

NEWSREEL

Edition Twenty Two

July 2010

the official publication of

The Australian Museum of Motion Picture & Television (Inc.)

Preserving the proud heritage of Australia's moving image industries for future generations

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Notice the change?

In our last Newsletter (No, you haven't missed any – the last one was edition 21 in December 2009) the Committee invited feedback on a proposal to include the name "Television" in our official name. Response to the request was better than anticipated, with the majority of the membership expressing strong and passionate views on why or why not we should make the change. It became obvious to the Committee that the majority of members wanted to move with the times. A motion was put for consideration. The vote was almost unanimous in adopting the new name, which now appears above.

We are currently going through the process of submitting the myriad of forms required by various statutory bodies to comply with required legal processes. In due course all our stationery and art work will reflect this change.

Observant members will have noticed our humble journal also bears a new name. While only a small step above a few stapled A4 sheets of our original format, and nowhere near the high standard of the glossy magazines produced by kindred entities, it was the opportune time for the autocratic editor to create an identity for our irregular publication. The name "newsreel" was coined as it represents the traditional generic name of moving image productions used to convey information on recent and current events. Constructive feedback always appreciated

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New Members

The President and Committee welcome our new Members;

- George Florence
- Bill Gaynor
- Australian Centre for the Moving Image
- Channel Ten Perth
- ABC Television Perth
- Damien Taylor
- Liverpool Plains Shire Council

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and









AMMPT Structure

In recent times, new members have joined who are unaware of the early days of our organisation. How it has morphed over the years from a local Perth group focused solely on creating its own museum to display local cinema history till today's objective of embracing all aspects of the Australian moving image industries, and eventually establishing permanent displays of its own. Also supporting and promoting its members around our nation who have or are creating their own exhibitions.

To overcome early interstate misconceptions of AMMPT's intent, it was decided to create a network of locally incorporated and autonomous regional branches, all operating under near identical separate Constitutions. Each responsible for its own activities but working under a common set of policies and guidelines, formulated by a national governing body consisting of the Presidents and committees of all regional branches. Items donated to AMMPT's collection are the property of the national body, but are held in custody by the branch in the region from which they were donated. My mutual agreement, items can be transferred between regional branches or loaned to members and approved entities for temporary display.

The national body, being registered by the ATO for charity concessions and as a DGR (Deductible Gift Recipient) has established an Ancillary Gift Fund account, administered by trustees appointed from all regional branches. It has also adopted a professional collections cataloging system which is accessible over the internet by all regional registrars and curators.

Individual, Corporate and Associate membership is for regional branches only, however all members are listed on the national register. There is no subscription fee required for membership of the national entity, however only financial committee members of regional branches have voting rights. Regional branch Presidents are automatically included on the national committee. Election of regional and national office bearers are held every two years. With a prime focus to locate and select items for preservation and display, it is essential that accession teams be formed - those with the experience and expertise to evaluate donated items for our collection. Currently we have divided our collection into three broad areas - cinema and related areas, television and related electronic media, and the amateur and consumer moving image field. Each of the three teams has expertise in its particular area.

Other teams can be formed for specific projects, i.e. audio and video history, educational programmes, exhibitions and displays, communication, fundraising, recruitment, marketing and public relations, liaising with local archives, museums and community groups etc. Members wishing to be a part of these activities are encouraged to approach the committee and become involved.

As the organisation grew over the past five years it was apparent a business plan was needed. The first one was compiled in 2006 as part of a grant submission for funding of proposed activities. It created a necessary focus on the direction ahead and identified objectives. This has recently been revised to accommodate current initiatives and take into account unrealistic goals set in the first document. It also permitted us to redefine our Mission Statement.

It comes as a bit of a culture shock to many members, most of whom come from a technical environment, to have to adopt and accept what appears to be at first encounter alien procedures and terminology but common to the museum and cultural fraternity. Keeping in mind the saying, "If you can't stand the heat, you shouldn't be in the kitchen" it has been a case of grit your teeth and dive in. While accepting the need for these disciplines and the desire to collaborate with the professional sector of the museum establishment, we have endeavoured to keep our organisation in touch with reality.

Mission Statement

Translation: What we intend to achieve

The Australian Museum of Motion Picture & Television (Inc.) - AMMPT's mission is to promote a greater community awareness and appreciation of Australia's contribution to the continuing evolution of the film and television industry which has and continues to influence our unique social culture through exposure to moving images.

Mandate

Translation: Our terms of reference

AMMPT's mandate is to preserve significant objects, document and publicly exhibit them to demonstrate the Australian contribution to the development of the moving image from its inception to its ongoing evolution. To advance its mission it will collaborate with existing Federal and State Archives and museums and support and promote industry related displays by local government and private archives, community museums and collectors, as well as maintaining and distributing its own collection and arranging its own promotional events

Strategy

Translation: How we will achieve those objectives

AMMPT will locate, obtain and preserve, commensurate with its resources, the widest possible range of appropriate objects and information deemed necessary to develop displays for the purpose of informing, entertaining and educating the public. It will initiate interpretation programs by highlighting the technologies used, individuals, entities and related services. Also to publicly exhibit them at its own premises or in collaboration with kindred community or private museum entities. A national database network will allow items of interest to a region to be identified and temporary loans for display to be arranged.

A supplementary network of member operated museums will have access to appropriate items from AMMPT's collection. They will be encouraged to develop museum skills and procedures to a level acceptable to the public and kindred organisations. By enabling all communities across Australia to have a greater access to significant items and memorabilia from our rapidly changing industry, they will gain a deeper understanding of our motion picture and television heritage.

The above criteria focuses and governs all our activities.

Our Industry's hidden treasures

One of the unexpected discoveries during a recent trip by the President to meet with interstate members in Victoria and New South Wales was the amount and range of significant items of our industry's heritage still in the hands of our members and other passionate collectors of Australian film and television memorabilia. Some are believed to be the only known remaining of their type in existence. The obvious challenge now faced by AMMPT is to ensure the ownership and location of these recently unearthed treasures are recorded to ensure the remaining family members do not treat the objects as worthless and consign them to the tip. The owners must be encouraged to publicly display them in a secure environment and explain their provenance.

Apart from assisting the development of branch activities in these regions, his secondary task was to meet with members, local government entities, private collectors and kindred organisations who had already established moving image related exhibitions or displays, or were contemplating doing so. The trip to Melbourne and Sydney included visits to several country areas where the enthusiasm in these distant communities to preserve their local moving image heritage eclipsed that normally found in some capital cities. There were plans to market their displays as tourist attractions for their local areas. This vindicated AMMPT's decision to focus on supporting and publicising member's existing collections and exhibitions, rather than wait till it was feasible to establish its own centralised galleries.

By establishing a national network of like minded individuals and entities throughout Australia, the entire community becomes more closely engaged in learning about and appreciating the achievements of our film and television industry pioneers. Rather than this unique material only being available in often distant centralised galleries and archives in the main capital cities, displays in community local libraries or purpose built cultural venues will enable members and local collectors to publicly exhibit their precious items that would not otherwise be relinquished from their control.

While government funded galleries and archives have traditionally been the sole recognised repositories for donated items relating to the heritage of our industry, and have the budgets for professional facilities to store and preserve donated items, events over recent decades have discouraged many individuals from contributing significant memorabilia to public collections. Retrieval of items for display at special events is often difficult, if not nearly impossible except for recognised cultural institutions. In some museums important donated collections have been catalogued by personnel who had no knowledge of the technical intricacies of the equipment they were inspecting, rendering resultant descriptive lists meaningless. These items are in danger of being discarded without accurate documentation.

The previous absence of any nationally established external organisation with members ready and able to offer diverse industry specialist advice to these institutions is an area AMMPT intends to rectify. They are able to provide a pool of qualified members willing to assist mainstream curators. With its national database accessible by the internet to all regional branch registrars, excess items in any particular area can be identified and loaned to supplement members' displays in diverse communities.

Another concern was the lack of access to finance and grants to individuals to establish or adequately maintain their exhibitions. Many items were not being kept in appropriate storage conditions, or presented to the public in an acceptable professional manner. This was not an adverse reflection on the intent of those concerned, but mainly due to the lack of knowledge of standards required and access to the training available to reach these benchmarks. Local government groups were better tuned to the grants system but in some cases lacked the technical support and funds to establish a credible display of industry technology.

AMMPT intends to use its resources to obtain funding to support members' community based displays, and encourage them to attend museum training courses to increase their awareness of the disciplines and standards required. These are beneficial to volunteers of community based museums, such as those provided by Museums Australia, Museums & Galleries NSW and similar organisations and have greatly assisted the AMMPT Western region branch in gaining knowledge and credibility. This enables it to actively represent and support its members in working closer with the established museum and archive fraternity.

Perhaps the most valuable hidden and fast disappearing treasures of our cinema and television heritage are the memories and personal photographs and memorabilia held by our industry pioneers. Amongst the membership of the Australian Cinematographers Society, Society of Australian Cinema Pioneers and the Australian Television Pioneers organisations, all of whom support AMMPT's objectives, are those with possibly the sole remaining account of past events, which once gone are lost forever. Whilst these organisations focus on technical excellence, camaraderie and benevolence, there are those amongst their ranks who have the passion to ensure their stories and objects from their industry are preserved for future display. It is hoped these people will be encouraged to offer their expertise to AMMPT.

There has been a lot of time and effort over the years by organisations such as CATHS, ACTS and other industry related preservation groups in the main cities and country areas documenting matters of immense historical wealth and significance. By collaboration with these groups and mainstream museums and archives, AMMPT intends to provide a facility to ensure these hidden treasures are unearthed and made accessible throughout the Australian community for the information and enjoyment of future generations.

Industry retrospect

Excerpt from Everyones June 13 1928.

News-Reel Planes in Thrilling Brisbane-Sydney Dash

Kingsford Smith Flight pictures cost companies £450 for aeroplane hire.

Film companies beat the newspapers

Pilm coverage of the arrival of Charles Kingsford Smith in the Southern Cross at Brisbane on Saturday morning after its record breaking flight from the USA (June 9 1928) was the signal for the start of unusual newsreel plane race to Sydney which supplied more thrills than any aerial derby. Cameramen from rival companies were out to secure prestige, and they got every available rev. out of their machines. With their exhausts roaring pilots flew down the coast. One machine came to grief at Taree and another was forced to land at Newcastle. The fastest performance was put up by a pilot Tom O'Dea with Australasian Film's (A.F.) footage. He landed at Mascot first in at 5 p.m. completing the trip in 5 hours and 55 minutes.

The News-Guardian plane, with Paramount shots, was the second to arrive. Rush work was executed by laboratories and flight films were shown to cheering audiences in the principal city theatres before the early addition of the Sunday papers were sold on the streets.

Anticipating the exciting race, and incidentally to check up on the honours, *Everyones* took up location at Mascot. The ground was stormed by executives awaiting the arrival of their machines, and such faith did they have in their pilots that they were prepared to back their arguments with cash.

Excitement reached fever pitch when a strange plane was sited a mere speck far to the northward of the drome. Different companies claimed the plane, until through glasses at closer range proved the Bristol bomber hired by Australasian Films. A car purred close by, the film was thrown from the cockpit into the auto, and was at the laboratory and in the juice within 10 minutes.

Although darkness wrapped the landing ground in the pitch black, flares were set and John Kennebeck waited in readiness for his pilot. In the vicinity of 7 p.m.the whirr of a propeller was heard overhead, and a torch flashed Morse signals from the clouds, and the flares were lit. Gracefully the machine landed. The Paramount news-reel had arrived.

It was the last plane home. Attributable to keen foresight was the arrival of the Paramount plane. Half Paramount's negative was placed aboard one machine and another machine carried a similar cargo. Contrary winds forced one plane down at Newcastle, the second got through.

Films Shown at 8:05p.m.

The first copy of Australasian Films' footage was screened at the Lyceum at 8:5 p.m. and five copies were completed for Sydney by 9 p.m. The Capital showed its copy immediately after interval, and the Empress, Lyric, Haymarket and Olympic screened the flight the same night. A.F. came to the rescue of the Prince Edward by lending a copy, and another print went to Arcadia Theatre, Chatswood.

The performance was an achievement of which A.F. hands credit to Billy Trerise, chief cameraman Charlie Ellis, in charge of dark rooms; and the rest of the studio staff, who gave every ounce of their skill and energy. The studio staff was under the direction of L. C. Wickes and Laurie Brown. The fine sequences portraying the arrival at Eagle Farm aerodrome Brisbane were shot under the direction of Monty Simmons. Paramount entrusted their footage to the Commonwealth Film Laboratories. A copy was rushed to the Regent and was shown there at 9:30 p.m. while suburban switches were also arranged. MGM had Ray Vaughn, official MGM cameraman, in Brisbane shoot the arrival from the land and air. Although the plane did not get through to Sydney, a special film was bought by radio man James Warner, in the "Southern Cross" from Brisbane, and handed to MGM representatives at Mascot aerodrome. Ray Vaughan flying in with the "Southern Cross" escort shot the landing at Mascot from the air. At the gala performance of Rio Rita at St James Theatre, in honour of Kingsford Smith, Ulm, and Lyon and Warner, the MGM record of their arrival was screened prior to the stage presentation.

Plane Racers Train

With the Sydney race over the interstate dash began. Australasian Films and Paramount got prints away to Melbourne via Saturday nights express (train) with what looked like a full-day's start on Fox and MGM. But Stanley S. Crick stole a march on Fox. As soon as his plane, which had come down outside Taree, reached Sydney on Sunday, laboratory work started. At six o'clock on Monday morning another plane was chartered to Fox and set out for Melbourne in a race with Sunday nights express. (train). Possibilities were that the plane and train would reach Melbourne simultaneously.

A print of the Fox film was dropped at Albury; then disaster came on the Victorian side. Storm forced the plane down at Avenel; and the run to Melbourne had to be completed by car. Fox got their prints to suburban theatres on Monday night, while both Australasian Films and Paramount were in time for afternoon screenings of the continuous city shows. MGM prints left (Sydney) by train on Monday night. The newsreel costs companies about £450 in aeroplane hire.

Addendum:

An interesting side light was that Ray Allsop then as chief engineer at radio station 2BL in Sydney used to intercept the Morse code messages of the Southern Cross' record breaking flight and broadcast the news of its progress. A big map of the Pacific ocean was put up in the studio of 2BL and the position of the flight plotted.

This map is included in the "Ray Allsop Papers" held at



the National Archive Canberra. This I believe helped to cause the great human interest in the flight and the big crowds at Archerfield and at Mascot for the arrival.

Ray later made his mark as one of Australia's cinema pioneers with his creation of the Raycophone company.

Ray Allsop This article provided by

Richard Ashton and was discovered as part ongoing research project into the Cummings and Wilson story and other Australian cinema pioneers.

16mm Film Library Progress

As reported in the December edition, AMMPT was successful in purchasing the State Government's 16mm film library housed at the state Library - a collection of nearly 6000 prints. Owning and operating a film library was never previously considered one of our organisation's key functions, however after some members had been regular borrowers of prints before the facility was closed, and appreciating the need to keep real film projection culture alive, the decision was made to accommodate this expansion of our operations.



Tony Smith (left) and Graham Lacey check out some titles Several members with small trucks and utilities took three days to transport the collection from central Perth to temporary storage in the suburbs. Unfortunately the specially designed shelves at the State Library were not part of the deal causing some initial storage headaches at the new location.



Jane Robinson, Graham Lacey and George Robinson ponder a small section of the temporarily stored collection

Currently all the titles are in the process of being inspected and content reviewed in batches. This will continue during the coming months. The condition of the prints vary, with some being those used in the 1940's and 50's as part of the original department of Education Visual Education film library, from whence the current collection eventually evolved. Once these have been culled to leave only those prints suitable for continuing projection, those selected for the AMMPT library will be essentially those with content considered to be of particular importance, informative or entertaining. They will gradually be added to a new catalogue under development. This process will depend on time and personnel available for these tasks.

Members not already involved in other volunteer duties on other AMMPT teams but with an interest in operating the film library, either as its librarian and booking officer, or someone to review, inspect and repair prints are asked to make themselves known as they can also contribute immediately to the initial setting up process. It is intended the film library facility be offered to members as a service, but consideration is being given to make it available to outside groups, such as film societies etc for an appropriate fee. It is hoped a permanent site to locate the library will be found in the near future, after which full operation of the service can begin. In the meantime a very limited but increasing number of titles will be available to members at no charge.

Copies of the provisional catalogue are now available and can be mailed out by contacting member Tony Smith on telephone 9271 5668. There is also no charge to AMMPT members for this service. However they are advised that loans will be subject to certain conditions that must be agreed to before a print is released. Access to these prints will be at the sole discretion of the librarian or a person acting on his or her behalf.

Visit to York museum

On the weekend of May 30th, several members journeyed to York where they had been invited to inspect the York Residency Museum. They were warmly welcomed and treated to an informative behind-the-scenes tour by its Curator, Carol Littlefair. As the museum was also running the Mosaic collection cataloguing system, it was a bonus to get some first hand info on operating the system.

The visit coincided with the weekend the York Film Society were hosting the AGM and national conference of the Australian Council of Film Societies with delegates arriving from all over Australia. We were invited to join them at their official opening ceremony, at which our film library team leader Tony Smith gave a short address on the objects of our organisation.

There was considerable interest in AMMPT having recently taken over the State film library, and the subject of ongoing access to the prints was raised. Tony explained that the film library would principally be a facility for its own members, but the committee would consider making limited access available to bona-fide film societies, once borrowing criteria policies had been established. Due to the large volume of prints to be inspected, this was expected to take some time. The State collection will be added to our existing collection of old time comedies and other early classics donated a couple of years earlier.

The increasing scarcity of 16mm film prints will mean that special attention will be paid to the competency of the projectionist and also the condition of the projection equipment being used. The film societies were advised it is intended that this film library service will eventually be available to all AMMPT members throughout Australia.



Another view of part of the film collection awaiting cataloguing. Graham Lacey is actually wearing shorts in the summer heat!

Temporary storage premises

With donated items continuing to be received, the problem of locating a permanent storage site continues to be one of our greatest challenges. The committee is constantly exploring new prospects, both at commercial and government level, but it appears many similar community organisations are in the same boat. In the meantime we are pleased to report being granted another year's free access to a secure unit at Koala Storage in O'Connor, courtesy of Mr. Lyndon Lewis and his fellow Directors. Their generosity is very much appreciated.

While this has alleviated some of the pressure on our increasing storage requirements, the other 90% of our collection is still housed in scattered temporary locations till such time as we can obtain our own storage facilities. Members are asked to make their own personal efforts in this direction as someone may finally hit the jackpot.



Please support Perth's most modern and secure self storage units

National Collection Register

ith the appointment of veteran television Pioneer Ross McDonald to the Committee as our National Registrar, listing of those objects available for our own exhibitions or to loan to members for their own displays, will allow easier access to this information and be more efficient. Photographs of the items in the collection will eventually be included. A generic coding system has been developed which will be used to categorise all items in our and possibly others' collections. It is available for use by anyone. Our Mosaic Collection Cataloguing system is now available via the internet to nominated office bearers throughout Australia, thanks to software designed by Treasurer Peter Foyster. As other regional committees are consolidated, their nominees will be trained in the operation of this increasingly accepted and user friendly community museum cataloguing system.

Our administrative data base has also been designed by Peter and is intended for national access.



Ross McDonald (left) is tutored by Peter Foyster in the operation of AMMPT's internet connected admin and cataloguing systems.

Vale: Arthur Stiles 1920 -2010

News of the death of AMMPT member, and till recently long serving President of the WA Branch of the Society of Australian Cinema Pioneers, Arthur Stiles, brought to a close a long and distinguished career in the local cinema industry. Arthur passed away on January 5th, just a few weeks short of his 90th birthday on the 23rd.

The family cinema tradition continues with Arthur's son Allan guiding the destiny of our corporate member, The Grand Theatre company.

Arthur presides over a meeting of the Cinema Pioneers in 2003, at which time the first discussions were held by some of their members about forming an association which eventually grew into the AMMPT of today.



Arthur's widow Irene, also a cinema pioneer, has requested she remain involved with our organisation and will replace him as a member.

Colin Hatfield 1923 - 2010

On June 1st, a member of the Hatfield family, a name synonymous with suburban picture theatre exhibition in



Perth from to 1940's to the 60's passed away after a battle with cancer. Always an energetic and helpful member of the community, he hand built what is believed to be the first outer suburban drive-in theatre, the Panorama, alongside the Brookton Highway in Roleystone. This pioneering venue closed in 1967, being another victim of the new age entertainment medium – television.

A report on this venture appeared in the September 2004 edition of our newsletter, with an audio history interview with Colin by Roy Mudge and Daryl Binning arranged a short time later.

Fritz Sennheiser 1912 -2010

Pioneer audio engineer and founder of a German company in 1945, now known as Sennheiser Electronic GmbH & Co., Professor Dr. Fritz Sennheiser died on May 17th at the age of 98. His research into electroacoustics contributed to a revolution in location sound recording with the development of the ":shotgun" microphone.



Blake Horrocks Television a working demonstration

Since the publication of the story of television pioneer Blake Horrocks in the last edition of our newsletter, there has been considerable renewed interest in the man and his equipment. A working demonstration was provided by Richard Rennie for fellow AMMPT members and others on May 19th, at which the principles of the system were clearly explained and understood. The event was videoed for our records.



L-R: Vice Pres. Harry Smith, Clive Woodward & Richard Rennie with some of the equipment used in the demonstration



have been given and others planned as the news of this pioneer and his work are publicised.

WANTED

LENSES: Peter Foyster is looking for a pair of **70 – 75mm lenses** for his 35mm projectors in his home theatre gardens. Please contact Peter on **08 9496 2802** if you can help.

VIDEO EDITOR: A member or other volunteer with the necessary equipment is required to edit the increasing backlog of archival material taken at our events. If you can assist, please contact Vice President Harry Smith on **08 9470 1533** or email harry @ wharfdale.com.au



Cinema & TV Pioneers support

We are pleased to have received support in principle from the Federal Executive of the Australian Cinema Pioneers Society for AMMPT's objectives. It is hoped their members can be made aware of our activities and to take part in our efforts to preserve the heritage of the cinema industry.

Another organisation which is now giving us support and promotion is the east coast based Television Pioneers Reunion. Encouragement from these and other industry organisations such as the Australian Cinematographers Society confirms the urgent need for our museum project.

Communication by email

Today, email has overtaken the postal system as the most efficient means of mass communication. With most of AMMPT members now connected to the internet, it is being used to advise them of events arranged at short notice. The Assistant Secretary has been posting copies of emails to the remaining members, but in some cases this has proved impractical.

To ensure all members receive information as quickly as possible, those not connected to the internet are asked to arrange with friends or colleagues who are, allow their service to accept messages addressed to the member, and to pass on information to them. It will be necessary for the member to advise the Secretary of the email address of the friend to which information can be sent.

Sponsorship

Members are encouraged seek out industry related companies and other organisations who may become AMMPT Corporate members or Sponsors. Covering costs in setting up regional branches and other initiatives without having to increase individual membership fees, means income streams must be generated to pursue our objectives. If you have any suggestions or contacts whom may be able to assist, please contact the President on 08 9310 3377.

Member recruitment

The strength of any organisation is dependent on the number and enthusiasm of its membership, and most importantly, pro-active involvement in its activities. Members should be on constant look-out for others who would enjoy being included in our activities. This is even more important in the Southern and Eastern regions as those branches become established.

The contact details for each branch are on the front page.

Newsreel Articles

Ts the production of a regular newsletter without a designated editor is made harder by the lack of material to cater for the varied interests of its members. A regular editor is yet to emerge from within the ranks of any of the branches, but we live in hope. In the meantime, members are encouraged to send in articles or photos for inclusion in *Newsreel* on any subject they consider may be of interest to others. It would also help in the creation of more regular editions. Email to ammpt@iinet.net.au

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MELBOURNE - REGIONAL MEETING

meeting of members and others interested in forming a Southern region branch in Melbourne was convened at the premises of Cameraquip, Clarendon St. South Melbourne on May $3^{\rm rd}$. It was hosted by local AMMPT and ACS member Malcolm Richards. As well as our own members, those involved with the ACS, CATHS. ACMI and private collectors also arrived to learn of the latest developments by our organisation and the new direction it was taking to engage the wider community.

The range of activities being undertaken in Perth was given as an example of what was possible in all regions, but needed active local committees to make it happen. While all attending the meeting were enthusiastic about the potential of local activity, it became obvious continued effort is needed to find the number required and who are prepared to devote the time and energy to establish a local committee.



Victorians and Tasmanians pooled ideas at the meeting Apart from having his own valuable collection of unique professional cine cameras and related objects, Malcolm is constantly being offered significant items from other industry pioneers. This is now reaching the stage where he will soon be unable to accept many more donations, causing the owners to consign them to an unknown fate possibly the tip! With a large business operation to run, there is a limit to the time Malcolm can devote to voluntary AMMPT activities and is seeking practical assistance from others. While there is a great deal of work currently being done in Melbourne documenting certain aspects of the industry, the need to ensure it is preserved and made available for the information and enjoyment of future generations is AMMPT's main focus.

Those wanting to be part of a team on this important project are urged to contact Malcolm on 03 9699 3922.

DIGGING UP THE PAST



Melbourne film-maker, researcher and RMIT broadcaster, Vincent O'Donnell has unearthed some valuable archival records searching for the original location and layout of a Bourke Street building known as the Melbourne, or Prince of Wales Opera House. It was later renamed the Tivoli for vaudeville

shows by entrepreneur Harry Rickards who is reported to have arranged the first screening of cinematograph films in Australia as part of his stage show on August 22nd 1896.

HERITAGE CENTRE TO SHOWCASE INDUSTRY BIRTH

elbournians walking down Bourke Street who lifted Latheir gaze above the footpath would have noticed a new construction perched high above the Salvation Army



headquarters. The new development is being fitted out as the Salvos new Heritage Centre, within which will be a section devoted to the history of

Australia's first major film production and exhibition operations. The Limelight department and the Biorama company are often referred to as being the birth of our nation's motion picture industry.

The heritage centre is the domain of AMMPT member and the Salvation Army's Territorial Archivist for the Australian Southern territory, Lindsay Cox. The grant funded heritage centre is due for opening later this year, and will include the restored areas in the original building where the Limelight department operated. Pre-restoration photos and an article on these areas were included in the March 2006 edition 7 of our newsletter. The move to the new premises involves a massive upheaval and relocation of objects and records from the several scattered rooms previously housing the collection. It has also created a gigantic workload for Lindsay and his helpers.



Left: Thousands of hand coloured glass lantern slides, many used in conjunction with the original Limelight film presentations, carefully catalogued and prepared for their new location in the Heritage centre.

Below: Lindsay ponders moving over 100 years of written records to a new storage area.

When the Heritage centre is officially opened, Lindsay intends offer AMMPT members special treatment when they visit the

Limelight display. Also it is proposed to provide some display space for AMMPT and the regional and Australian cinema heritage in the new gallery. As a lecture theatre/.presentation area is also included in the Centre's design, once the local AMMPT branch is operational, an invitation has been extended to hold some of its meetings on what some might consider to be, our industry's sacred ground.

PUBLIC INTERACTION

OUT CHILTERN WAY

One of the greatest failures of our moving image industries over the past hundred years has been in getting the community involved in what we do, and how we do it. To many, the world of film and television is perceived as a magical enclave, only accessible to the gifted few who were lucky enough to receive its calling. This illusion has been reinforced over the years by moving images being created by a beam of light coming out of small holes in the wall at the back of the cinema. What mysterious equipment lies beyond those openings and what do the people do in that little room often referred to as "the box"?

And the people working in the television and film production industry – many living a jet-setting international and glamorous lifestyle, some employed in unimaginable occupations such as Dolly Grip, Best Boy, Gaffer, Focus Puller and the like. The gulf between everyday mundane occupations and those creating and displaying moving images has always appeared too wide for most to cross or to comprehend.

This absence of community awareness of what those in our industry do, or have achieved, is partly the cause of a general dearth of support for, or pride in our local efforts. This indifference manifests itself in the political arena where many of our elected representatives can find no reason to encourage the local initiatives of an industry in a prime position to showcase Australia to the world.

While it is AMMPT's mission to rectify this situation, as a volunteer body it is difficult to make the desired pace of progress towards this objective. Without permanent premises, professional salaried staff, or a regular income except that of membership subscriptions, support of corporate members, fundraising activities and other irregular sources such as grants, it must promote those already in a position to do so.

Public interaction with the varied technical aspects of our industry is the key ingredient to entertain and educate the community of our industry's hidden mysteries of nature and science. This has been developed to a highly professional level at the Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI) located in central Melbourne, across the road from the Flinders Street railway station, in Federation Square.



ACMI has recently joined AMMPT as a corporate member. Nick Richardson, its Collections and Access manager would welcome our Members making contact when they visit their Melbourne. display.

Nick Richardson standing behind ACMI Director Tony Sweeney who operates a Mutoscope, one of the many fascinating items of film and television equipment available for public exploration. Perhaps the most unlikely site to find what could be one of the region's and possibly one of the nations largest private collections of antique television and film production equipment was discovered by the President when he visited AMMPT member Paul Dickinson on his rural property on the outskirts of Chiltern, a small town in Victoria near Wodonga and Albury. Paul has spent most of his life working in the film and television industries and has managed to acquire significant examples of its evolving technology on the way.



During the visit Paul was working providing Gaffing and Grip services on a local TV production, mentoring the young crew with his wisdom and

experience accumulated over many years. On his property Paul has built a working television studio which he named Chilternwood, in which TV industry training courses are held. Being a highly qualified and practical person, he has manufactured a lot of his own equipment, which has been supplemented by more sophisticated lighting and other facilities purchased from the main network stations as they downsized and upgraded their own gear.



The Chiltern community is aware of the value of Paul's extensive and unique television collection as a tourist attraction for the town. A meeting was held with some of Paul's friends and local community representatives who are encouraging him to select items from his collection that would be suitable for public display. Once established, AMMPT will assist Paul by promoting the display as a convenient stop-off point on the main Melbourne to Sydney rail line for those interested in this technology.



Paul's challenge now is to select and prepare those items for display which will convey to the public the huge advances made in the television industry over recent decades

QUIRINDI JOINS THE AMMPT NETWORK

A s mentioned on page 3 Our Industry's hidden treasures, the further you get away from the main population centers, the more passionate the communities appear to be about preserving reminders of the social fabric of days gone by - when Australia was not unduly influenced by overseas influences and was forming its own cultural identity with innovation and initiative. A common thread in the days between the two world wars, in fact, till the arrival of television, was the role the suburban or country town picture show played in maintaining a sense of community spirit and a regular opportunity for social intercourse amongst the population.

With the advent of TV and Drive-ins, the social importance of the Picture theatres, or Cinemas as they became known, waned to the extent that most of the suburban and country shows closed down, the buildings demolished or used for other purposes. Fortunately, at Quirindi, a progressive country town, a 5½ hour train ride from Sydney towards Tamworth, the people have realised the growing interest and tourism value of preserving our rich heritage, and now plan to include a cinema museum amongst its growing list of attractions in the district.

The catalyst for this project was the departure of AMMPT member and equipment collector John Mitchell, from the Quirindi Royal Pictures which he had operated since 1996. The cinema had a long history in the town, originally being set up as the Lyceum Picture Palace (gardens) in December 1911, later to change its name to Royal Pictures in 1917. In May 1930, the current hardtop was opened, just below the gardens site.

During his term as the last film exhibitor in the town, John had set up a selection from his massive collection of cinema related equipment and memorabilia in the auditorium. When the decision was made that he was no longer able to service the towns cinemagoers, John gifted his collection to the Liverpool Plains Shire Council, headquartered in Quirindi. It was intended that a museum display depicting the development of the cinema industry, in particular that of the surrounding region be established as another tourist attraction at a recently constructed pioneer village just out of town.

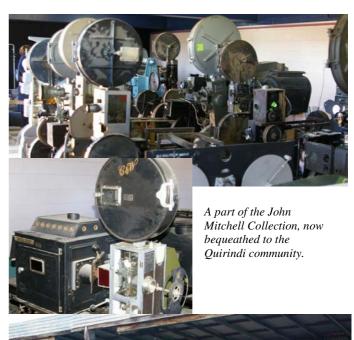


From Left: Keith Kannar, LPSC Tourism development officer Belinda Blanch, John Mitchell & Shire Genl. Mngr. Robert Hunt.

Regional AMMPT convenor Keith Kanaar, John Mitchell and the President traveled to Quirindi early in May to meet with Council representatives and discuss their project and offer promotional and technical assistance where possible. Also to put them in touch with cinema projectionists who could assist them in assembling the exhibition.

The collection had been moved from the hall to a secure and environmentally stable area where it will be prepared for eventual display.





The original Lyceum / Quirindi Picture Palace site, still with operational projectors

For those interested in the town's love affair with the cinema, a book *Quirindi at the movies* has been written by David Coles, from which you really get the feel of what it was like in the pioneering days of country town cinema. The Liverpool Plains Shire Council has subsequently decided to join AMMPT as a corporate member – a partnership destined to be beneficial to both entities. While it may be some time before the collection is open for public display, it is possible arrangements will be made for AMMPT members to visit and have a preview of what is a truly amazing collection.

EASTERN REGION MEETING

A diverse assembly including collectors, academia, historians, cinema, television and media people arrived at the production facility *Engine*, in Artarmon on Saturday May 8th to hear the visiting AMMPT President talk about its recent activities and proposed initiatives. After the initial embarrassment of being late due to being caught in a massive Sydney traffic jam, he reiterated the need to form a strong local committee if the success of the western region branch was to be repeated, indicating there is a greater potential over this way to make things happen.

ACS member Calvin Gardiner made his *Engine* production facility premises available for the meeting and offered it to Eastern Region convenor Keith Kanaar for future AMMPT meetings.



The green screen at Engine provides something different for a group shot of those attending the meeting. Due to the late start, and a few members including Charles Slater having a long country trip back home, some did not wait for the photo.

YESTERDAY AND TODAY AT LITHGOW

Visitors to the Lithgow region with an interest in community cinemas or the history of the industry's technology should consider checking out the Lithgow Valley Movie Club Community Cinema at 16 Main Street, Lithgow and the Centrex projector display, part of the Lithgow Small Arms factory museum exhibition on the outskirts of the town.

The well presented and intimate cinema is the base of the local film society, its driving force being the indefatigable Ross Adams.





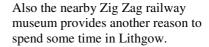
Above: Ross and Ben check out the cinema before opening time

Left: Ross operates the Society's Fumeo 35nn projector.

Ross is also editor of the cinema aficionados' and film buff's publication *Dress Circle*.

The production of components for the American Centrex

projector at an Australian factory internationally renowned for its production of defence armaments is something that was not generally known in the industry. A display detailing the factory's involvement with the cinema industry is worth a visit when you are in the town.





CINERAMA REMEMBERED

The challenge of maintaining operation of aging technology, especially that which relies on the availability of discontinued consumables, is the bane of many collectors. AMMPT Sydney based member John Mitchell, Australian Cinerama guru and renowned as a very serious collector of all things connected with the cinema industry, is urgently seeking a source of 35mm full coat magnetic film – an essential component of the original Cinerama system which he now has in his collection.

Members
Charles
Slater (left)
and John
Mitchell
amongst the
operational
Cinerama
equipment in
John's home
projection
box



Most of us who still have cans of either 16mm or 35mm fullcoat magnetic are finding upon recent inspection, the film

base has often deteriorated to the point where it can no longer be used. Johns massive collection, part of which he recently donated to the Quirindi community, includes a huge Oxberry animation stand, sound dubbing racks, to smaller items such as his unique cine cameras.



Film industry quiet achiever

Tucked away at the bottom of Eveleigh Street in the inner Sydney suburb of Redfern, with an area notoriously known as "the block", are a group of quite unremarkable factory buildings which give no hint of the initiative and vitality within. They house the main office and manufacturing facilities of a brand name which should be familiar to every person who has been involved with film in Australia since the sixties, and to a lesser but increasing extent, all around the world.

Tuscan Industries was established in Sydney in 1964 by a professional engineering toolmaker Peter Gell, who until



then had no particular interest in motion pictures. A home movie enthusiast friend mentioned the trouble be was having with buckled metal spools, prompting Peter to suggest they could probably be made out of the new plastics materials that

were becoming available. After some initial research, Peter made a set of injection molding dies to produce Australia's and possibly the world's first prototype plastic 1200 ft film reel – the first of what was to become the world's largest range of 8mm, 16mm & 35mm reels and cans. Within a few years nearly all metal 16mm and 8mm reels had disappeared from the international market.

In 1969 Tuscan Cinematic Ltd. was established in London to supply the UK and European markets. Through their German distributor, who was a member of the German Standards Committee, Peter Gell was asked to address their committee relating to film. This resulted in the German Standard being re-written from a metal standard (aluminium) to a plastic standard for 16mm film reels. It reached a point where it was estimated that Tuscan had 40% of the German market. The German manufacturers had to conform or be decimated -they did! Following their European success Tuscan Corporation was formed in the USA, based in Chicago. Over the years the product range expanded to include film bobbins (cores), microfilm reels, cassettes and related items.

In recent decades, the decline of the film market in the face of the expanding electronic image technology caused Peter to re-think the future direction for his film product line. Preservation of existing film images was becoming a priority, prompted by the disastrous experience of committing images to videotape in the very early stages of that technology. Film was considered to be a far more stable medium to conserve archival material, but at the time, also had some inherent problems. Sealed cans of film were prone to deteriorate due to the release of deleterious gasses causing rapid deterioration of the film. An immediate idea was to punch holes in the side of the cans, but this had only limited effect.

This problem was also of great concern to the National Film and Sound Archive, with whom Peter formed a working relationship. He collaborated with their film



preservation team of specialists led by technical researcher Mick Newnham.

Mick explained the problem in a paper published in the January 2002 edition of the SMPTE journal, with an intro:

"One of the major issues in film preservation is decomposition of the cellulose ester polymers used as the film base. During decomposition film acid by-products are formed that will catalyze and accelerate the decomposition reaction once a certain concentration of acid, the autocatalytic point, is reached. Apart from using controlled temperature and relative-humidity storage to slow the reaction, removing acid by-products from the decomposing film is an approach to slowing the rate of decomposition.

Encouraging diffusion of the acids away from the film base is an effective control method. Film cans are comparatively well sealed and provide a buffering effect for the internal microclimate. This sealing also reduces the ability of the decomposition acids to diffuse from the film. Punching holes in the sides of the film cans to allow ventilation of the diffused gasses is often practiced."

Mick's paper explained how the design of the film can plays a crucial role in the long term storage of motion picture films.



Tuscan Corporation is now the only U.S. manufacturer of film cans, with special emphasis on those designed for archival storage. Every significant film vault in the United States specifies *Provent* storage containers, vented to Mick Newnham's design. Export of this Tuscan product from the U.S. to Europe is rapidly increasing.

Provent cans have gained universal acceptance with archives, universities and similar institutions where the long term storage of motion picture, microfilm and audio tapes is an ever growing market.

FILM INDUSTRY QUIET ACHIEVER - CONTINUED



Peter Gell alongside one of his injection molding machines

In Sydney, with a large investment in extrusion equipment, Tuscan now concentrates on a range of other products made from exotic materials – polycarbonate and acrylic. These include profile diffusers used in the lighting industry. From a steep learning curve and a special expertise, Tuscan Industries is now the most highly regarded supplier in this field, servicing all major Australian lighting manufacturers.

By innovative thinking and keeping one step in front of demand, a quiet achiever in the back streets of Redfern has proved again that Australians continue to set the benchmark for innovation and excellence in the international moving image arena.

ABC TV Pioneers gathering

As part of AMMPT's contribution of an event for Museums Week in May, it was decided to publicise the 50th anniversary of ABW Channel 2's (ABC TV Perth) commencement of regular transmission. With several members of the pioneering ABC TV presenters, technicians and crews amongst our membership, the necessary personnel were assembled to plan the event. The concept was to make it a free nostalgic public event, with as many of the original TV presenters who could be rounded up, to reminisce of the good old days. Also to provide amusing anecdotes of behind the scenes shenanigans, which at the time, if known, may have resulted in instant dismissal of those involved. Such was the strict regime of those early days.



David Hawkes, at podium, with L-R Michael Brock, Dianna Warnock, John Harper-Nelson, Earl Reeve, Michael Palmer and John Colwell.

The gathering was arranged for Monday May 17th, beginning at noon. This was the day after an ABC reunion of all past staff which was held at their studios in East Perth. MC for the presentation at the accessible State Library theatre, provided gratis for the event by the State Librarian, was veteran ABC presenter David Hawkes.



Interaction with the mainly elderly audience, who had been Channel Two viewers from the beginning, continued following the two hour session over afternoon tea which was provided. Many caught up with old colleagues, some after nearly 50 years.



Feedback indicates it was a very positive PR exercise for our organisation with some more TV pioneers considering joining up with AMMPT. We look forward to continuing to support the television and cinema pioneers groups to ensure they get the recognition they deserve.

AMMPT Members at the Gathering:

Right: The President beats Cameraman Peter Goodall to the remaining teabag. Peter and fellow member and VP Harry Smith made a video record of the event.

Left: Kevin Coombe meets old colleagues.

Right: One of Channel 2's original newsreading team, Earl Reeve (left) chats with some of the guests.

Working and retired members of the television industry are encouraged to join AMMPT and help in preserving its heritage for the information and enjoyment of future generations.

Here we present another article on Perth cinematic history from the pen of Jack Honniball. It will doubtless strike a nostalgic chord, especially for those of our readers who are familiar with the local scene in times long past.

Classics of the Silver Screen

A gain the year has been off to a good start with the attendances drawn to the first four of the monthly presentations in this series. Our Committee much appreciates the income we gain from these screenings that our supporters enjoy at the delightful Cygnet Cinema in Como (W.A.).

An attractive bunch indeed, the eleven films on the schedule this year were first shown in Perth over a period of thirty years, ranging from 1934 to 1964. So let us further indulge ourselves historically by taking a brief look at the occasions and contexts when these notable films were originally released in this city.

Four of the films on the list were first shown at the huge Capitol Theatre, which stood at the foot of William Street from 1929 to 1967. For most of the 1930s, under Hoyt's management, it was Perth's leading cinema, thanks to the constant succession of first-class films it showed, generally on a weekly-change basis.

The earliest of the eleven films, RKO Radio's 'Flying Down to Rio' (our offering on 16th May) teamed Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers for the first time, though in supporting billing. It played at the Capitol for a week in June 1934 and then progressed further up William Street for a second week at the Regent (the Metro's predecessor), such moveovers then being a common practice. 'Follow the Fleet' (to come in September) was the fifth of the ten films the dancing duo made together. It drew record crowds to the Capitol for two weeks in September 1936, and then transferred for a third week at the much smaller Majestic in central Hay Street.

Another two of this year's films proved attractive to Perth cinemagoers a year or so before the start of World War II. The famous tear-jerker "Camille' (to show in July) starred the incomparable Greta Garbo then at her peak and the fast-rising Robert Taylor. It played two and a half weeks in May 1938 at the venerable Theatre Royal in Hay Street, which was nearing the end of its four-year heyday as the outlet for Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer product. Then, across the street, in September/October 1938, 'The Adventures of Robin Hood' (which we saw in March) drew four weeks of outstanding business at Hoyt's new Plaza Theatre, which had risen in place of the Majestic the year before. Warner Brothers' first film in colour, it further boosted the career of the dashing young Errol Flynn.



After ten years in operation, the illsited Capitol suffered the indignity of its screen falling vacant for nearly four years before the general wartime boom in the film trade attracted a new tenant late in

1942. Thanks to a valuable contract they secured with Warner Brothers, Fullers Theatres were responsible for presenting the other two films on our list that made their debut at the Capitol. They enjoyed a 'dandy' run of four weeks from 17th September 1943 with the famous 'Casablanca' (on our program for June),

and another good one of three weeks from 18th January 1946 with 'Arsenic and Old Lace' (which we saw in April).

Three films in the current series (in February, November and December) played at the large, ornate and fondly remembered Ambassadors Theatre, which enlivened central Hay Street from 1928 to 1972. Up until the introduction of the Cinemascope format at the end of 1953, this was generally a weekly-change house, and presented a wide range of films in double-feature programs and greatly varying in quality. Some were sure-fire box-office successes, many run-of-the-mill, and some rather risky propositions. Occasionally along came a real gem of dubious appeal at the time, but which critics propelled into classics. Such was RKO's 'Citizen Kane' (our first exhibit this year) in May 1942. 'Results will only be mild; too arty for this house,' according to one trade magazine of the time. 'Looks like this is over their heads' and business was just 'so so', reported another. However, in September that year Warners' 'The Maltese Falcon' gave the Ambassadors the best business of the city's seven cinemas that week. Having performed so well, it earned a



second week in October at His Majesty's Theatre, where the stage had been replaced by the screen for the duration of the war. Then RKO's 'It's a Wonderful Life' attracted 'fair' business against the harsh conditions prevailing for its week in July 1948. This film won general acclaim in the long run, and it has been a perennial favourite of the television stations at Christmas time.

The occupant of our August slot, 'The African Queen', notched up three weeks of excellent business in September/October 1953 at the Grand Theatre in Murray Street. Perth's first purpose-built cinema, the Grand functioned from 1916 till 1980, and had a



very chequered career. For about sixteen years from 1949 it fared well with an all-British policy. Though it boasted two famous stars who were unmistakably American, this film was in fact a British production and was deservedly much applauded.

The youngest or newest film on this

year's program is Universal's 'Charade', to be shown in September. The Piccadilly Theatre did well in securing this very stylish and amusing thriller as its Christmas/New Year attraction of 1963-64. And the run of ten weeks that it achieved was not an uncommon feat for a film of such quality in that decade. Indeed, many a film of distinction has played at the Piccadilly since it opened in 1938, and it is today the only functioning cinema, actually a triplex, in Perth's Central Business District. However, it is quite likely to lose that solo status before very long!

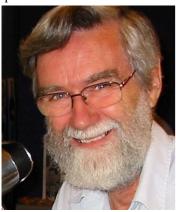
Satellite gallery proposal

Discussions are progressing with the Friends of Woodman Point Recreation Camp (Inc.) committee relating to the establishment of a long term display depicting the evolution of the moving image as employed by the cinema and television industries. Meetings have been held, including on site in one of their recently restored quarantine station buildings. These are in constant use by visiting school and youth groups.



The objective is to establish the exhibition not only for public entertainment, but for its prime use as an educational facility. Students from primary, secondary and tertiary courses studying visual media will be encouraged to engage with it while on school camps at the site. Media teaches will also be made aware of what is on offer and may decide to include the gallery to impart knowledge of the industry's heritage.

Development of the project will be under the guidance of AMMPT member and Education officer Richard Rennie, a professional educator with an established reputation as an



effective communicator. Richard has the ability to design interesting and effective displays, as proven by his successful operation of the previous Light and Sound Discovery Centre in Fremantle. Fortunately AMMPT has sufficient professional display cases for the project, donated by both Channel Seven and the W.A. Museum which were surplus to their requirement.

This project presents another area for member involvement – an exhibition team to assist Richard with this and other future projects. If you are interested in this exciting area of our activities, please contact Richard on 9330 1636.

Membership Directory

The Committee has been asked to consider publishing a Directory listing all Members, their contact details and industry interests. It was noted that all members are entitled to inspect the membership list kept by the Secretary. Concerns were expressed by some on the privacy issues of publishing such a list, while others mentioned the desire to network with members of similar interests. Both are valid comments. It was decided it would be a good idea to produce a Directory but containing only the names of those who wish to be included, and only that contact information and other details which they were prepared to make public.

Any member wishing to be included in the directory is asked to send an email (ammpt@iinet.net.au) or a written response by post (AMMPT, P.O. Box 476 Leederville, W.A. 6903), both communications to be marked "For the Secretary" and listing only the information they wish to be included, to be received no later than August 31st.

The response will be announced at the Annual General Meeting.

Coming events

Please mark in your diary NOW!

July 28th 5.30 – 6.30 pm (Wed.)

Ambassadors Theatre Exhibition

A display of photos and other memorabilia from this wonderful old cinema, hosted by Ivan King at the Museum of Performing Arts, **His Majesty's Theatre**Hay St. Perth (basement below HMT tavern)
Admission by Gold coin donation to MPA.

Aug. 28th 3 pm - 4 pm (Sat.)

Perth's new community TV station

A visit to see how TV stations have changed in 50 years, especially a community operated facility.

West TV Channel 44

337 Wellington St. Perth, near Surplus Stores

Sept. 22nd 7 – 9.30 pm (Wed)

The Cummings & Wilson story

A presentation by Richard Ashton
at Curtin university

Details of exact building location to be advised closer to the event when RSVP'ing.

October 11th 7.00 pm

2010 AGM and slide presentation

of collections held by some interstate members. also at Curtin University.

November & December

Events, outdoor film shows & socials

at Mundaring Community Museum, Kookaburra cinema, Peter Foyster and Frank Worthington. **Details to be advised later.**

Refreshments

Tea and coffee will be provided at the September, October, November & December events. For other refreshments while socialising, please BYO

Please Note:

These events are for Members, their partners and prospective members.

Due to limited space at some venues, it is essential we know beforehand those attending.

Please RSVP to John Richman-Scott on **9417 7746** Mob. 0429 019 626 Email <u>richman-scott@bigpond.com</u>

Please wear your name badge/membership card to these events for identification and assisting to getting to know each other.

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