



NEWSLETTER NO. 50 JUNE 2021

PRESIDENT RAY EDMONDSON'S MESSAGE:

Over recent weeks members of the Friends have responded to my invitation for suggestions on what should be the NFSA's future priorities, a timely topic given that this year will see a change in the institution's leadership, both at the Board and executive levels. I have started to compile those suggestions into a draft which the Committee will discuss and finalise, offer to the NFSA Board, and place on the Friends' website.

As I was doing this, it occurred to me there was a central priority which nobody actually suggested but which was implicit in many of the comments: that the NFSA, which celebrates those who have created our audiovisual heritage, should begin to make a point of celebrating *itself* as well. Let me explain.

Like their overseas counterparts, Australia's major memory institutions - libraries, galleries, museums, government archives - are built on concepts and templates that go back to antiquity. But moving images and recorded sound don't go back to antiquity. They are inventions of the late 19th century that went on to change the world. When it was realised that their preservation and accessibility required new institutional structures and a new professional discipline, audiovisual archives - as we would now call them - began to appear during the 20th century. All of this action happened, naturally, in Europe and North America, the birthplace of these new media. All the other countries gradually followed - except for one that was already there.

It was Australia. The first country born in front of a movie camera (1901), and the country that invented the feature film (1906), was the first outside Europe/America to establish a formal audiovisual archive. On 11 December 1935, the Federal Cabinet created the *National Historical Film and Speaking Record Library* under the joint aegis of the Commonwealth National Library and the Department of Commerce 'to secure and permanently preserve approved historical films and sound recordings.' That's 86 years ago. It is a long and tortuous journey from that moment to the NFSA of today, which gained its institutional independence from the National Library as late as 1984, and legislated recognition with its own Act of Parliament only in 2008. One contemporary commentator predicted that the new entity would soon fall victim to 'the piranha pool of Canberra bureaucracies'. But it survived and grew, becoming not only a unique Australian creation but a global model and leader in its field - a topic much too large to unpack here. The NFSA has much to remember and celebrate about *itself*.

(cont.)

A key reason for its survival and growth has been the succession of grass roots advocacy groups that, over the years, have surrounded and supported it, as the Friends of NFSA - among others - do today. Now, as then, the NFSA needs its Friends, as well as its sense of its own history and achievements. These things are its anchor for the future. The age of advocacy is by no means past.

Ray Edmondson
President

The NFSA Board invited the Friends of the NFSA to a special farewell afternoon tea for retiring Chair Gabrielle Trainor.



Friends President Ray Edmondson, retiring Chair of the NFSA Board Gabrielle Trainor and NFSA Acting CEO Nancy Evers in the NFSA Café.



Friends Secretary Sue Terry enjoying the afternoon tea with Anne Davis.



Friends of the NFSA mingle with Board Members in the lovely courtyard in our building



Barry York (soon to present a great program for the Friends) chats with the NFSA's Jacqui Uhlman.

Coming Events for Canberra Friends!

5.30 – 7.00 Friday 13th August:

Barry York Presents:

Our first winter event will be a return to the **NFSA Theatrette to meet **Barry York** and hear about his wonderful (postal!) journeys into the world of celebrity.**

Barry York grew up in Brunswick at a time when it was not a fashionable place but rather a city of low-income working-class folk, many migrants like his parents and him. There was a toughness about it, and some big social problems - and television and movies were an escape.

In 1964, aged 12, from his home in Brunswick, Melbourne, Barry York wrote a fan letter to Rod Serling, 'Twilight Zone' creator, presenter and writer. He addressed it simply to Rod Serling c/- MGM Studios, Hollywood, California, USA, based on the address in the credits at each episode's end. A few weeks later, Barry couldn't believe his eyes when he came home from school and noticed a large envelope in his letterbox. It was from MGM Studios and contained a personally signed black-and-white photo of Serling. Thus began a hobby of writing to celebrities. His collection numbers well over a hundred and he will share a PowerPoint presentation featuring a selection of them.



Barry and the items that started his fascinating hobby and collection – join us in August to find out more!



Join us at 5.30 for pre-show nibbles and socialising. Drinks can be purchased at the bar.

Admittance is free for Friends, a gold coin donation, please, from members of the public.

NFSA Theatrette, McCoy Circuit, Acton

ANOTHER WEBINAR EVENT:

Sunday August 15. Join us for an online webinar on The McDonagh sisters' 1930 film **THE CHEATERS**. Q&A presented by Graham Shirley. Details will be provided nearer the date or check the Friends website

And our CMAG Friday afternoon programs continue in September and November with some Classic Australiana!

Friday 10th September 2.00pm:

It's back to the farm to renew our acquaintance with **Dad and Dave**.

A very young Peter Finch nervously asks for the hand of Dad Rudd's daughter Sally in **Dad and Dave Come To Town**, a comedy classic from 1938. Also starring is Shirley Anne Richards in her famous 'don't call me me Girlie' scene.



Friday 26th November 2.00pm:

More Australiana, but from a very different performer – Olivia Newton-John! Her delightful 1965 musical comedy is still a breath of fresh air. The teenage singing star makes her very first venture into the movies, along with some multi-coloured sheep, a children's gang called the The Terrible Ten and music from the famous Horrie Dargie Quintet.

[Booking advice will be sent to Friends members nearer the date.](#)



NEWS FROM THE MELBOURNE FRIENDS:

Our Melbourne friends of the NFSA have been having a busy and interesting year!

MELBOURNE FRIENDS VISIT TO SALVATION ARMY LIMELIGHT STUDIOS

On Sunday 23rd May 2021 eight members and supporters of the Melbourne Friends of the NFSA visited the Salvation Army's building at 69 Bourke Street in Melbourne's CBD. We were met by Lindsay Cox, the Curator of the Army's Archives and Museum.

We spent two hours in this fine Museum showing the history of the Salvation Army's foundation and activities in Australia, and elsewhere, during wartime. The Army originated in England, and was established in Adelaide in 1880, moving its main activities to Melbourne, starting its extensive social support programs with assistance for newly released prisoners from Melbourne Gaol.

Particularly interesting for us were the original Limelight Studios, built on the roof of the original Victorian building, and thought to be the oldest remaining film studios in Australia. Repainted with the original light green, the original words to the 'colouring room' remain, in the signwriter's copperplate. Several rooms are now set up with films shown on several screens.



The Salvation Army's role in the history of cinematography in Australia is outstanding. Its epic *Soldiers of the Cross* was first shown at the Melbourne Town Hall on 13 September 1900, to an audience of 4000. Curator Lindsay Cox corrected the widespread belief that this epic was 'the first Australian feature film'. In fact it was a multi-media presentation, using 200 hand-coloured lantern slides and 15 film segments each of no more than 90 seconds duration. The 'first feature film' is more correctly *The Story of the Kelly Gang* (1906), as recognised in a large poster shown to us by the Curator.

The Limelight Studios not only produced religious films, but were commissioned by the Australian Government to record the birth of the Australian Commonwealth, in film of the Federation ceremonies in 1901. This film, *Inauguration of the Commonwealth*, is held in the NFSA, and was shown in the Studios, together with some earlier film. Sadly, none of the film segments in *Soldiers of the Cross* has survived, although the original lantern slides are in the NFSA, and copies are shown in the Limelight Studios.

All participants on 23 May were engrossed by our visit, and grateful to Curator Lindsay Cox for his time and expertise, not to mention the provision of tea and biscuits! We expect that more visits will be arranged by the Melbourne Friends.

Gwenda Beed Davey
Chair Melbourne Friends of NFSA

THEN THERE WAS THE KIDS' STAKES ONLINE Q&A IN JUNE:

Those who attended **The Kids Stakes** online Q&A on 6 June featuring David Donaldson and John Flaus, the two experts on this black and white film from 1927, were witness to a fascinating and informative discussion. David and John were key members of the Sydney University Film Society that was responsible for the rescue and restoration of the film in 1953.

This talk was most enlightening and touched on a few topics such as the streets of Woolloomooloo where the film was shot and diversity in the film with it being noted that one child who appears to have an aboriginal background was one of the group whereas an Asian and Italian were stereotypical for the time. It was also commented that children's films more than adults' films often reflect social representation more accurately. It was noted that the director Tal Ordell was born in India and that may be why the film was inclusive for the time.

We soon learnt about goat racing and the Queensland connection. The children were delightful and it reminded us of a time when children were free to roam, get up to mischief and weren't as preciously treated as they are now. Ray Edmondson delighted us with tales of films or parts of films being found under beds and in wardrobes.

You can view the recording of the webinar here: <https://youtu.be/1VD9oswxH8Q>

Jo Wellington



And coming up in Melbourne . . .

July 4 at 3.45 pm Thornbury Picture House. Joint showing with MelfriendsNFSA of film **Ten Canoes**, for NAIDOC WEEK.

August 15. Webinar on the McDonagh sisters' 1930 film THE CHEATERS. Q&A presented by Graham Shirley. Joint event with Canberra Friends.

September or October. Film by Daryl Dellora. To be advised

September or October. Live event. Tours of Salvation Army Heritage Centre including Limelight Studio. To be advised.

November. Live event by David Donaldson. Film 'Reg Perry Remembers' (Salvation Army Film Unit), presented by David Donaldson.

Please be aware events may be subject to COVID regulations and conditions, and may change.

Donating to the Friends

First, a big shout out to all the members who donate to the Friends. Some of you do it when you attend an event, either in person, via our little donation box, or online via TryBooking. And some do it when joining or renewing memberships. Some donations are a few dollars while others are significantly more. The point is it all helps. And we thank you greatly.

But, what we do with the donations?

Well, the Friends of the NFSA is very small as Friends groups go, so our accounts are also small. However, we like to do what Friends groups do which is to provide events and activities for members, *and* support archive and audiovisual culture causes. Currently, we make an annual donation to the NFSA Restores project. We have also, on an occasional basis, donated to other relevant causes, such as the Canberra International Film Festival, *Senses of Cinema* magazine, and a crowd-funding program to move the remains of film pioneer Cecil Holmes to a more permanent location. The additional support of members like you help make these things possible.

You need to know, however, that unfortunately we do not have Deductible Gift Recipient status. Donations to us are therefore not tax deductible. If you prefer to support the NFSA and receive a deduction, please check their website: <https://nfsa.jotform.com/203566574891871?>

VISIT NFSA ON YOUTUBE

Have you seen [the NFSA's YouTube page](#)? With over 600 items to choose from, there are film clips, talks, interviews and much more to explore, taking you inside the work of the Archive.

VINYL LOUNGE ON FRIDAY'S

The virtual vinyl lounge operates on the first Friday of each month.

2021 Committee:

President: Ray Edmondson **Vice-President:** David Kilby
Secretary: Sue Terry **Treasurer:** Chris Emery
Committee Members: Jill Matthews, Tony Briscoe, and Lindy Ross
Public Officer: Sue Terry



The Friends would like to acknowledge the support of the IT firm, Blue Packets, in hosting our website.

Find the Friends on Facebook www.facebook.com/NFSAFriends

or on our website www.archivefriends.org.au



Check the Friends' website and Facebook page to keep up with what's happening!

Friends of the National Film and Sound Archive Inc.

PO Box 9618 Deakin ACT 2600.

E: archivefriends@gmail.com Website: www.archivefriends.org.au