

REVISITING THE ORIGINS OF FESTIVAL FLEURIEU

In April I was pleased to speak at an event of the Friends of Festival Fleurieu in the beautiful Mistletoe Project exhibition at Myponga. I was asked to give background to the festival's history. As it was the tenth festival, I also aimed to thank and honour the thousands of people who have been part of the festival since its inception in 2005.

To reach a wider audience, I am now placing a version of that talk into the Yankalilla Regional News, and I would like to recognise Paul Jelfs' unwavering support in this publication since the very first festival.

Lorraine McLoughlin

In February 2004, I convened a public meeting for YACCA (Yankalilla Area Commerce and Community Association) which was then our local business and community organisation. The group, chaired by Phil Palmer, proposed a regular event to showcase the arts of the district and attract visitors here outside of peak tourism times.

We chose our coast's leafy seadragons for the festival's name as a symbol of all that's beautiful in the Yankalilla district, a place with a stunning physical environment and a colourful creative community.

Erika Inhofer of Studio 13 sold the idea to the Yankalilla District Council, which supported us strongly, particularly Mayor Peter Whitford and CEO Rodger Sweetman, but also elected members, the office and outdoor staff, and its Tourism Officer.



Artist George Tetlow's painting of a leafy featured on the first poster with a very simple logo.



Creative people from Cape Jervis to Myponga to Inman Valley and in-between towns and farms came forward with ideas for events and exhibitions. Erika pushed me into nailing the program to meet printing deadlines to promote the festival happening in April 2005, and we were off.

Our talented and loyal community made it happen, as Ruth Davis, YAS Principal Rosie Harden, Ian Main, and vital others helped rally creative thinkers and positive workers. Together we succeeded.

For the second festival, graphic artist John Nowland, who had a weekend farm in Myponga, designed the more stylised logo which has been used ever since. He also created the 2007 poster which has been repeated this year to honour the festival's history.



Now, here we are celebrating a tenth festival, thanks to the work of thousands of people along the way. (Looking back at the review of the 2007 festival I see we estimated over 500 people up front and behind the scenes helped make it work. Multiply by ten and it's a huge community effort).

I am honoured to be a patron of the festival as bestowed by the present festival board, although I get far too much of the spotlight as I passed the baton for leading future festivals to Ian Main who delivered those in 2009 and 2011. He brought on board graphic artist Alison Fort who is a fellow patron and has been pro bono graphic designer seven times.

I returned for the 2013 festival, then Jillian Langford led exciting festivals in 2015 and 2017, followed by stalwart teams directed and convened in various ways by Greg Mackie, Jane Mitchell, Jenny Jenkinson, Desmond

Ford and Libby Robertson. It's not possible to name everyone but so many have been extraordinary in retaining the vision and keeping our festival going.

Like a leafy seadragon and still beautiful, the festival, with a new name, continues to morph into various shapes as individuals come and go, and circumstances change. The artist's trail was there from the beginning. While Peter Fitzgerald and Karen Hammat have opened their studios every festival, new people have continually come on board.

A constant that remains is the glue of our strong community. Creative and enthusiastic artists, performers and creators, and tireless volunteers behind the scenes, have made the festival an ongoing success. We could hardly have dreamed nearly twenty years ago of getting to a tenth festival. And what a wonderful festival it will be.

I congratulate the current team of innovative organisers and all participants in Festival Fleurieu 2023. Beginning in this wonderful exhibition, the whole program looks amazing.

I am thrilled that the festivals continue and that they still uphold the founders' belief in the potential of the arts to contribute to the district's economy and sense of community.

(Speech given 20 April 2023)



Post Script re artists' profiles

I would like to thank the twenty creative people who have agreed to be part of my regular profiles of artists, and also thank members of the public for their warm responses to their stories. The next interview in August will feature painter Jane Smeets from Second Valley. In September in my final profile, I'll interview Paul Jelfs whose support for the arts has made these articles possible.