

## Wellington Meeting – May 2004

*Excerpts from the write up by David Lascelles.*

The meeting was held in the Miramar Central School Hall. Date 7<sup>th</sup> 8<sup>th</sup> 9<sup>th</sup> May.

On Friday night at 5 pm, Trevor Collett was at the registration desk ready to welcome members as they arrived. This year and for the first time in many, there were very few items for sale. At 6.30 a light meal was served and following this, we were welcomed by M.C. John Bell. Then a special auction began with items from an estate. The whole exercise was interesting and entertaining with some excellent prices being received. A lovely supper was served at the conclusion of the auction.

Saturday began with morning tea followed by the meeting – this being our 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Year in the city where it all began and Life Membership was bestowed on four original surviving members: Dave Turnbull, John Bell, Phil Croft and Fred Holloway. With business over, it was auction time and John Bell along with his assistants moved the auction along at a rapid pace and before long all items had found new owners. Lunch was then served.

After lunch we boarded the buff's buses for a theatre trip. Our first stop was Ewan Cole's Lighthouse Cinema in Petone. This lovely two screen cinema was converted from the old Labour Hall and opened in August 2002. The larger cinema has 72 seats and the smaller one 40 seats. We then travelled into Wellington City and the beautiful Reading Cinema Complex where we were guests of Graham Kahn, the Technical Manager and after an introduction from Glen Sainsbury, Wellington Complex Manager, we toured the Regency Lounge area and the main projection room which is equipped with Kinoton FP 30DS and Kinoton FP 30DE projectors. The 10 screen complex seats 2203 of which 141 are Regency cine-lounge seats. From here it was a very short trip to the wonderful Embassy – a theatre rich in history and home to the "*Rings Trilogy*". We were greeted by theatre manager Michelle O'Donnell and her staff who made us welcome as well as providing after tea for 100 people. We were then escorted through the cinema to view the restored theatre. Our host was Bill Sheat, Chairman of the Embassy Theatre Trust which owns the building. We were then invited to view a quick couple of trailers on the large perlux supergloss screen (56ft x 27ft). To promote Dolby Sound, we saw *The Train* - about 30 seconds long, then the original trailer for *Braindead* (1992) and one of the Matrix films. We then returned to the venue.

The Saturday evening dinner was held at The Pines and was a wonderful meal enjoyed by everyone. After dinner, Hugh Macdonald introduced our guest speaker, Alex Funke, a visual effects specialist who recently won an Oscar for his work on *Lord of the Rings: Return of the King*. His career spans many years in the industry and his talk was really fascinating and well received. The signed placemat was auctioned and the evening came to a close.

On Sunday, the group split in two, with one group going to the Camperdown Studio in Miramar and the other to Rongotai and the Miniatures Unit, later changing over so everyone visited both locations. The Camperdown Road facility was Peter Jackson's first venue and once inside, we were shown into the Wingnut Theatre – a wonderful 74 seat cinema complete with a waterfall curtain. After a display of lighting fades and dims, we saw the 1992 short film *Valley of the Stereo* made by Wingnut Films, then an animated short film from 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox titled *Gone Nutty* (2002). We then moved on to Kilbirnie to meet our host Alex Funke who conducted us through the Miniatures Unit, where they were in the very early stages of preparing for the second remake of *King Kong*. Later we were allowed upstairs where members were shown and allowed to hold the Oscars, Baftas and other awards won by Alex. We then returned to the hall for lunch after which we visited the new Park Road Post Studios. The facilities offer state of the art technology, the Dolby and THX certified dub stages feature Euphonix series 5 mixing consoles impressed all of us. Then it was back to the hall for an evening meal and the official farewells took place.

Many of the stayers then headed over to Time Cinema for more films and that "Bell" hospitality.