

ARCHIVING AQUARIUS

The significance of the Festival

The title of the Aquarius Festival in 1973 drew on the wholesale shift of consciousness emerging in Australia in the 1970's which, to those of us caught up in it, really did feel like the dawning of a "New Age" affecting almost every facet of our lives. It served as a clarion call to movers and shakers around the country and so they came in their thousands to learn and to celebrate.

It is variously estimated that between 5,000 and 15,000 attended some part of the Festival, but, whatever the number, its impact, both in Australia and overseas was profound. Many others who could not make it to the Festival subsequently arrived, liked what they saw and stayed. This applied not only to the young but to their retiree parents' generation who began settling in the area in and after the late 1970's.

But this in-migration also included many foreign nationals, particularly Germans, Dutch and Scandinavians, many of whom arrived as tourists and stayed on to become residents. In addition, today there are today in Nimbin the backpacking tourists who arrive in six daily busloads with many being Japanese or more latterly, Koreans.

It is hard to think of anywhere in the world like Nimbin and the Rainbow Region in terms of an aggregated self-consciously counter-cultural demographic concentrated in such numbers in a rural setting. Perhaps more than any other nation's young people, the "alternative society" in the Rainbow Region was, proportionally the biggest, most influential and successful counter-cultural sub-society on the planet.

To give you an idea of the range of fields in which the Aquarians have had and are still making an impact, we would cite:-

- In community development- the "Land Sharing Intentional Communities" movement, of which there are arguably more in our area than in any other similarly sized region in the world.

- In agriculture- the application of the "Permaculture" system of land management. There are now dozens of productive permacultural and organic farms in the area, the highest concentration in Australia.

- In
alternative energy- wind, solar and water power, especially the development of
the "Pelton Wheel" water powered generator. The area contains more alternative
energy home systems than anywhere in the country.

- In
architecture- domes, yurts and innovative designs involving recycled materials.

- In
building- sawdust-sand and cement for wall panel infilling; recycling of
building materials, hand made mud bricks;

- In
health- complementary medicine, apothecaries, home birthings, home burials;

- In
environmental politics- the saving of the region's rainforests from logging and
the preservation of other environmentally significant sites;

- In
spirituality- the establishment of centres for Buddhism, yoga and different
types of meditation;

- In
media- the establishment of new styles and modes of communication such as
community radio and New Settler newspapers and magazines;

- In
retailing- the setting up of farmers' markets and food co-operatives;

- In music- the introduction of various genres of music to the region, including protest folk and reggae;

- In education- innovative forms of education such as "Schools without Walls" and Steiner schools;

- In fashion- the creation and development of fashion styles unique to the region.

These above lifestyle categories represent the specific types of archival material that come within the purview of the Aquarian Archive's collection policy.