

Dunedin Convention – November 2008

With a number of Australians and out of town visitors attending the New Zealand Film Buffs meeting in Christchurch, a Dunedin addition was arranged by Glynn Babington.

On Monday the 10th November, eighteen Film Buffs left Christchurch by minibus and private car to begin their trip south. A stop was made near Ashburton for morning tea, before we continued on to the Geraldine Cinema, which was built in 1924. In the projection box are Ernemann II projectors with Ashcraft arcs and the theatre boasts a great collection of sofas in the back row of the circle and the front row of the stalls. After lunch in a cafe nearby, we continued on to Oamaru where we visited Movie World 3. After refreshments, we travelled on to Dunedin.

On Tuesday morning, we arrived at the Rialto, where Glynn had an excellent breakfast waiting for us. We were given carry bags, packed with goodies and information. Then we were shown a film about the building of Benmore Power Station, a very interesting piece of historic footage. We walked the short distance to the Metro which is situated in the Town Hall and had morning tea with Owner/Manager John Wilson. From here, it was a short walk to the beautiful Regent Theatre where a tour had been arranged.

After lunch, we travelled to the Mayfair theatre in South Dunedin which has its name in stained glass above the entrance. It was lovely to see the beautiful plaster work on the ceiling of the auditorium. Our next visit was to the Gas Works Museum which is a very interesting place. After our tour, we had afternoon tea, then returned to the city for our visit to Taylormade, who are well known for their sports graphics including the America's Cup. We had time to view a 3D snow and ice presentation while here.

On Wednesday, after another breakfast supplied by Glynn at the Rialto, he gave us a tour of the building. Originally known as the St James Theatre, the Rialto has been completely refurbished to house 6 cinemas of varying seating capacity. Some original architecture still remains and is most visible in the 'Long Room' which was originally the foyer – now used for functions. Discovery of beautiful wall murals were partly influential in saving this theatre from demolition. Our next visit was to the Town Hall to see 'Norma' the Town Hall organ which was built in 1919 as the Bathurst Mammoth Cathedral Organ, the 23 ton instrument travelled around England on pantechicons and was played in theatres as part of the vaudeville shows. Eventually, 'Norma' was sold to the Paterson family who gifted her to Dunedin. After many years of use 'Norma' has been restored with the utmost care to retain the basic sound.

On Wednesday night, a barbeque tea was provided at the home of Charlie Gilligan who has a home theatre set up with rare projectors and other memorabilia.

On Thursday morning, after another breakfast provided by Glynn, our visit had come to an end and it was time to say goodbye. We had a great time and we thank you Glynn for single-handedly putting together such a memorable programme which we all thoroughly enjoyed.