

Auckland Meeting – November 1996

Excerpts from the write up by David Lascelles.

Date 1st 2nd 3rd November.

From 5 pm on Friday night, members began arriving for the start of another weekend of fun, friendship, food and films. Once registrations were completed, most headed to the sales tables where much dealing began. After the welcome from Roger Stewart, supper was served followed by a slide presentation which featured images of our past, from fashion and furs to cars and appliances. Next was a special 16mm programme which included an early NFU Weekly Review about milk processing and distribution in Wellington plus a selected variety of trailers and a film extract. This brought the evening to a close.

Saturday began with morning tea with delicious scones which were much appreciated. The meeting then got under way and when the business side had been completed the auction began. Once again, auctioneer John Bell did an excellent job, ably assisted by Michael Woolf. Bidding was a little slow but with coaxing from John all items found new homes. A wonderful lunch was then served.

A double-decker bus had been arranged for our transport and it was all aboard for our visit to Kiran Chhiba's Crystal Palace Theatre, which his family have owned for over 20 years. The film presentation included a variety of subjects all well received. Back on the bus again, it was into to Auckland where the group split into two groups for visits to Television New Zealand and the Casino. Warren Smyth conducted the tour of TVNZ and gave us a great insight into the workings of the station. At the Casino, you could observe or try to win a fortune. Needless to say the latter didn't prevail.

The Saturday evening meal was held at the venue and prior to dinner, a few films were run which included an early Disney cartoon *Three Little Pigs*, a Rudall Hayward film about *Opo the Dolphin* and an early NFU Eastman colour film *North Island by Coach*. Dinner was a huge banquet and when finished, another programme of films was shown. These were preceded by advertising slides which were most entertaining. Then the Queen hit the screen, to be followed by a Cinesound Review newsreel from the 1960s, *A Hundred Years of Cinema in Australia* and *A Hundred Years of Cinema in New Zealand*, from Warner Bros *Pie In The Eye* (1948), and a compilation film of early Mack Sennett comedies from the 1920s. This brought us to interval and time for a quick tea, coffee or beer. The programme continued with the feature film from RKO, *Top Hat* (1935) with Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers. The entire program was presented on two 35mm carbon arc machines by Doug Harley, who put on a flawless performance.

On Sunday, we assembled at Jan Grefstad's Hollywood Cinema at 9 am for morning tea and a look around. On display was some history of Auckland cinemas which was most interesting. Moving upstairs, Bill Mitchell entertained us on the Wurlitzer organ, before we enjoyed a selection of vintage films. A couple of Pete Smith Specialties from the early 1950s, the Three Stooges in *Movie Mania* (1936), a wonderful cartoon, a Vitagraph short from Warner Bros *Daredevils and Those Exciting Days*, along with Lionel Hampton and his Jazz Band from Universal-International.

From here, it was over to the Westwind to enjoy a lovely BBQ lunch, followed by another film presentation. This time we saw Cecil B de Mille introducing his promotional trailer for *The Ten Commandments*, A DB beer advert, some trailers, including one for the *Essential Hitchcock* promoting the re-issue of a number of his old films. Soon it was time for farewells and another wonderful weekend came to a close.