping the church.

Mrs. Betty Church, the Vicar's wife, had the idea of starting an Opportunity Shop as a form of outreach, to serve the community and to raise funds for good causes. At that time, there were several such shops in England and one had just opened in Camberwell, Victoria. There were, however, considerable misgivings amongst the ladies about expenses, where would stock come from, etc. Early in 1957 three factors came together. A lady came to the church saying that her mother had died leaving a considerable wardrobe. None of the family wanted them but they were too good to throw away. Here was some initial stock. Secondly some premises in **Davey Street**, adjoining the Pier Hotel became vacant. It was just the kind of place they wanted. Finally, Robert Timms of coffee fame, who was a Churchwarden at the time, offered an interest free loan of 250 pounds. It was decided to take the plunge.

The ladies, mainly from the Ladies Guild, washed, ironed and mended the wardrobe and other items which flooded in. The shop opened on 3rd May 1957. It was a great success from the start and the loan was paid back at the end of the first month.

Although not the first such shop in Victoria, it was certainly the first on the Peninsula. The initial committee had the Vicar as President, Mrs. Church as chairperson, several ladies and three members of Vestry. However, in October of 1957, the church burned down and the members of Vestry decided that they had enough on their hands with the rebuilding of the church, so they resigned.

From then on, it was decided that members of the committee should be active volunteer works at the Op Shop.

The Rev'd Church mentioned to me a few of the people who worked very hard in the early days and for many years afterwards. Of course, Mrs. Church was an absolute dynamo and a good organiser. Among the others mentioned were Rita say who was Secretary for many years, now living in Violet Town, Heather Thomas now in Mornington and Emily Male, still with us and living in Thames Street (Dec. 2006)

An early project was to help St. Barnabas in Seaford who were struggling financially. The Op Shop in Davey Street soon became too small but they were able to take over the adjoining shop. Eventually the Pier Hotel, who owned the shops decided that they wanted to expand. So, a move was made to **Young Street**, where the Commonwealth Bank is now. On the first day in Young

Street, an incident occurred which did not seem funny at the time. Some tar spraying was going on nearby and one of the workers came in to browse. As he wandered around, tar dripped on to the new carpet, creating a lot of work for the men who had helped the move.

The business continued to prosper but eventually this building was redeveloped and a move was made to **Shannon Mall**. This was a beautiful shop, well laid out with a pair of magnificent oak doors. The shop was so smart that the Rev'd Church told me that some people dubbed it "Georges".

Business was so good that in 1966, an Auxiliary Shop was opened specifically for the purpose of raising money to help in the furnishing of St Paul's Court. Eventually, Lincraft who owned the Shannon Mall shop decided to expand and the Op Shop was moved to **Nepean Highway**.

They had so much stock at Shannon mall that it could not all be accommodated in the new Nepean Highway Shop. It so happened that a shop was opening up at Noble Park and a whole truck load of stock was sent to help the shop get started. The Nepean Highway shop which was opposite where Dimmey's is now also came up for redevelopment so the shop moved to **Central Park**. As we know, in recent times the shop moved again, this time to **29 Ross Smith Avenue**. These premises are very well set up, a big shop with good presentation and still well stocked.

Over the years, the Op Shop has supported many causes. Examples include buying a unit in Williams Road as a Curate's residence, making generous donations to Ridley College, Trinity College, Frankston Hospital and the Frankston Chaplaincy Appeal. They have supported a succession of children through international agencies and have given money to many other charities including Cancer Research. They have helped the church in many ways. They paid for the magnificent "Glory Window" which is widely admired by visitors. They have also paid for painting, plumbing, general repairs and installing security lights at the church and the vicarage. For many years, they paid the cost of insurance and they made a generous donation to clear the debt for the improvements to the Vicarage which were undertaken in 1994, and in recent times they have paid for a new photocopier and computer system for the Parish Office.

It is true to say that the survival of St Paul's Church owes a great deal to the ladies of the Op Shop, all of whom have been unpaid volunteers from the inception to the present day.

Well done, long may it continue.



Op Shop Report 2016 to the Parish AGM

The Op Shop has valued the support of all volunteers, including 'Work for the Dole' participants, parishioners, the Frankston community, the donation givers and the customers during the six months we were open this year.

St Paul's Op Shop was a member of the Diocesan Op Shop Network which offered the opportunity to network and share ideas with other Anglican Op Shops in the diocese when we met twice a year and at other times.

So, after consultation with the Diocese, the decision was made by Parish Council to vacate the Ross Smith Avenue address when the Lease expired on June 17th.

A successful 'Closing Sale' was conducted over the last few weeks with most stock sold.

Remaining good quality stock and shop fittings were relocated to the church property.

We wish to thank all those who helped in the pack-up, cleaning and dismantling phase a great example of how parishioners and others do come forward and help when help is required.

A thank you lunch was held at Davey's Restaurant for current Op Shop volunteers where each was presented with a certificate.

St Paul's Op Shop, being the first Op Shop in Frankston, was commenced in 1957 by Mrs. Betty Church (wife of the then vicar (Reverend Albert Church) and has served the Frankston community from two addresses in Nepean Highway, one in Central Park and for the last 20 years at 29 Ross Smith Avenue.

In closing this report, we will share two quotes from previous Op Shop reports:

"At present, we are experiencing some difficulties with high overhead, a limited work force, and opposition from 7 other Op -shops and the various cheap discount shops." (1994)

"We have an enormous amount of opposition from other Op. shops, Savers and very cheap new clothing on sale everywhere. Never in its 43 years of operation, has the Op. shop had to compete with so many." (2000)

So, in 2017, as we open the new Op Shop in the old-school building at the church, we will celebrate its 60 years of serving the Frankston community.