

A U S T R A L I A

THE NATIONAL LIBRARY FILM ARCHIVE, CANBERRA, A.C.T.

ACTIVITIES 1958/59

1. FILM PRESERVATION

Steady progress has been made during the past twelve months in the location and copying of a number of early features and short films. The transfer to safety stock of two of the first three sound films made in Australia was completed and the copying of the third commences shortly. This particular film, a short melodrama entitled "THE SPUR OF THE MOMENT", appears, on present evidence, to have been the country's first sound production. It suffers from an indifferent track but will transfer sufficiently well to provide a valuable historical record. Among other features preserved are the two comedies based on Steele Rudd's characters, "DAD AND DAVE COME TO TOWN" and "DAD RUDD, M.P.", of which prints in excellent condition were located in Coventry, England. The two government-sponsored films "THE INVADERS" (a re-titled version of "THE POWER AND THE GLORY") and "THAT CERTAIN SOMETHING" were transferred to the Library during the year by the Government of New South Wales whilst recognition by the trade of the Archive's value came with the provision of fine-grain masters of Charles Chauvel's well-known films, "SONS OF MATTHEW" and "FORTY THOUSAND HORSEMEN".

Of particular interest has been the excellence of the results achieved by the laboratories in copying shrunk and deteriorated prints. In many cases through careful control of the various processes and much tedious re-touching, copies have been produced superior in most respects to the originals from which they were made.

The location of surviving prints of films made between 1900 and 1920 remains our most difficult problem. In spite of wide-spread publicity through film societies and district newspapers and radio stations, few films of the period have been discovered. This is especially disappointing since it was in this era that Australia was a most prolific producer of features as well as short films. There is however the encouraging fact that those actually found have been astonishingly well-preserved.

In addition to the early films, copies of most contemporary productions are viewed as made and a selection of those considered important from an historical or cinematic viewpoint is acquired.

A further stage in the consolidation of the Archives will be reached in 1960 with the completion of a fully equipped vault for which plans have already been approved.

2. CATALOGUING

A noteworthy achievement and the culmination of many years' work has been the recent publication by the Library of its catalogue, "Australian Films", a fully indexed record of scientific, educational and cultural films produced in the years 1940-1958. With the planned publication of annual supplements, this catalogue is expected to fill the need for a reference tool in the field of film production.

In conjunction with the continuing work of recording new films, the second stage of our cataloguing project is now being undertaken. This, a difficult task because of the scanty nature of available records will involve the recording (a) of non-feature films made prior to 1940 and (b) of feature, and what may be termed feature, films made from 1899 to the present day.

3. DISTRIBUTION

The Library's collection of films for study purposes continues to form the basis of film society screenings. Although by no means as complete as we should like it to be, this collection is being constantly augmented as resources permit. Its success in providing film societies with the necessary historical background to their studies has been due in no small measure to the generous co-operation of the British Film Institute over the years.

We hope that our closer association with F.I.A.F. will make it possible for us to increase our collections by direct exchange with the archives of other member countries.

A new edition of the annotated list of films for study purposes is at present in preparation and is to be issued to film societies towards the end of 1959.

4. USE OF ARCHIVE MATERIAL

Material from the Archive is being used increasingly in contemporary films where an historical background is necessary. Earlier in the year such material was incorporated in a film celebrating Queensland's centenary of responsible government whilst a number of early reels on Canberra will be included in a survey of the Capital's growth soon to be released.

To celebrate Canberra Day in March this year, the Library co-operated with national and commercial broadcasting stations to produce a tape to accompany a copy of the 1913 film, "THE NAMING OF CANBERRA". The combination of tape (commentary and sound effects) was so successful at the public screening, that it was decided to attempt the production of a sound track from the tape. The completion of this project is expected in October when a sound film of the historic occasion will be available for use by schools and film libraries generally.

A similar project involving the addition of a sound track to the feature "THE SENTIMENTAL BLOKE" is in its initial stages. The aim here is to reproduce the atmosphere of an early film show. This has become possible through the discovery of the still-active pianist who played the accompaniment to the film at its premiere in Adelaide in 1920. He has undertaken to record the authentic piano accompaniment as played originally.

SUMMARY

In general the past year has been one not only of some achievement but especially of the firm establishment of the Archive in the minds of both the trade and the public as the repository for films of an historical nature. As a result the next twelve months promise to be a period of considerable activity in the collection and preservation of Australian films.

NATIONAL LIBRARY, AUSTRALIA

FILMS ACQUIRED FOR PRESERVATION DURING
THE PERIOD 1ST AUGUST 1958 - 1ST AUGUST
1959

Note:

This list includes only those films acquired during the year under review. It is arranged chronologically. Non-factual films are marked with an asterisk.

The current Government productions are held by the Library for distribution but preservation copies of these are held by the film production units of the Federal and State Governments.

The National Library does not hold distribution rights for all the films listed but archives who are interested in acquiring any of them should negotiate with the Library.

EARLY SYDNEY 1912? silent 7 min.

The main streets and buildings of the city including the dress and transport.

THE MELBOURNE CUP 1915 silent 5 min.

A description of the race with shots of the fashions of the time and the Governor.

EIGHT-HOUR DAY PROCESSION, TAMWORTH 1916 silent 8 min.

The floats, crowds and early transport with enough of the town to give a good idea of its appearance at the time.

THE DIGGER CARRIES ON 1919 silent 15 min.

Trade training, soldier settlement and the care of disabled soldiers after first World War.

THE SYDNEY MORNING HERALD 1920 silent 15 min.

A detailed description of the production of the Sydney Morning Herald.

BALLARAT 1927 silent 15 min.

The city and its surroundings with particular emphasis on the beauty of its famous park.

* THE SHATTERED ILLUSION 1927 silent 55 min.

An early short feature incorporating trick effects and the extensive use of models especially in portraying a shipwreck. A private production made cheaply with much effective ingenuity.

AIR PAGEANT, MASCOT. 1927 silent 12 min.

A description of a once-popular sport and spectacle in the early days of flying in Australia.

THE NORTHERN TERRITORY. 1927 silent 80 min.

A record of an official tour through the Northern Territory. The film gives a good idea of development in 1927 and includes shots of early road-trains.

THE ARRIVAL OF BERT HINKLER silent 15 min.

Bert Hinkler's arrival after his solo flight from England. Includes pictures of public officials, etc.

HINKLER ARRIVES IN TASMANIA silent 6 min.

A short news picture of this event.

BRISBANE 1928 silent 15 min.

The city, its suburbs buildings and various other points

of interest.

RICE GROWING IN THE M.I.A. 1928 silent 18 min.

An excellent descriptive film of all aspects of rice-growing in the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area. Early harvesting methods are clearly shown.

GRIFFITH, N.S.W. and GRIFFITH FESTIVAL 1928 silent 11 min (each)

Two short films which together give a comprehensive picture of the Griffith of the era.

* DIGGERS 1930 sound 90 min.

One of Australia's first sound films. A comedy made by Pat Hanna which recounts the adventures of three Diggers in France during the first World War.

* DIGGERS IN BLIGHTY. 1933 sound 90 min.

Further humorous adventures of the three Diggers on leave in England during the War. Also made by Pat Hanna.

SKYWAY EXPRESS 1935 sound 35 min.

An early Australian example of the use of film for advertising in Australia. The film describes a trip from Sydney to London by Fokker monoplane.

* DAD AND DAVE COME TO TOWN 1938 sound 80 min.

A typical example of a comedy based on Steele Rudd's characters, this describes what happens when 'Dad' inherits a fashion salon.

THIS PLACE AUSTRALIA - HENRY LAWSON 1939 sound 10 min.

THIS PLACE AUSTRALIA - BANJO PATERSON " " "

These were the last two films made by photographer, Damien Parer before becoming an official war photographer. They are noteworthy for their imaginative camera-work.

* DAD RUDD, M.P. 1940 sound 80 min.

'Dad' is induced to stand for Parliament with humorous consequences. The humour is less spontaneous than in the previous Rudd film and the effect of the War is noticeable in the final scenes where 'Dad' delivers a long and serious speech about Australia's war effort.

* FORTY THOUSAND HORSEMEN 1941 sound 90 min.

Charles Chauvel's well-known film which reconstructs the part played by the Light Horse in the war.

* THE INVADERS 1941 sound 90 min.

A retitled version of a drama, "The Power and the Glory" sponsored by the N.S.W. Government to aid the film industry. It deals with the activities of subversive agents in Australia and their eventual defeat before production of a deadly war gas can be undertaken.

* THAT CERTAIN SOMETHING 1941 sound 90 min.

A comedy sponsored by the N.S.W. Government. The story refers to the difficulties of a young girl in her attempts to become a film star.

* SONS OF MATTHEW 1949 sound 100 min.

Another Charles Chauvel film in which the life and work of a bush family in Queensland are described.

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN LANDSCAPE 1952 colour sound 20 min.

A general description of South Australia and some of its cities and towns.

- PATHWAY TO THE SUN 1956 colour sound 30 min.
A study of Queensland's coastal towns from Brisbane to Thursday Island.
- LATE WINTER TO EARLY SPRING 1957 sound 10 min.
One of the early films of the Melbourne University Experimental Film Unit.
- ROYAL INTERLUDE 1957 colour sound 23 min.
An account of the visit of the Queen Mother to Adelaide.
- ROCKET RANGE - AUSTRALIA. 1957 colour sound 20 min.
A description of the Weapons Research Establishment, Salisbury, South Australia and the Woomera Rocket Range.
- RADIOASTRONOMY IN AUSTRALIA 1958 colour sound 20 min.
The work of the C.S.I.R.O. in the field of radioastronomy.
- MALLEE FOWL. 1958 colour sound 14 min.
A unique record of the habits and behaviour of the Mallee Fowl made by the C.S.I.R.O.
- REACHING FOR THE STARS 1958 sound 10 min.
The work of Australian astronomers at Mt. Stromlo Observatory.
- GRAPEVINE PRUNING 1958 Colour sound 20 min.
A C.S.I.R.O. film for farmers describing improved methods.
- WELCOME YOUR MAJESTY 1958 colour sound 35 min.
A record of highlights in the visit of the Queen Mother to Australia.
- BALLOONS AND SPINIFEX 1958 colour sound 35 min.
A record of the establishment of a meteorological station in Central Australia.
- WAITING FOR THURSDAY 1958 sound 11 min.
A survey of the needs of pensioners and a plea for further assistance.
- AUSTRALIAN DIARIES NOS. 99 - 105 1957-8 sound 10 min. (each)
Magazine films recording various aspects of Australian life and work.
- HOMES FOR HAPPINESS 1959 sound 15 min.
The work of housing authorities in Western Australia.
- QUEENSLAND CENTENARY STORY 1959 sound 20 min.
A survey of Queensland's progress after 100 years of responsible government.
- PEACE COMES TO THE HIGHLANDS 1959 colour sound 9 min.
The work of patrol officers in New Guinea in obtaining co-operation from the natives.