

Upfront Club

The UpFront Club is 20!

**HAPPY
BIRTHDAY**

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Maleny is famous for its cooperative culture, demonstrating what can happen when an idea has the power to inspire people and the people have the courage to listen to their hearts, follow their dreams and are willing to commit to putting in, usually a very large amount of effort, often years of sustained energy to create something, that is often, quite out of the box!

The idea of Maleny having an alternative to the Pub, was first seeded when I was an artist in residence at the small state school in Theodore. Each Friday afternoon the teachers took me to the local pub. I was intrigued to learn, the owner of the pub had died and left it to the community, it was set up under a cooperative structure.

I was excited at the thought "We can do this in Maleny". So when I got back, I told my friend, Billy Abbott, then we spoke to Jill Jordan and I could see the sparks of interest. We put the idea around and the seed germinated, with a bunch of people keen to explore the idea.



Opening night of Maleny Cooperative Club - 1 July 1994

by Gay Liddington
(with introduction by Veronica Davidson –
Founding Member)

A VISIT BY Maleny woman Jill Jordan and friends to the Hotel Theodore on Labour Day weekend 1993 percolated an idea. A vision grew and the planning of a cooperative club for Maleny gained momentum. This year the Upfront Club celebrates its twentieth birthday.

In those early years there had been ongoing disquiet among members of the community who sought a meeting place other than the local pub. The vision was to create a place for families, youth, cultural activities and social interaction inclusive of the whole community.

On returning from Theodore armed with history of the Theodore Hotel Cooperative Association formed in 1949, an initial steering committee and small working parties were formed. This led to the foundation meeting on 9 May 1994. Fifty people signed the attendance book. It was at that meeting that the Maleny Cooperative Club Society Limited was birthed.

Also, at that initial meeting the subject of a name arose followed by a brainstorming session which carried forward to the opening night two months later. Names such as Bunya Club, Bunyip Club, Jovial Club, Hot Gossip, Trivias, Obi Club and Good Time Café were on the list.*

Dale Lorna Jacobsen recalls, 'I was on a 12-day Great Walk organised by the Queensland Folk Federation. Halfway through, Paul Lawler said he was going to Maleny to take part in a meeting to form a new club in town. Although I still lived in Brisbane, I had a block of land in Maleny, so asked if I could come too.'

"Paul and I rolled up to a room so full of people many sat on the floor. Billy Abbot led the spirited discussion, part of which was to vote on the name. He read out a list that had been submitted, and someone yelled from the back of the room, "Why not call it the Upfront Club then we can have a restaurant behind which we can call the Outback Café!" That was it! We then voted to christen it the Upfront Club, took out membership and became founding members.'

Ann Jupp, secretary of the cooperative for twelve years said, 'From the onset, Maleny Kitchen in Maple Street was the preferred place for our club. It was because of its ambience and the fact that the proprietors were ready to sell. It was serendipitous...it just all came together.' Ann added that the support of landlord Ian McDonald made all the difference.



Above left: Upfront Coffee Club 2004



Above right: Danny Rose – Upfront Club's Music Manager

'He was prepared to give us a ninety-nine year lease and reasonable rent. And, to this day Ian is still one of our greatest supporters visiting the club pretty much on a daily basis.'

The grand opening of the Club was on 1 July 1994. 'How exciting it was. Everyone was so puffed up about the opening and having a place of our own. It was very upbeat, the room was buzzing! And I sat out front writing receipts for new memberships,' recalls Ann.

LETS (Local Energy Trading System) has been part of the Upfront Club since its beginnings. This cashless trading system to date has supported the club in various ways including maintenance and the purchase of items for the club. In turn the Upfront Club offers LETS members a coffee card and meals for 'bunyas' the trading unit for this area.

Another stalwart of the Upfront Club and one described as 'a rock' is Harry Whitehouse. Harry, one of the originals, was licensee for fourteen years. 'I was attracted to the spirit of the thing. It cut across the staid, established mindset of the village at the time. And, as a result, we met a lot of opposition. Some were dead against it and did everything they could to stop us,' said Harry.

When asked if this new club was seen by some as a hippie, drug culture club, Harry replied. 'Yes! Well, that's what they stigmatised us as but of course it was nothing of the sort. We were basically responsible people with a different point of view. And they couldn't understand that. We eventually won some of them over and they became members. We were about having fun!'

Member Robin Clayfield recounted, 'My most precious memory was walking away from the foundation meeting feeling honoured and thankful to have met Harry Whitehouse and feeling what a great initiative a Co-op Club was to draw in and connect people from all walks of life and all ages.'

Danny Rose, the Club's Music Manager for the past eighteen years has also played an integral part in the development of this cooperative. Danny was there in the beginning sharing his musical talents at the opening of the club. 'It was hard going in those days because we had to perform totally unplugged,' he said.



Douglas Bailey - volunteer



Harry Whitehouse

As well as local acts, interstate and international artists have also had the pleasure of playing at the Upfront Club. 'Nano Stern is a young Chilean artist of international note. His manager tracked us down and said he wanted Nano to play in places like the Club,' said Danny.

The Upfront Club is a place where creativity and friendships thrive. Events such as theatre restaurant and fundraising auctions have made their mark. The Folk Club, Art Exhibition openings and Welcome Mat feature monthly and the 11.00am Coffee Club meets daily.

In the spirit of a cooperative the Upfront Club belongs to its members and stands as proof that when people get together with a common goal they achieve great things. The Club's membership currently stands at around 700.

'It was an experiment that succeeded in spite of financial difficulties. It was a worthwhile experiment and now it's an integral part of the community. I am very pleased we are still here. That's an achievement in itself...and long may it continue,' said Harry Whitehouse beaming with pride.

For more information go to www.upfrontclub.org and www.facebook.com/TheUpfrontClub/

** Veronica Davidson told HT: "The suggestion of Feral Club, brought a roar of laughter, as the Maleny Folk Festival was being blamed for attracting "Ferals" by a lady who didn't like the festival."*