

Twice a week during the season, the club brings the entire rural community together. It holds social gatherings and is planning a club ball.

Its firsts are on top of the ladder and its seconds are unbeaten. Grand final weekend in Toolleen promises to be memorable.

The Mount Pleasant footy ground is remarkable.

It sits like a manicured green field in an old red gum forest, the "mount" (in reality a pleasant little hill) on the horizon.

Off to one side in an impressive brick club house and rooms, along with tennis courts and assorted other sporting buildings.

Bernard Linnett is another newcomer who has fallen for the quiet lifestyle of Toolleen.

He and his wife Donna moved up from the Mornington Peninsula about five and a half years ago to run the pretty general store and post office.

"With all the double letters in the surname, it seemed right to settle in Toolleen," he jokes.

"You know, things could always be busier, but we're very happy here.

"We actually got a map of Victoria and drew a big circle on it and said we wanted to live somewhere in that circle.

"We looked for three months, from Manangatang to Korong Vale and after three months we spoke to an agent in Bendigo who said the Toolleen store might be for sale.

"We said: where's Toolleen?"

"The moment we pulled up out the front, we said that's what we want."

Bernard has added a Bendigo Building Society agency and any other lines he felt might be needed.

"You're right about it being quiet in the town, but there are 75 families who get their mail from here. It serves a big area."

The only other business in Toolleen is just out of town where Neville Tranter runs a large and modern turkey farm feeding the appetites of Melbourne's restaurants.

It is the largest employer in the district.

But there are other signs of economic life ticking away in Toolleen.

For example, just across the Northern Highway from the pub, Terry Tuohey has developed a business which makes most people blink in amazement.

He cuts up fallen red gums along the district's many creeks and floodways.

Which in itself isn't remarkable.

But he does it in a big way and trucks the split logs to Melbourne where they are placed in 13-kg bags and sold at places such as service stations for \$5.30 a bag.

Melburnians wanting a picturesque effect from their Coonaras during a dinner party might not wince at paying \$5.30 for 13 kgs of wood.

But that means a tonne of red gum eventually sells for \$407.70. That, he laughs, is called value adding. Not that Terry gets that much, by the time everyone else involved gets a piece of the action.

In 10 weeks, Terry and his brother have cut and dispatched 160 tonnes of wood.

Terry was born in nearby Elmore and has a family with four children in Toolleen and says it's a nice enough little place to live in.

Mind you, there is something else remarkable about Terry. He's a Tuohey.

The hills are thick with Tuoheys. You only have to look at the footy tipping board in the pub to see that.

"I think we must be good breeders," Terry laughs.

"But from my point of view it's good. There are always people around you and if you get into real trouble there's always family around to help.

"That helps to make it a good place for the kids to grow up in as well, although it's a pity about losing the school."

You come away with the feeling that for as long as there are Tuoheys there will be a Toolleen.

While the place might be the tail end of the bureaucratic world, it's the centre of their's.