



Back: Barry Parnell, Gavan Harkin, John (Slim) Shiel  
Front: Brian Ford, Tony Janes, Mike Henry

## SCHOOL MATES FOR LIFE

**Mike Henry**

Class of 1963

*"Through thick and thin, we have remained friends...setbacks only strengthened our longstanding friendships, unique as they are."*

1960s past pupils Barry Parnell, Brian Ford, Gavan Harkin and Mike Henry still cherish their Salesian College Chadstone connections, gathering on the last weekend of November annually "to celebrate retirement and life in general". While decades have passed since they left our classrooms, these past pupils firmly believe "the spirit of Chaddy (is still) ingrained in our 1960s set."

These days many people finish school only to venture into the outside world and leave their College friends behind. Once their professional field beckons, they rarely recollect their Alma Mater.

Well, not this small group of 1960s past pupils of Salesian College Chadstone. Today, we still gather annually to reminisce about our school days.

For over 50 years now, Barry Parnell, Brian Ford, Gavan Harkin and myself have faithfully met each year on the last weekend of November to celebrate retirement and life in general.

Since 1999, this weekend has been diarised as our weekend away. Each couple takes it in turns to locate a suitable venue that is a reasonable driving distance from Melbourne, with dining facilities, a massage parlour for the women and a golf course for the men.

In 2007, Anne Harkin suggested we travel overseas together. After many hours (and wines) deliberating over a mutually agreed destination, a tour of Spain was decided on. A five-year savings plan commenced, and travel arrangements were made. When the trip eventuated in 2012 it was a huge success, both culturally and socially.

In the early days we were members of the Old Boys' Cricket Club, where we enjoyed

regular Friday night card games. This Cricket Club, instigated by the legendary Fr Bill Edwards, was a hive of activity for all of us. Our group, which also included Tony Janes and John (Slim) Shiel, was soon formed.

Barry (President) and myself (Secretary) also re-ignited the Salesian Old Boys' Association. Plenty of activities were planned, including car trials, city dinners, theatre nights and golf days. As partners appeared on the scene, frequent additional evenings eventuated, and we all grew closer.

As a group, our birthday parties, engagements, weddings and housewarmings were not complete without one another. When we had children our reunions still continued, with our toddlers in tow.

Understandably, as our families grew, it became challenging to keep in touch. But the spirit of Chaddy was ingrained in our 1960s set.

Through thick and thin, we have remained friends. When Brian lost his home and belongings in the Ash Wednesday bushfires, when Gavan suffered horrific injuries in a car accident, when Tony passed away only months into his retirement (his spouse, Jan, still attends our reunions in his memory), when 'Slim' (John Shiel) recently passed away, when

Barry had major knee problems and when I had a close call with a brain tumour... these setbacks only strengthened our longstanding friendships, unique as they are.

Do we attribute our ageless partnerships to our educational upbringing? We sure do! Once a Chaddy boy, always a Chaddy boy.



L-R: Gavan Harkin, Barry Parnell, Tour Guide, Mike Henry, Brian Ford



L-R: Trish Parnell, Brian Ford, Kerri Ford, Pauline Henry, Mike Henry, Anne Harkin, Gavan Harkin, Jan Janes, Barry Parnell