

Wellington Meeting – May 2023

From the write up by David Lascelles

The meeting was held at Time Cinema, Lyall Bay, Wellington. 27 attended. Date 5th, 6th 7th May 2023

On an overcast afternoon, eager film buffs gathered for what turned out to be a wonderful weekend. It had been many years since Time Cinema had played host to an FBA meeting.

Sale goods and auction items appeared on the table and after a great meal cooked by master chef Cass Shavez, we were welcomed by Trevor Collett. We then settled in for a programme of films. After a few adverts from the 1950s and 1960s (one for Matinee cigarettes which I have on 35mm, having found it in a treasure trove of material in the rafters of the Embassy in 1990). We saw excerpts from the Coronation of King George VI (1937) and then Queen Elizabeth II in 1953. Other films screened were Pacific Films *A Nation on Wheels* (1950), made for General Motors and Dunlop, released the same year to Amalgamated Theatres. One of Charlie Chaplin's best of the period *The Cure* (1917) released on 6th April 1917 and from 1934 the Little Rascals in *Hi-Neighbor* released 3rd March 1934 - a nice comedy with which to end our first day.

A brisk Saturday morning saw everyone assemble for morning tea. John Bell arrived and all were pleased to see him. At 9am the formal meeting began after which a small auction took place with some interesting film titles fetching some unusual prices. A break for lunch and then we boarded the bus for a trip to Queen Elizabeth Park and Tramway via Transmission Gully (lovely but boring). The tramway is great, well run and maintained. Its history is on display at the museum and outback is the workshop where old trams are lovingly repaired and restored. It's worth a look, along with a visit to the US Marines Memorial.

We boarded the bus again for the short trip to the Blue Train at Paraparaumu for dinner. This is an unusual place, a train converted to a restaurant. An excellent choice for dinner with wonderful, helpful and friendly staff, I did not want to leave. John Bell was supposed to join us, but was unwell and didn't make it, but there was a surprise waiting for us all. We boarded another bus for a short trip to the Taylorville Ranch at Raumati, where in its western theme saloon, we had our dessert after which we toured the venue, a workshop with classic cars and a terrific original 1950s American diner. Time passed all too soon and we headed back to Blue Train where our own bus was waiting to take us back to Wellington. Arriving at around 9.30pm, Cass said he would put on a film - the 4 hour version of *Cleopatra*, he was joking of course – or was he? Anyway, we all decided to call it a day and headed home.

Sunday delivered a marvelous day with clear skies and it was on the bus again for a trip to the Cable Car, where a staff member explained its history and working before we boarded the car. After a stop half way up we reached the top. On the observation deck, we really had a spectacular view of Wellington City and harbour, just magnificent. After a group photograph, we headed to the Cable Car Café for morning tea. Many took the time to visit the very modern Cable Car Museum which was interesting as were the viewing of historic films.

Our trip back to Time Cinema was a two hour 'Tiki Tour' around the bays, through Brooklyn to Red Rocks, Happy Valley, Island Bay, Cave Rock, Houghton Bay (where I was born eighty years ago), passed 'The Pines', Princess Bay and the old council yards at Lyall Bay, where on the beach opposite, film companies would burn their nitrate film under controlled conditions, passed the Airport to Moa Point, Breaker Bay and Scorching Bay. We stopped for 20 minutes at the Wahine Memorial before heading through Seatoun back to our venue.

After a light lunch, it was time for farewells. President Ian Fisher thanked the organisers and everyone who came, for what was a most enjoyable weekend. The group sent its best wishes to John Bell for a speedy recovery.

Events like this don't just happen, they are the result of much work and planning. Our thanks to John Bell who started it all off until ill health stopped him, to Cass Shavez our host who took over and brought the weekend together, including the Blue Train experience and Cable Car trip. Graeme Daue for arranging the bus and Trevor Collett our secretary/treasurer who kept things running smoothly and was also my driver. A big thank you to you all. For the first time in some 30 years, I was not involved in the organisation, which is probably why it went so well. On a personal note, I was stimulated by the weekend seeing many members and friends again after many years, good memories I will cherish. November will see Christchurch play host to the next convention.

Those staying behind arrived at Time Cinema for a meal of fish and chips and then a selected film programme. The National Film Unit's *Wahine Day* (1973) released to Kerridge-Odeon on 23rd October was followed by an untitled item about the aircraft carrier *USS America* visiting Wellington. It had an old NFU logo tacked on to it but is not recorded in their film listings, but was probably filmed around 1970. The final feature was *The Greatest Showman* (2017) the early life of PT Barnum. This film looked dazzling on Time Cinema's big screen.

Again thank you Cass.