

AUSTRALIAN MEMBERS MEET

John Hyett

On 11 October 2014 several Australian members of the Society, along with some others with an interest in the magic lantern, gathered at the Salvation Army Headquarters in Melbourne for a day of sharing our passion for this medium. Although a small venue capable of catering for eighteen attendees, it was a fitting venue as it was from this building that the Salvation Army's Limelight Brigade operated following the purchase of the building in 1894 until the brigade was closed down in 1909. During this time the Limelight Brigade became the major producer of lantern slides and film in Australia, producing nearly 80 per cent of Australian-made films between 1901 and 1905.

After a brief welcome by our host, Lindsay Cox, the Salvation Army's Territorial Archivist for the Australian Southern Territory, the introductory presentation was made by John Cleary, a national broadcaster with the ABC and a long time member of the Salvation Army. John spoke of the Salvation Army's Limelight Brigade and its influence on the pioneer film industry of Australia.

This address was followed by a tour of the Salvation Army Museum and the Limelight Studio. I think we were all surprised at the small size of the studio considering the prolific output of the Limelight Brigade during the years it operated.

Following a delicious morning tea John Semmens presented his slides on the Sudan War. John also provided his magnificent Watson biunial lantern for the use of lanternists during the day, a gesture that was much appreciated. This presentation was followed by excerpts from a documentary on probably the Limelight Brigade's most famous production, *The Soldiers of The Cross*. This epic was first presented in 1900 and contained some 200 glass slides and 15 movie sequences of approximately 90 seconds each. Many of the slides still exist in the National Film and Sound Archives in Canberra but the film sequences are long lost.

John Hyett then showed a recently acquired set of slides taken during a Crusaders Union camp at Mornington, Victoria, in January 1933. The camp was held on the property owned by Thomas Baker, a 'photographic scientist' who imported and produced photographic material including magic lantern slides in partnership with J.J. Rouse from 1887 until they amalgamated with London Kodak in 1908 to form Kodak Australasia, with Baker and Rouse as managing directors. The slides showed a way of life far removed from that of the unemployed during the Great Depression.

After lunch, taken at one of the many cafes in the area, we returned to watch a presentation by Lindsay Cox on some of the narrative slide sets produced by the Limelight Brigade, which the archives have been able to acquire over the years and return to their rightful home. Ian Edwards then presented *War and Peace*, the Australian Colonies and Commonwealth 1850s to 1920s, musically accompanied by his wife Margery, with Antony Catrice manipulating the lantern. This was followed by excerpts from a Chris Long documentary showing the Federation Celebrations in 1901 filmed by the Salvation Army Limelight Brigade, who had been appointed official photographers by the Government.

A tour of the Archives and the City Temple followed afternoon tea and then Dr Martyn Jolly presented a series of song slides accompanied by recordings made during an earlier live presentation at the Australian National University. A video of the ANU performance can be found at <http://vimeo.com/106788363>.

Our thanks to the Salvation Army for providing such a historic venue and to Lindsay Cox for organising the day.



Group photo of attendees



John Hyett at the lantern with Margery and Ian Edwards and Martyn Jolly



John Semmens with his Watson biunial



Our host, Lindsay Cox, addressing the gathering