

Christchurch Meeting – November 2005

Excerpts from the write up by David Lascelles.

Date 11th 12th 13th November.

The meeting was held in the New Brighton Fire Brigade Lounge. 74 registered for this meeting including 23 from Australia.

This meeting would celebrate 21 years of the NZ Film Buffs Association.

A warm welcome from Bryan Ellis awaited the large contingent as they arrived to celebrate this milestone of our association. The sales tables were filled with an amazing assortment of movie material and business was brisk. With the temperature at 31 degrees, refreshments were being served to keep everyone cool. Later a nice supper was served during which some lucky number raffles were drawn. A nice colour film titled *Frontiers Down Under* (1967) along with a DVD *Ode to Odeon*, giving a brief history of the building and the fight to save it was shown which brought the evening to a close.

Saturday morning began with morning tea followed by the meeting. Soon after, the auction began and with nearly 100 lots to get through it was a busy time for those assisting auctioneer John Bell. As usual he had it all wrapped up in time for lunch.

After lunch we boarded the buff's bus for our visit to the newly re-furbished Theatre Royal. Opened on 25th February 1908 by owner JC Williamson Theatres, it seated 1400 and began showing films on the 9th September 1916 with *Birth of a Nation*. These ceased in 1956 but began again in 1987-88 and 1992-94. This beautiful restored theatre is a Christchurch landmark and part of our country's rich theatre heritage. Next stop was to view the former Odeon which is in a sorry state. A group calling themselves the Odeon Theatre Trust are trying to raise money for the purchase and restoration of its graceful features. It began life as the Tuam Street Public Hall, opening in July 1883, renamed the Opera House in July 1894, became Fuller's Vaudeville House in February 1903, renamed the New Opera House in 1928, name changed to St James in July 1930 with sound films. After alterations, it re-opened as the Odeon in September 1960, closed in 1983 and was sold to the Assembly of God Church.

The dinner on Saturday night was held at the New Brighton Working Men's Club. An excellent venue and a superb menu which was thoroughly enjoyed by all. After dinner, we returned to the hall where President Dave Turnbull spoke about the history of the club. He was followed by John Bell and then the 21st Birthday cake was cut by Margaret Bell and Moira Turnbull. Now a surprise for all as commemorative coffee mugs with our logo and 21 year 1984-2005 in club colours were presented to all present. The signed placemat was auctioned and to end the evening, Howard screened some slides from Ian Fisher, taken at past meetings along with a short DVD on Dame Ngaio Marsh and her house, now a museum which we are to see tomorrow.

Sunday saw us back on the bus for the visit to the Dame Ngaio Marsh house and amazing look at the life of a fascinating woman – it was as though time has stood still here. Soon it was back on the bus for a visit to Ian Fisher's new home cinema. After morning tea, we entered his 24 seat cinema where he showed an 11 minute film that he himself had filmed on Lake Ianthe, just south of Hokitika.. Called *The Paddle Boat* (2004, it was shot on 16mm using Eastman colour.

Back at the venue, an excellent lunch awaited us before it was time for the official farewells.

Those who were staying on, boarded the bus for a trip to Rangiora's Northbrook Colonial Museum which had an extensive range of New Zealand's colonial history. Later they attended a BBQ at Bryan and Dawn Ellis's house and enjoyed continuous movies in Bryan's home theatre.