

You've made significant contributions to the arts across our district in various spheres over many years. How would you like to be known?

That's a tough question. I see putting on events as a creative form in itself; I don't make art or consider myself a musician, but delight in developing ideas for arts and community events and making them happen.

This community is indebted for those creative visions and your involvement in numerous events. Many include music. Where did your interest in music begin?

There was no music in my home, and little during school days except some recorder playing. My love of music evolved in my twenties when going to folk music festivals at Goolwa and then Victor Harbor, later widening further afield over the years. The communal aspect especially attracted me, I enjoyed the camaraderie and social connections between musicians, being amongst such warm vibes and even developing some personal prowess playing the Irish bodhran drum and a washboard.

That led you to establishing Yankalilla Acoustic Music (YAM)?

Yes, my focus has been on creating opportunities for sharing music in my own district. YAM, a monthly community fixture at the Show Grounds on the third Saturday night of the months between the equinoxes, has gathered a large following over nearly fifteen years. There is an open mic session in the supper rooms and jamming around the campfire, people pay a gold coin entrance fee and it's up to participants and onlookers to organise themselves. I set up and mix the sound system, would be performers list their names on a blackboard and music and friendly camaraderie follow.

And out of that came the Bluegrass festival?

In some ways it developed from YAM but with a more structured program over a weekend. In November we're coming up to the eleventh of these low key festivals. A committee helps set up at Wirrina whose caravan park gets behind us too. Local community is again at the core although the small budget event attracts visitors,



musos and bands from further afield and involves around 300 people.

You've been involved with the Festival Fleurieu since its inception as the Leafy Sea Dragon Festival in 2005 and helped it off to a great start with a street party.

Yes I ran its first street party. That involvement predated the Bluegrass Festival. It was a steep learning curve, but it all came together on the day creating a buzz around the Normanville town centre. I repeated it several following festivals and took that experience of managing diverse stall holders, crowds and musicians into other ventures.

Yes, notably into running the whole LSD festivals in 2009 and 2011. Did you enjoy that experience?

Indeed. That's a big event, with multiple events within it; since directing the whole show I have continued to play roles in all subsequent festivals. Four festivals featured popular soirees, a series of musical concerts I masterminded and organised, and for many shows I have provided technical support behind the scenes. Running amps and a mixing desk is almost like playing a musical instrument and can be nerve-racking and stressful. I also set up the arts network to help fledgling groups until they've established their own constitutions and funding arrangements.

You have an enormous range of skills. Where was your formal training?

I grew up in country NSW in the Murrumbidgee farming area. I went to primary school in Cootamundra and high school in Wagga Wagga but spent my trade training years in Sydney qualifying as a general electrician, then in air-conditioning. Always eager to leave city life, when I settled in the Yankalilla District in my twenties, I never wanted to live anywhere else. I have a strong sense of belonging here, to this land and this community of people.

At first I found work repairing air conditioners in Victor Harbor then went on my own fixing small appliances, and since qualifying at TAFE as a bookkeeper, have worked part time in that arena.

But you constantly work for the community in many spheres. Don't you carry a heavy load for the local Show Society?

I work part time deliberately so that I can be involved on several fronts as a volunteer in this district for which I have a passion. It's been

thrilling keeping the Yankalilla Show going and being part of its 140 year history. Volunteer teams maintain the buildings and grounds and put on a much praised annual event every October long weekend. As outdoor convenor of trade spaces and markets, I am there every day the week before, but it is worth it as everyone pitches in and on the day locals really make it a rousing carnival.

Show day itself is a great success but you've also been instrumental in the restoration of buildings, upgrades of facilities and adding new ones.

Over the years I've successfully applied for grants to enable the show team to tackle restoration of the large hall. The facade has been done, the windows replaced, and walls repaired inside and out. Next is the roof. We've also upgraded the toilets with access facilities, and put a commercial kitchen in the supper room. We built The Pavilion, a large display and activities space, with a new block of toilets attached. Sometimes I've been project manager if work's done by contractors, but I am always part of a larger committee of show devotees. It's a strong team.

What activities now happen at the show grounds precinct?

Numerous clubs hold meetings, it's the monthly market venue, yoga and art classes occur, private parties hire it, music shows and concerts take place, the youth theatre group and karate classes train there, and so the list goes. Like-minded people who've worked to create this hub believe in the role public events and the arts play in the wellbeing of our area. It's been well worth it, and fun too.

Like your work for the annual New Years Eve Pageant?

Yes, that was more fun. I used to run the market set ups after all the floats ended their sojourn through Normanville streets to the foreshore. The beach became a party site, but we made it a family friendly event with fireworks at dusk so that young people could also enjoy them. I hope a new team can muster community support to re-establish this quite famous Normanville parade.

There's a strong thread of caring and inclusiveness in all you do. What is your hope for the future?

To facilitate and encourage a succession of people to maintain established events and facilities, and to find new people with energy and ideas to extend community involvement so this district always remains the best place to be.

Well done and thank you Ian for your creative efforts as an arts and community events organiser.



Show Maintenance Crew L to R Allan Whellum, Ian Main, Peter Cleland, Andrew Norton



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