CHAPTER 1

"A PLETHORA OF THRESHOLDS"
- CREATING A SENSE OF OCCASION
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The history of any building is closely tied to the history of the people who dwelt in or used it. The picture theatre is no exception to this. While some architectural and social research (the latter to a much lesser extent) has been undertaken on Australian city and suburban picture theatres, next to nothing has been recorded about their 'country cousins'. The history of the Australian country picture theatre is, by and large, unknown. No major research has been undertaken that combines these three aspects of our social history and heritage. As those born in the 1920s and 1930s continue to pass away and the physical evidence of picture theatres continues to disappear, the void in our knowledge of why people attended and what it was like going to the pictures in pre-television rural Australia will grow wider. This thesis will help to redress, to some extent, the situation by, firstly, presenting a chronological history of the buildings used for pictures within a selected country area of New South Wales (therein tracing the development of cinema exhibition in that area) and, secondly, recording the relevance to and the importance of the buildings in pre-television days to the people of that area. The subject area may be considered to be representative of the state as a whole. What specific influences, if any, the films themselves had on the lives of people (for example what overseas' slang infiltrated our language, how fashions changed, which hairstyles were copied) has not been essayed as it is part of a broader sociological topic\(^2\) not considered relevant for the purpose of this thesis.

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\(^2\) Such a topic might include the effect of moving pictures, records, wireless, books, magazines on the lifestyle of Australians, as well as political and economic influences.
Prior to the early 1960s, Australians went in their millions to the pictures and the nation, in particular New South Wales, was well-endowed with picture theatre buildings. (See Appendices A - D.) It cannot be denied that, from the beginning, "The sole purpose of theatre operation is to make money." Picture exhibition (to mass audiences) commenced in Australia in 1896 and it was seen as a money-making opportunity. That was why, in the late nineteenth century, travelling picture show men gathered together a portable projector, several thousand feet of highly inflammable nitrate film (the subjects of which bore little resemblance to each other), possibly an Edison gramophone, some of the 'latest' sheet music and headed off into the country areas of our nation, travelling thousands of miles (by train) and screening in country towns for one to three nights. Travellers in the early twentieth century did much the same although some preferred a horse and cart in which to travel. From c1910, as purpose-built or permanent venues became the norm, exhibitors were faced with having continually to attract patrons, rather than allow, what had been in the past, the novelty of an infrequent visit to 'do the trick' for them. Thus, they turned to and drew upon the traditions of the music hall/vaudeville, sideshow and theatrical entrepreneurs and attempted to entice people inside by means of 'showy' facades and pretentious advertising displays. During those formative years (c1910 - mid-1920s), exhibitors in city, suburbs and country areas acquired the knowledge of how to attract patrons to their shows and this involved them continually having to improve their venues (including equipment) in order to maintain profits. On the other side of the picture (figuratively speaking) were the patrons who, in the early


4 For example, utilising a local hall (such as a School of Arts) on a permanent basis.

The Sydney city exhibitors were constantly faced with having to improve their theatres. While the first 'wave' were built in the years around 1910 - 1912, it was not long after World War
years probably went to see the flickering images simply because they were a novelty. As time passed and they were able to attend on a more regular basis, because either a touring show man came regularly or a permanent picture theatre was erected in the town, it seems that the patrons went because it was a social event. The whole business of going to the pictures had developed into a sense of occasion and people, being 'social animals', readily attended regardless of what was on the screen. By the mid-1920s, the picture business had grown far beyond what the early travellers could have envisaged.

There were many live theatrical companies touring the countryside in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as well as permanent live theatres in Sydney and Newcastle. Live theatre had a strong tradition in Australia. So, what was it that made picture theatres different to live theatres? According to one American researcher, there were psychological differences.

In the movie theatre, ticket buyers take with them only a mood and a memory, which is reinforced by the physical surroundings. In live theatre, the audience and actors interact,

that, in order to stay ahead of competitors, theatre owners were remodelling. It was, in fact this expenditure that forced Union Theatres into liquidation in 1931 and the sale of Hoyts Theatres to an American company in the early 1930s. A perusal of individual theatres in R. Thorne's Cinemas of Australia via U.S.A. Sydney: Architecture Dept. University of Sydney, 1981 will supply information about rebuilding. One example worth nothing was the Lyric in George Street. It was opened in 1911, extensively redecorated into a latticed pseudo-extravaganza in the early 1920s to become the Lyric Wintergarden, then in the early 1930s transformed into an Art Deco theatre which it remained until entirely remodelled in the 1960s.

6D. Höher, "The Composition of Music Hall Audiences 1850 - 1900" in Bailey, P. (ed.). Music Hall. The Business of Pleasure. U.K.: Open University Press, 1986, pp. 73-93. In nineteenth century England, music hall visits were looked upon as "social events: people tended to go there in groups, if not with workmates, then with neighbours or members of the family." (p.80) The results in Chapter 5 of this thesis confirm that going to the pictures was also a social event.

7 R. Waterhouse, From Minstrel Show to Vaudeville. Sydney: N.S.W. University Press, 1990, p.85. "From the gold rush period onwards the major touring companies had always included country towns on their itinerary..."
feeding off each other and creating a new experience each time. But in a movie theatre, the film is always the same. The experience of moviegoing is shaped by interaction among members of the audience and by the environment itself.8

Besides the psychological differences, pictures were available to all classes of society even if there was a perception that the upper class preferred live theatre and regarded the pictures "as a form of cheap popular entertainment, similar to the circus, and without the artistic potential of the theatre."9 The masses found that picture shows offered them reasonable surroundings, a social experience in a relatively convivial atmosphere and glimpses of the world that they had hitherto been denied, all for a very small admission price.10 In the early days of this century, the films themselves were known as 'photoplays', the film makers and exhibitors obviously attempting to legitimise their product. As the number of picture theatres grew in Australia, exhibitors continually sought ways to improve their venues in order to maintain or increase business. Thus, an accidental duality of purpose occurred: the exhibitors, because of their desire to make money, improved their venues and presentations; the patrons, desirous of being entertained and, to a far greater extent,


10 A comparison of admission prices between live theatres and picture theatres for the years between c1910 and c1929 reveals that pictures were accessible for as little as one shilling (adults) whereas live theatres charged higher prices. For example, Sydney's The Sunday Sun. 29.5.1910 p.2 advertised William Anderson's London Vaudeville Stars at the Standard Theatre with prices at three shillings, two shillings and one shilling, and Miss Sylvia Blackston and other "leading artists" at the YMCA Hall at five shillings, three shillings and two shillings. On the same page, the Empire Picture Palace, Oxford Street, advertised the latest in "cinematographic art" for one shilling or sixpence, and West's Pictures at the Palace Theatre advertised seats from sixpence to two shillings. With the advent of 'talkies' from the late 1920s, the live theatres experienced a rapid decline. This decline was not reversed to any great extent until after World War II.
wishing to engage in a social experience, patronised the venues. Hence, both parties, desirous of 'being fulfilled', were fulfilled.\(^{11}\)

At this juncture, it is worth exploring just what a picture theatre was considered to be, both abroad and at home. Writing in the 1980s, William D Routt\(^{12}\) stated that any film seen was seen in a physical structure called a 'cinema'. The 'architectural cinema' was, he claimed, "a series of thresholds designed to encourage the translation of people from outside to inside", and he explained this by a pseudo-flow diagram of pavement to vestibule, vestibule to ticket box, ticket box to stair, stair to auditorium entrance, auditorium entrance to seat. When one examines the anatomy of a cinema building, it is, as Routt suggested, a place "all outside" - "facing away from its interior". There can be no half way in or out despite its "plethora of thresholds". He further stated that, from a semiotic viewpoint, a cinema was a "public space" for "private activity". Outside or inside, public or private, these "poles" (as he called them) may be separated in the architecture of the cinema but both are indispensable. Cinema audiences must come eventually to focus on the screen and the screen on the individual. As Routt saw it, the 1920s provided a cinema architecture that he labelled "fairyland" - "a public expression of collective dreaming". (One is tempted to include in this description cinema architecture from c1910 to the 1940s.) Routt lamented that, at the time of his writing, there was nothing of "architectural excitement in the cinema", the exterior (outside) simply being "a screen to house its screens."\(^{13}\) He pointed out that

\(^{11}\) Chapter 4 (through the tracing of the history of exhibition within the subject area) and Chapter 5 (the qualitative research data) expand upon this idea.

\(^{12}\) W.D. Routt, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 32 - 35.

\(^{13}\) If one were to visit cinema complexes of the late 1980s/1990s, one would find the auditoria to be far less decorated than in pre-television times and patrons are not encouraged to spend time inside them since single feature shows are the norm. In some cinema complex vestibules, seats are not provided as the management wishes to discourage people from loitering
we do not know if "the space on the screen moves out among the people...or whether people are moved out of their seats and onto the screen". There is a certain amount of what he termed "displacement" and that films were "the agents of that displacement". Therefore, as Routt explained, a person's "experience of space in films is not the same as one's experience of space in the architectural cinema where one is sitting." Over the years, the concept of "in the film" had replaced the idea of "in the cinema", and thereby reduced the level of importance of the experience of space in the architectural cinema. For many people, the sense of occasion had been greatly lessened and going to the pictures (ie the cinema) had long been replaced with going to see a film.

Overseas theatres, architects and their philosophies about environmental psychology have been better recorded than Australian ones. (This is to be expected as there are large markets for books in the United Kingdom and the United States of America and more willing researchers.) What these overseas people have to say is relevant to the Australian scene. David Atwell, English theatre historian, is one of the better known writers in this field. In his Cathedrals of the Movies, he traced the development of the British picture theatre, paying particular attention to the architects. Frank Verity (English), whose theatre work spanned Edwardian times into the 1920s, was acknowledged by the Royal Institute of British Architects in 1937 with the following, "...Mr. Verity's more sumptuous cinemas are examples of such high architectural accomplishment that anyone is to be pitied who cannot enjoy them for their own sake." Another mentioned was John Eberson, an

(eg Hurstville GU Cinemas).

14 The theatre historical societies in these countries run into the many hundreds, unlike Australis that has a little over two hundred societies.

American architect, renowned for his atmospheric theatres\textsuperscript{16}, and whose work was well-known in Australia and the UK. He was quoted from 1927 as having said, "We visualise and dream a magnificent amphitheatre under a glorious moonlit sky in an Italian garden, in a Persian court, in a Spanish patio, or in a mystic Egyptian temple-yard, all canopied by a soft moonlit sky...We credit the deep azure blue of the Mediterranean sky with a therapeutic value, soothing the nerves and calming perturbing thoughts."\textsuperscript{17} A third, Theodore Komisarjevsky, had a background as a director of the Imperial Theatre, Moscow. As a stage producer, he had a great influence on acting, settings and lighting, before he took up theatre design. Expressing some of his thoughts about designing, he wrote,

\begin{quote}
The richly decorated theatre, the comfort with which they [the public] are surrounded, the efficiency of the service contribute to an atmosphere and a sense of well-being of which the majority have hitherto only imagined...in comfortable seats and amidst attractive and appealing surroundings.\textsuperscript{18}
\end{quote}

In an interview for an American theatre magazine in 1926, John Eberson spoke at length about the need for picture theatres to be places where patrons felt that, by attending them, they were experiencing a sense of occasion. He explained the need for variety in the buildings. Believing that people love variety when it comes to amusement, he said that the masses "might not know art, but they feel it...". A picture theatre, "more than any other building, requires sensational features -

\textsuperscript{16} Atmospheric theatres were those where the ceiling was made to look like the sky and patrons were given the impression that they were sitting 'outside'. The sky usually had 'stars'.

\textsuperscript{17} D. Atwell, \textit{op.cit.}, pp. 76-77.

\textsuperscript{18} \textit{ibid.}, p. 130. Komisajeovsky's most well-known interiors were in the Granada Theatres at Tooting (1931) and Woolwich (1937) both of which (as at 1980) have been statutorily listed by the Dept. of Environment, U.K.
it must have modern features - it must be something 'Never Before'..." Eberson knew what he wanted to achieve and what the patrons and the exhibitors expected. (Australia gained five of his style of theatres, four from Eberson's designs and one that 'borrowed' his ideas.\(^{19}\)) In the late 1940s, Eberson was interviewed by another film trade journal in which he reminisced about theatre design of earlier years. While design styles had changed, the basic tenets had not.

_In tune with the times and the average standard of living, great stress was laid on patron comfort and all equipment relating to it. More comfortable seats, better sight lines, better acoustics and sound, and real luxury in rest rooms, lounges and toilets - rather than ornately decorated interiors - were the Eberson aim._\(^{20}\)

Eberson mentioned that the average standard of living had changed since he had designed theatres in the 1920s. Whether this was so for some or all, times certainly had changed. The Great Depression had occurred. Fashion and design had changed. Furnishings and housing comforts had improved for those fortunate to have the money to purchase them. Picture exhibitors had to keep up with the times and the perceived expectations of their patrons. It has been claimed that the 1930s cinema "...belonged to the proletariat" and was "the ultimate in consumer architecture."\(^{21}\)

Film set designers were keeping up with latest trends and cinemas could not afford to remain old-fashioned. In Australia, this was especially evident in the theatres designed by Guy Crick and

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\(^{19}\) "The Atmospheric Theatre - An Interview With John Eberson, Architect", in *Motion Picture News* (Better Theatres Section), U.S.A., 30.11.1926, no pagination. The five atmospheric theatres in Australia were Sydney Capitol, Melbourne State, Perth Ambassadors, Goulburn Empire, Paddington (Qld) Plaza.


Bruce Furse ('in association').

Modernity was not confined solely to picture theatres as a browse through architectural magazines of the 1930s shows. The 1930s saw many impressive picture theatres built, all endeavouring to continue the tradition of the sense of occasion and all emulating the current vogue. Australian researcher, Diane Collins, suggested that the 1930s picture theatres, by using carpet in foyers, tried "to resemble the family sitting room or the lounge of a better type of residential hotel". She stated that the 1930s reversed the development of the exotic, aristocratic world of the palatial theatres by making the cinema patron "a relaxed participant in a building which imitated his own domestic surroundings."²² It cannot be denied that exhibitors wanted their patrons to be relaxed. But Collins has ignored the fact that, for many, wall-to-wall carpets were a luxury in the 1930s²³ (most people being satisfied with a carpet square or some Feltex or a hall runner, if they could afford it) and the plush theatre vestibules and foyers were hardly 'typical' of the "domestic surroundings" in houses throughout Australia. The purpose of the wall-to-wall carpet, the modern furniture and light fittings (prismatic, concealed or otherwise), plush lounges, etc was to give most patrons something more than what they had in their own homes. These little(?) touches of elegance took 'Mr and Mrs Stringbag'²⁴ out of their normal, mundane environment and, for a relatively inexpensive charge (a

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²² D. Collins, *Cinema and Society in Australia 1920-39*. Ph.D. Thesis (unpublished), University of Sydney, 1975, p. 405. Collins used J.M. Freeland, *Architecture in Australia*, Melbourne: F.W. Cheshire, 1968, pp. 257-259 as a source for these statements. Freeland offers an incorrect and superficial view of 1930s films and the effects, he claims, they had on cinema design. "The shadow world on the screen had its own equally unreal settings. Because the stories were invariably set in night clubs and sumptuous penthouses the designs produced [ie for the film] were essentially interior. The same glamorous character was repeated in the cinemas in which the films were shown." (page 259) There is no referencing in Freeland's work.


²⁴ A colloquial phrase for the average couple.
shilling or two) gave them the opportunity to experience that which they probably would not have been able to afford for their own homes. Added to all that were several hours of entertainment in a social atmosphere. Collins' comments rather fatuously deny the sense of occasion being created for patrons by the architects and exhibitors in their 1930s cinemas. They may not all have been State and Regent Theatres\(^25\), but they certainly did not "imitate" one's "domestic surroundings".\(^26\)

It was not until living standards increased dramatically after World War II that picture theatre exhibitors had trouble trying to keep ahead of the norm, finding it harder and harder to give the patrons the sense of occasion. It was only then that most of their patrons' domestic surroundings were as good as, if not better than, those offered by the picture theatres.\(^27\) It was then that other gimmicks were employed (eg 3-D\(^28\), CinemaScope screen formats not available in the home). In a later work\(^29\) that stemmed from her 1975 thesis, Collins still made no attempt to discover why people patronised picture shows. "The psychology of the movies' audiences eludes us still", she claimed, then offered a few suggestions as to why they might have attended - "...a particular film", "...a little enjoyable escapism", "...to kill a few hours", "...to entertain some guests". In an

\(^25\) The State and Regent theatres in Sydney were true picture palaces, dating from the latter half of the 1920s.

\(^26\) In the research undertaken, the writer has yet to come across a cinema, the style of which could be described as "Happy Valley", although one or two country halls come close to it.

\(^27\) Perhaps that is why today we look upon the State Theatre in Sydney as worthy of preservation but have ignored theatre buildings of later periods that, on the surface, appear to be far less decorated. Thus, we show our ignorance of the historical nature of these buildings.

\(^28\) A form of 3-D (ie three dimension) picture was trialled in the 1930s. Its full potential was not achieved until the early 1950s when feature films were made in the medium. It was quickly superseded by CinemaScope.

attempt to brush the whole issue aside, she concluded that "Each person had private reasons for being there that resist near categorisation." What she has failed to consider were the psychology of place and the social aspect of 'going to the pictures', both of which played important parts in the total event.\(^{30}\)

Overseas' designs influenced Australian architects' work and this was most certainly the case with regards to picture theatres.\(^{31}\) The creation of a building that espoused a sense of occasion would have been to the forefront of the designers' minds. Kaberry and Chard (Sydney-based architects whose work spread throughout the 1920s and 1930s) and Crick and Furse (Sydney-based architects of the 1930s-1950s\(^{32}\)) were well-respected in theatre design and were responsible for hundreds of picture theatres (either new or remodelled) across the nation. It is fortunate that a few interviews were recorded. Sadly, like most of Australia's theatre architects, their records have been 'lost' and their work has been either destroyed or badly mutilated. However, some of their thoughts have been recorded in a few of the old film trade journals.\(^{33}\) In 1923, Kaberry and Chard were

\(^{30}\) Both of these aspects emerged during the course of the oral histories and correspondence (undertaken for part of this thesis) and were considered to be very important by the participants.

\(^{31}\) Australian architects, like their overseas' counterparts, would have looked through architectural magazines, seeking new ideas. Perhaps because of our remoteness from Europe and USA, the ideas took a little more time to filter through. One such USA magazine was called Pencil Points. According to one of Crick and Furse's employees from the 1930s, it was well-known in their office.

\(^{32}\) Although the partnership broke-up in 1940, both men continued to practise separately. The bulk of their theatre work was done in the 1930s.

\(^{33}\) Film trade journals were magazines expressly created for cinema industry people, including exhibitors. Besides containing information about events within the film industry - both in Australia and abroad - and the latest film releases, they also contained information about what exhibitors were doing and, from time to time, helpful hints on mechanical and design aspects of theatre operation. They commenced in the early years of cinema exhibition and continued until the 1980s. Some of the titles were: Film Weekly; Everyone; Australasian Exhibitor; Exhibitor; Australasian Cinema. Various public libraries have certain holdings.
reported as saying,

The designing of a modern theatre is indeed an art, and the result of attempts by the amateur are everywhere in evidence to the long-suffering public in impossible vision lines, conspicuous absence of ventilation, and other all-important matters of design that should ensure the comfort of the patron and success to the management generally...After all the details of construction have been completed...there comes the question of decoration or interior treatment...[it] is a matter of individual taste either of the designer or the owner; but undoubtedly in a building for entertainment and amusement, light and cheerful colour schemes are essential and preferable to dull - though wonderfully artistic - tones.\textsuperscript{34}

In another interview thirteen years later, their comments were not much different and they still insisted that the picture theatre had to be a place that suggested a sense of occasion for each patron. While predicting the intrusion of television into our lives, they maintained that the picture theatre was, and would remain, both a place of meeting and a place of entertainment.

The showman is apt to exaggerate the importance of striking novelty in both front elevation and interior treatment; for the former is useful, even necessary, in the city to make a theatre discernible amongst its competitors, while in the suburb every child knows the location of a new home of amusement. Hence, a well-designed facade is even more necessary in a suburb, as it shows to greater advantage among its neighbours and is subject to more attention...The best decoration for an auditorium is the one an audience can view with a feeling of exhilaration, and yet behold repeatedly without boredom. This

\textsuperscript{34} Interview with Kaberry and Chard, \textit{Everyones}, Sydney, 9.5.1923, p.91.
means brightness (in keeping with the idea of relaxation), harmony and proportion and absence of eventually irritating features that move or change... great satisfaction [seeing] the creation of something new, and despite the fact that we shall soon tune-in and have our picture thrown on the dining-room wall from some central exchange, the community spirit will prevail and demand the theatre beautiful as a place of meeting and entertainment.  

The work of Guy Crick and Bruce Furse in the 1930s was unmistakable.  

Using 'Modern' architectural and decorating elements, their theatre buildings (typified in Sydney by the Kings' chain of cinemas) brought their architectural firm many commissions throughout Australia. Theirs was the spirit of the time - all that was modern. In 1936 Crick was interviewed and said,

...the architect's part goes considerably further than the mere design of the theatre. That aspect, of course, is important but no more than the furnishing, lighting, decoration and the general treatment necessary to make an attractive show-house. All things must harmonise for tone to obtain maximum effect, and... it is a work for the architect.  

In a later journal, he stated,

Everything in the interior of the modern theatre should play its part in obtaining a harmonious whole; this includes wall treatments, decorative motifs, doors, carpets, furnishings, upholstery, and even such things as the dressing of the theatre with vases

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36 Australasian Exhibitor, 7.11.1940, Sydney. p.5. Short item about Bruce Furse. The Crick and Furse partnership commenced in the early 1930s and ended in 1940.

and flowers.\textsuperscript{38}

The picture theatre was much more than bricks, mortar, steel and seats. A sense of occasion became closely linked with going to the pictures and a sense of place became associated with the building within its community. Collins made the point, "The phenomenon of the moving picture house is of major importance to the historian of the cinema. The picture theatre represented the most concrete and permanent product of the motion picture industry."\textsuperscript{39} In writing this, whether she fully appreciated the point or not, she declared the importance of the building to the process of 'going to the pictures'. The 'product' (the building) is the place where, according to Marvin Carlson\textsuperscript{40}, "the experience of the audience assembled to share in the creation of the total event" takes place. Traditionally, people have viewed theatre buildings this way. The entire building's component parts, including its locality, "are all important elements of the process by which an audience makes meaning of its experience". Semiotics, he claimed, can help one's understanding of the complete theatrical experience, and not solely the text of the play being seen (or, by implication, the film). Thus, the theatre building, long regarded as a "utilitarian public building", can be looked at from a very different way if one approaches it from the semiotic viewpoint. Carlson wrote purely about 'live' theatre buildings.\textsuperscript{41} He said that theatres attract the public by


\textsuperscript{39} D. Collins, op. cit. 1975, p. 383. It is worth noting at this point that while they may have been "the most concrete and permanent product of the motion picture industry", for the most they have disappeared within Australia since the advent of television.


\textsuperscript{41} Letter from M. Carlson, The Graduate School and University Center, The City University of New York, U.S.A. in reply dated 10.3.1994 to letter from the writer in which he
offering performances and the opportunity to spend time in attractive surroundings. By implication, the same can be said for the picture theatres of pre-television days. One only has to recall Routt, with his "plethora of thresholds" and the "architectural excitement in the cinema", and what Carlson had to say can apply equally to cinema buildings.

A semiotic approach to theatre architecture should encourage us to look not only at the traditional elements of stage and auditorium but at every distinct element of the theatre complex for what it may reveal about the meanings of this building for its society...since the meaning of those elements that make up a theatre structure, and sometimes the elements themselves, will change as the society that interprets them changes.\(^{42}\)

If we view going to the pictures from this semiotic viewpoint, then there is more to the event than first meets the eye. For example, the theatre building's location could be important, or as Carlson pointed out, "where it's not". A theatre may have been built in an important commercial part of town to capitalise on the 'busyness' of the area.\(^{45}\) For example, in the subject area, the Broadway wrote "...I have not myself done any work on that theatre tradition." (ie picture theatres)

\(^{42}\) M. Carlson, op. cit., p. 9. As times and attitudes change, a building may fall into disrepute because of its locality or because it is unable to provide the service for which it was originally intended. The Sydney Capitol Theatre is a good example. It is situated in the Haymarket area that, for many years, was considered to be a 'seedy' part of town. As a cinema, it was too large to survive and its limited stage facilities excluded it from major stage shows. After restorations and extensions, its reopening in 1995 should create a better image for the area.

\(^{45}\) The location, considered important by exhibitors in the past, worked against the picture theatres in post-television years, especially in the city centre and the suburbs of major capital cities. The building site became more valuable than the cinema building that stood on it. Examples of this are numerous and include Sydney's Prince Edward, Ashfield Kings, Blacktown Warrick, Manly Odeon, Chatswood Kings, to name a few. The cinema operations themselves were capable of being sustained but the property owners gained more money from the sale of the properties. Country locations were not affected in the same way nor to such a large extent.
Theatre at Parkes was built in 1923-25 at the newer commercial end of the town. Some theatres became important urban landmarks. Their locations would "condition the public image of the building". Maggie Valentine expanded Carlson's idea when she wrote about the subsequent loss of 'community' associated with modern cinemas and multiplexes with their 'airport-like' appearances.

One of the most important qualities provided by the motion picture theatre, but missing in the multiplex or in home video rental, was the sense of community. Theatre provided the 'lobby experience': everyone there was sharing the moment. They were watching the same movie at the same time and breaking for intermission at the same point...The sharing of joy and sorrows [associated with the film] added to and was reinforced by the grandeur of the space.

Earlier in her work, Valentine expressed concern at the way

Most historians and critics have overlooked the significant contribution of the theatre environment in social, film and architectural history. Film historians have tended to focus on the history of the industry - namely, the economic and substantive development of film production - describing the exhibition process only in vague or generalized terms.

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44 An example of this in Sydney could have been the North Sydney Orpheum.

45 M. Valentine, op. cit., p. 184.

46 ibid., p.2.
As the theatre building has become incorporated into other buildings (e.g., shopping complexes/malls), it has lost its identity, both architecturally and as a landmark, and has ceased to make a statement of its own. An example of this can be seen in Parkes, NSW where the 150-seat Golden West Cinema is situated inside the local RSL Club. Its tiny foyer is incapable of holding more than a dozen or so people and its single film per show policy does not lend itself to creating a sense of community since there is no interval. Apart from a small, external advertising board, the cinema makes no statement, nor is it a landmark of any sort.

For the patrons of the past, the picture theatre was an environment for social interaction and offered them more than simply what was on the screen. William Ittelson, an environmental psychologist, stated that we receive information about the environment through our senses. This material is then processed through our nervous systems in order to provide us with what is necessary for us to relate to that environment. According to Ittelson, we can only be participants in our environments and it is this that causes the distinction between "self and nonself" to disappear. "The environment surrounds, enfolds, engulfs, and no thing and no one can be isolated and identified as standing outside of, and apart from, it." 47 The path to clear understanding is, as Ittelson claimed, not without its difficulties. "Environments always represent simultaneously, instances of redundant information, of inadequate information, and of conflicting and contradictory information. The entire mechanism of information processing in the nervous system...is brought into play." 48 Ittelson further commented that "environments always have a definite esthetic(sic) quality. Esthetically neutral objects can be designed; esthetically neutral

environments are unthinkable. Thus, going to the pictures and our perceptions of the environment will be determined by a number of factors, including getting ready, who else was there, the physical surroundings, what was seen, and leaving the venue.

In a 1980 paper on the relationship between people and the man-made environment, Ross Thorne made the point that, in the past, the visual quality of the built environment had not been considered sufficiently important in much of social science research and that designers had been educated away from trying to come to an appreciation of how the public (the users) perceive buildings. As Thorne explained, architects tended to view buildings differently to non-architects and, it was possible, that buildings were not designed with human needs in mind. Thorne used a cinema complex as a model and showed that many architects did not like the building while many non-architects did. He commented that "If everyone perceived buildings at the same level of fine detail as architects, there would be little need for architectural schools. Buildings are perceived in much the same detail as other objects in our environment that is, at a number of different levels." Almost a decade later, Peter Spearritt wrote that "Architects...like fine arts graduates...are secure in the knowledge that they've been trained in taste." Yet, as Spearritt pointed out, this is not always the truth. (It would do architects well to be aware of John

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40 Ibid., p. 15.


Eberon's statement about the masses who "...might not know art, but they feel it...".

Australian architectural historian, Ann Lumley continued Thorne's line of thought (although she may not have been aware of it) when she wrote

"We all react instinctively to the size and space relationships of architecture, because buildings and their surroundings relate to the human figure as we walk in, around and through them. We all take pleasure in the textures and colours of walls, floors, furnishings and paving because they are places where we work, eat our meals, interact with others and carry out all the complicated tasks and enjoyments of our lives. Human needs must be the concern of the architect and town planner, as well as a knowledge of materials and construction principles."  

The built environment does affect us, although many people may not be consciously aware that this can occur. Tony Hiss, an American sociologist, stated that we react both consciously and unconsciously to those environments in which we live and work. "The design principle here is that any change made to our surroundings has the potential to affect the way we experience a place." Places give forth 'messages' to people and, in order to experience places with a deeper appreciation, we need to change our way of looking at them. Some people, in order to retain their

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52 "The Atmospheric Theatre - An Interview With John Eberson, Architect", in Motion Picture News (Better Theatres Section), U.S.A., 30.11.1926, no pagination.


55 There has been little research done into theatrical venues. One researcher, John Earl, writing in 1986 about nineteenth century English music halls, stated that "...the behaviour of the audience is directly influenced by its physical surroundings..." (J. Earl, "Building the Halls" in
experiences of place, take action to protect them, for example, by protesting to stop the demolition
of certain buildings or the desecration of particular natural sites.

In 1982, overseas researchers, Moleski and Lang, wrote about the relevance of contemporary
corporate identity programmes. What they have said can relate just as well to the world of picture
theatre organisation in pre-television days (to either chains or independents).

*An organization through the design of its physical setting communicates messages about
its character and values to both its staff and public. The symbolic qualities of the
environment go beyond the application of the firm's logo-type across the building as part
of a corporate identity program.*

Theatre chains in the past spent time and money on trying to promote appropriate images that they
believed patrons expected. Hoyts, for example, ran competitions for the best-presented theatres
within the company, the results of which were published in contemporary film trade journals. In
the late 1940s, as part of its staff training process, Hoyts produced at least one short training film.
Entitled, *Guests In Our House*, it presented a number of key staff positions and how they should
and should not behave. Striving to make one's theatre a better place was not left solely in the hands
of the chains. In correspondence with a past exhibitor of the Regal Theatre at Dunedoo, NSW,
the following is offered for consideration:

*We were both usherettes and wore a black skirt with blue blouse which we made to our
liking and fashion and received lovely comments. Some theatre goers ventured to say that*

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our 'Regal' was run as well or even better than some of the cinemas in Sydney. We thought how kind and encouraging they were.\textsuperscript{57}

In his book about growing up during the 1930s in Bolton, UK, Leslie Halliwell (well-known for his film guide books) described his childhood experiences of going to the pictures with family members. Halliwell wrote about each picture theatre that he attended and gave candid comments about his experiences. One such visit was to Bolton's Theatre Royal, a former live theatre but in use as a cinema.

Only from the outside, because of that untidy and slightly sagging canopy, did it seem a bit of a jumble: once through the casemented swing doors (and you could choose from eight of them) you were in one of the most beautiful theatres of my experience, always warm and cheerful because the predominant colour of its décor was red and the very richness of its fittings gave the building a pleasantly opulent smell.\textsuperscript{58}

Whether or not architects and exhibitors aspired to a "pleasantly opulent smell" is unknown. However, there was a sense of place associated with picture theatres and a particular sense of occasion about attending them. Little of this has been recorded with regards to the Australian situation. As well, the ephemeral nature of the physical picture theatre building, with its short reign of dominance among the major public structures within a locality, has remained virtually

\textsuperscript{57} Letter to the writer from Mrs Gwen Tibbets (nee-Yeo) 2.4.1992, exhibitor with her sister from 1954 to 1966. Besides handling all of the business side of the cinema, the "Yeo girls" (as they were referred to in one trade magazine, acted as usherettes - because they saw it as such an important personal relations' position.

\textsuperscript{58} L. Halliwell, \textit{Seats in All Parts}. London: Granada Publishing Ltd., 1985, p. 43. Note the use of the word "experience".
unresearched until the last two decades. Compared to what has been done in the United States of America and the United Kingdom, little has been done in Australia even to record the buildings. There is a similar void in our knowledge about why people attended and the relevance they placed on 'going to the pictures'. A few Australians have endeavoured to record data, to take and/or gather photographs and to collect memorabilia about the physical aspects of going to the pictures. What is disturbing is the lack of research undertaken into the relevance of picture theatre venues for human beings.

In 1982, the Australian Theatre Historical Society was formed. Its main functions are to produce a quarterly magazine (that records past and current aspects of cinema exhibition) and to establish and maintain an archive. In recent years, it has embarked on a publication programme that has seen specific areas targeted (eg Newcastle district, the Illawarra). These books have dealt primarily with the history of the buildings. A few years ago, a similar society was established in Victoria to cater specifically for the perceived needs of that state.

One attempt to look at the importance of the picture show in New South Wales' country areas was

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50 One executive of a country historical society was interested to learn that the local theatre had been designed in 1928 by Bruce Dellit (who also designed the War Memorial in Hyde Park, Sydney). The theatre had been demolished only the year before to make way for an RSL carpark and no-one was aware of who had designed it.

51 It is worth noting that the National Film and Sound Archive, situated in Canberra, was formed in 1984, two years after the Australian Theatre Historical Society was formed.


52 This group was started primarily for social gatherings but is now producing a newsletter and has established an archive.
Lyle Penn's book, *The Picture Show Man*, while recording part of our social history, it was mainly concerned with the life of the exhibitor. Occasional items have appeared in country newspapers, but usually when theatres were about to be demolished. For the most, this aspect of our history remains unrecorded.

John Tulloch, in *Australian Cinema, Industry, Narrative and Meaning*, looked at the organisational structure of the film industry in Australia from earliest times. In one chapter there is a short section on 'Country Exhibitors' that describes how film companies (predominantly American) made booking films difficult for the show men and extracting as much money from them as possible, while proclaiming that they really were their friends. In 1922, for example, the film distributors raised film rentals by 12.5% claiming it to be because of a proposed extra duty on American films. Trade journals, as Tulloch suggested, "presumably under advertisers' pressure" did little to help.

The first two parts of Tulloch's book are worthwhile background reading on the Australian film industry as a whole. They look at the struggles it had to endure as overseas film companies slowly tightened their grip on Australian exhibition. Because USA produced so many films and Australia so few, exhibitors were forced to take American product and distributors were able to dictate terms that were not necessarily in the best interests of either the exhibitors or the Australian film industry. However, Tulloch does not discuss the history of any picture theatres nor does he provide input from the patrons who attended the pictures.

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65 L. Penn, *The Picture Show Man*. Melbourne: Thomas Nelson (Australia) Ltd., 1977. The area covered in the book is primarily the Northern Rivers, including Coffs Harbour. A film by the same name was made in the late 1970s and used an adapted form of the book as its basis.

64 Another example: J. W. Gerard, *From Pastures Green To The Silver Screen*, Coff's Harbour, J.W. Gerard, 1984. Nothing has been found for other Australian states.

The books that have been written on Australian picture shows are few and have shown a tendency for approaching the subject in an ad hoc way. There are some exceptions to this. In his *Theatre Buildings in Australia to 1905* and *Theatres in Australia - An Historical Perspective of Significant Buildings*, Ross Thorne has written two specialised works that deal more with the development and architectural significance of live theatre buildings. *Theatre Buildings in Australia to 1905* is a two volumed set that carefully traces the development of live theatre buildings in this country. There are some references to buildings that were used as cinemas but this is limited. Contained within the first volume are numerous architectural drawings and photographs. Two of his other books trace the development of the architectural side of Australian picture theatre buildings. These works are *Picture Palace Architecture* and *Cinemas of Australia via USA*. The former book presents a brief look at the architectural development of cinema buildings, from the early years to the end of the 1930s. There are numerous photographs in the second part of the book that explain visually what has been written in the text. The latter is a much larger book and covers a wider range than *Picture Palace Architecture*. The first part details the American influence on Australian picture theatre buildings, moving through an architectural history from the earliest to the modernistic. A section at the end of the first part deals exclusively with Australian cinema architects and is a worthwhile starting point for anyone who might be interested in a general overview. The second part of the book is "...an edited anthology of information and previously

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published descriptions of 90 cinema buildings... covering much of Australia, although New South Wales and Victoria far outweigh the other states. There are, of course, many photographs. As one reviewer wrote, the book as a whole “...includes a detailed introduction, some analysis, a fleeting index of references, architects, bibliography and sources...” In its day, it was considered important enough to be launched by the Managing Director of The Greater Union Organisation at a special evening function at the State Theatre, Sydney. Thorne's books broke new ground in Australia and are still looked upon as important works.

Simon Brand's Picture Palaces and Flea Pits is a conglomerate-type of book that 'sweeps across Australia' endeavouring to cover in one book what might better have been covered in more depth by many. He does make slight mention of the picture theatre in relation to social life but in a shallow, rather general, way. Much of the interest in this book stems from the many lavish black and white photographs, thus making it more of a 'coffee-table book' than a reference text. Sadly, he published many photographs from one major collection of photographs from Victoria and did not use the opportunity to expand upon them in the text.

Diane Collins' Hollywood Down Under broadly covers the history of cinema exhibition in Australia. The book is a scaled-down version of her 1975 PhD thesis. It is well-referenced and covers a certain amount of ground not covered in the books listed above. Besides a history of the


72 S. Brand, Picture Palaces and Flea Pits, Eighty Years of Australians at the Pictures, Sydney: Dreamweaver Books, 1983.

pictures in Australia, there are chapters on the types of films, the role of musicians, theatre buildings, publicity, film critics, the impact of World War II on the picture business, and how cinema tried to stave-off decimation from television. The chapter on the cinema buildings attempts to cover too much and, in doing so, the effect is lessened. By using already reasonably well-documented buildings, Collins offers little new research in this area.

Barry Sharp's *A Pictorial History of Sydney's Suburban Cinemas* is basically a collection of photographs accompanied by very little text, as is his *A Pictorial History of Cinemas in New South Wales*. In the Foreword to his first book, Sharp states that it takes the reader on "a browse through the past in pictures". A third book by this writer is *A Pictorial History of Sydney's Prince Edward Theatre Beautiful* and deals exclusively with one theatre. The real worth of the three books is in the photographs, particularly the colour ones in the latter book.

There are some other books that deal more methodically with the histories of theatre buildings within specific geographical areas or within similar architectural styles. These books include: Kevin Cork and Les Tod's *Front Stalls or Back? The History and Heritage of Newcastle Theatres* (a suburb-by-suburb history of the cinema buildings of Newcastle and Lake

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Macquarie); the Australian Theatre Historical Society's "Dream Palaces" series (that looked at Australia's atmospheric theatres and those theatres with Spanish influence in their design, and one that recorded the history of Sydney's State Theatre); and the writer's own "Cinema Heritage Series" (that recorded the history of picture venues within certain suburban areas of Sydney⁷⁸). There are a few interstate books and these tend loosely to follow a similar pattern.⁷⁹

Little is available for the researcher in Australia about the history of country picture venues and their importance to country people even though their existence is as long and as vibrant as their city and suburban counterparts.

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⁷⁸ Cinema Heritage Series by K J Cork: Titles include -

⁷⁹ For example:
CHAPTER 2

SCENE SETTING
or "Shedding a Little Lumière"
CHAPTER 2
SCENE SETTING
or "Shedding a Little Lumière"

It is just one hundred years since the first moving pictures were exhibited in Australia. These were shown in Thomas A. Edison’s Kinetoscopes (Figures 1 and 2) which were single-person-only viewing machines (similar to a peepshow machine).\(^2\) It was not until late 1895 that Louis and Auguste Lumière (Figure 3) exhibited the first projected 35mm motion picture (Figure 4) to a mass audience in the basement (known as the ‘Salon Indien’) of the Grand Café in Paris.\(^3\) (Figure 5) There was also a display of moving pictures in America in the same year by a family of the name Latham.\(^4\) Probably the thoughts of financial gains from screening moving pictures nudged the Lumière brothers into despatching representatives to various places throughout the world, complete with projectors and films. The following year, 1896, saw the first public screenings in Australia to mass audiences. While there were some private screenings of films during the year, Carl Hertz is regarded as the first person to screen moving pictures for public viewing in Australia. He did this, using a Theatrograph projector at the Melbourne Opera House on Saturday, 22 August 1896.

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\(^1\) In English, the French word "lumière" means "light".

\(^2\) C. Long, "Australia’s First Films Pt. 2", in Cinema Papers No 92, April 1993, p. 37. (H. Du Feu, The Story of the Cinema, London: Wayland, 1974, p. 23, states that the Kinetoscope was invented by Thomas Edison and William Dickson.) Edison’s films could have been projected onto a large screen for larger audiences but Edison believed that more money could be made by restricting each film to one viewer at a time and he did not see the need to develop a suitable projector. It was not until after the Lumière Bros showed the way in 1895 that Edison set about making a suitable projector. This idea is also borne out in R. Griffith, A. Mayer and E. Bowser, The Movies, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1981 (3rd ed.), p. 2. (E. Reade, Australian Silent Films, Melbourne: Lansdowne Press Pty Ltd, 1970, Ch. 1 provides another detailed history of the early years of motion picture exhibition.)

\(^3\) H. Du Feu, op. cit., pp. 26-27.

\(^4\) ibid., p. 25.
FIGURE 1
AN EDISON KINETOSCOPE
(Source: Du Feu, H.
The Story of the Cinema.
London: Wayland, 1974, p. 22.)
FIGURE 2
AN AMERICAN KINETOSCOPE PARLOUR
The Australian Kinetoscope displays would have been similar, but with fewer machines.
FIGURE 3
LOUIS AND AUGUSTE LUMIÈRE
FIGURE 4
THE LUMIÈRE PROJECTOR
FIGURE 5
OVERSEAS' ADVERTISEMENT FOR THE LUMIÈRES' CINEMATOGRAPHE
In September, Hertz moved his enterprise to Sydney where he opened at the Tivoli Theatre, Castlereagh Street.\(^5\)

The Salon Lumière (Australia’s first all-film venue) was opened by Lumière representative, Marius Sestier at 237 Pitt Street, Sydney on 28 September 1896. He was assisted by W. Barnett and C.B. Westmacott (representing the well-known actor and theatrical entrepreneur, J.C. Williamson). Twelve films, each running about one hundred feet, comprised the programme. The Salon closed on 27 October and Sestier moved to Melbourne. Of special interest is the closing day on which Sestier and Barnett screened the first Australian-made film. It had been shot on Sunday, 25 October and showed passengers disembarking from the paddlewheel ferry, the Brighton, at Manly wharf. (Figure 6) Sestier opened at the Princess, Melbourne on 31 October and the Sydney Salon was taken over by Messrs. Goodman and Westmacott from 2 November. It closed at the end of the week owing to the quality of the projection. From 7 November the Macmahon Brothers took over and continued operating under the name Salon Cinematographe for the next year. While in Melbourne, Sestier and Barnett filmed the 1896 Melbourne Cup. About ten short films were shot that day (3 November) and what has survived has become an important part of our cinematic and cultural history.\(^6\) On returning to Sydney, Sestier opened at the Criterion Theatre on 24 November and presented the first all-Australian film presentation. After the fortnight, he moved to a shopfront theatre at 478 George Street and exhibited there (Figure 6) from 9 December 1896 to 6 March

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\(^5\) C. Long, “Australia’s First Films Pt. 2”, in *Cinema Papers* No 92, April 1993, pp. 38-43. The article provides detailed information about Perier, McMahon and Hertz. Long suggests 17 September but refers to an item in the Melbourne Argus 17.9.1896 which indicates that Hertz opened in Sydney on 19th September.

\(^6\) According to the National Sound and Film Archive, Sydney, (18.5.1994) only part of that day’s footage has survived. What has survived shows spectators, part of the race and the winner. Other early films (eg Boer War footage, Federation Ceremony in Centennial Park 1901) survive.
The Lumière Cinematographe

478 George Street, near Royal Arcade,
Opposite New Markets.

The Only Authorised Machine
in Australasia.

Mons. Marius Sestier,
Solo Representative for Australasia.

CHANGE OF PROGRAMME, New Pictures.

Afternoon and Evening Exhibition.

ALTERNATE PROGRAMMES.

PROGRAMME No. 1.

1. AN UNEXPECTED BATH.
2. ARRIVAL OF CALAIS EXPRESS.
3. The Czar and Czarina accompanied by
   President F. Faure, Paris.
4. Algerian Rifles, “Turcos,” escorting the Czar
   in Paris.
5. The Czarina’s Return from the Russian
   Church, Paris.
6. Chaussers a Cheval escorting the Czar
   through Paris.
7. BABY’S DINNER.
8. NEWHAVEN IN HIS QUARTERS.
9. POST OFFICE, SYDNEY, FROM GEORGE STREET.
10. N.S.W. ARTILLERY DEFILE.
11. THE RUSTIC FURGE.
12. LIGHTNING CHANGE ARTIST.

PROGRAMME No. 2.

1. PUSY’S DINNER.
2. CHARGE OF THE 7th GUIRASSIERS.
3. BABY’S QUARREL.
4. The Marriage Cortège of Princess Maud,
   London.
5. Arrival in Gondola, “Beautiful Venice.”
6. The Tigers at the London “Zoo.”
7. A Javanese Dance.
8. PASSENGERS LEAVING S.S. “BRIGHTON,” MANLY.
9. SADDLING PADDOCK BEFORE THE CUP RACE.
10. FINISH OF THE HURDLE RACE, CUP DAY.
11. “DAILIGHT ROBBERY.”
12. ON THE RAFT WITH RATHERS.

12 of these Animated Photographs will be shown daily

AFTERNOON—1.30, 2.0, 3.0, 3.30, 4.0, 4.30, 5.0 p.m.
EVENING—7.30, 8.0, 8.30, 9.0, 9.30 p.m.

ADMISSION, 1s. CHILDREN, HALF-PRICE.

(Printed by Fletel.)
FIGURE 7
EARLY TRAVELLING PICTURE SHOW MEN.
The older man is the operator and the younger man works the generator. This portable projector would have been similar to those used by travelling exhibitors in Australia in the early years of film exhibition.
1897. Sestier left Australia sometime prior to June 1897. He had played an important part in Australian film-making because he had introduced the technology and had trained people to make and exhibit films.  

In Sydney, several shopfront picture theatres operated for a time and films were also included in vaudeville shows at the larger, live theatres. Exhibition was not confined to the city. Travelling theatrical companies saw the possibility of making extra money and were quick to acquire a projector and films and include the new medium in their tours throughout the state. (Figure 7) By 1898, the Polytechnic (82 King Street) was the only surviving picture show. During the next twelve months (before its closure in April 1899), many Australian-made short films were screened there. Picture exhibition in country areas continued for a slightly longer time because of the touring companies but interest had waned by c1901. It has been suggested that, after the initial novelty, the public seemed to tire of the pictures because the films lacked any sort of storyline. Diane Collins suggested "As early as 1900 people lost interest in the sheer novelty of moving pictures. What lured them back as regular patrons was the promise of a good belly laugh and a little enlightenment. Comedies and factual films were the industry's first staples." 

Eric Reade expanded upon this idea. "It took the Boer War to revive interest in the Australian

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7 C. Long, "Australia's First Films Pt. 3", in Cinema Papers No 93, May 1993, pp. 36-60. The Lumière projector also doubled as a camera. Sestier had been trained in the processing of the film as well as the exhibiting of it.


screen. This was especially so in Sydney when, on 16 April 1900, the Boer War Biograph ("direct from London") opened at 478 George Street and screened 3000 feet of film. Although these films were received enthusiastically, their appeal was constrained by time and picture exhibition returned to being the exception rather than the rule for the next few years. Short seasons of pictures at various venues were tried and they were also included as part of vaudeville shows. Country areas followed suit.

It was not until 1905 that pictures started on their road to permanence as a mass medium. That year saw the beginnings of Australia's first picture show men - C Cousens Spencer and his American Biocope, T.J. West and West's Pictures, J.S. Phelan, Johnson and Gibson.\footnote{Spencer and West were both overseas men who thought that Australia would be a land of plenty. For both, it was Phelan, after some years of touring, retired to the Newcastle area where he and his family operated cinemas. Johnson and Gibson, besides exhibiting films, became pioneers in film production as well as operating a film distribution centre.} Programmes consisted of a mixture of mainly overseas and some Australian-made films. Films (both overseas and Australian) started to become more plentiful and were being screened in a wide variety of venues - from football grounds to town halls and purpose-built live theatres and, in many cases, by travelling showmen. The years between 1910 and the early 1920s witnessed many picture theatres built in New South Wales. The architecture of these buildings fell into three categories: "...new or rebuilt, richly-fronted buildings; existing buildings converted with little exterior change; and large shed- or barn-like buildings."\footnote{R. Thorne, Picture Palace Architecture in Australia, South Melbourne: Sun Books Pty. Ltd., 1976, p. 10.} Often, the facades were constructed from Wunderlich (or similar) pressed metal and gave the appearance of dressed stone and castellation. Others relied on asbestos cement sheeting or undisguised, galvanised iron facades. In the main city centre of Sydney, picture theatres tended to be more substantial and architects relied heavily on...
the arch (singly or in multiples) as a feature. The facades required that architects provide a "definite visual statement." Suburban and country theatres tried to emulate their city cousins although to a lesser degree of decoration. Open air cinemas were constructed both in the city and the country and ranged from the crude to the more substantial. "They may not have matched up quite to contemporaneous U.S. designs, for U.S. architects were following a far more flowery tradition of theatre design than their Australian colleagues. Nevertheless, the same concept of making the major cinemas richly decorated environments and pleasant places to be was being pursued simultaneously in the two countries."  

The years before the World War I witnessed the beginnings of two cinema chains that still control a large market share in Australia. In 1908, a dentist, Arthur Russell leased the St George's Hall in Bourke Street, Melbourne and commenced exhibiting pictures. His enterprise's name was Hoyts, a name that was to become synonymous with Australian film exhibition. In 1913 Union Theatres (later to emerge as The Greater Union Organisation) was formed. This occurred through a series of takeovers and mergers that led to an extremely powerful organisation which controlled a large chain of picture theatres and possessed production and distribution divisions. From c.1910, individuals and companies set up picture theatres across the nation, using available halls, erecting make-shift cinemas, constructing fine theatre buildings, or travelling from place to place with a tent or similar.

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13 *ibid.*, p. 17.

14 *ibid.*, p. 17.


16 The company was incorporated in 1926 following a number of mergers. Acquisitions followed as did a steady building programme.
Wherever they were shown, Australians quickly incorporated going to the pictures into their way-of-life and the most populous state, New South Wales, was typical of the nation in this regard. Available figures\(^{17}\) reveal this. The Official Year Books of New South Wales\(^{18}\) provide brief, but specific, details about this part of our social history from 1913. As at 31 December 1913\(^{19}\), there were 1171 theatres and public halls licensed to screen pictures in the state, with a total seating capacity of 564,500. Considering that the population of the state in 1913 was estimated to be 1,830,444\(^{20}\), the ratio of seats per head of population was quite high.\(^{21}\) There are a few problems associated with interpreting the facts and figures provided in the Year Books. One of them is that there is no listing of theatres per se before 1913 and the listing is altered to "Picture Shows"\(^{22}\) from 1921. Between 1913 and 1921, the figures given for "Theatres" may be weighted by the inclusion of legitimate theatres.\(^{23}\) Another problem with this source is that certain years do not list total seating (eg 1939/40), and by the 1950s the number of licensed premises appears to have been

\(^{17}\) See Appendices.

\(^{18}\) Copies of The Official Year Book of New South Wales are available at the Australian Bureau of Statistics, Sydney.

\(^{19}\) The Official Year Book of New South Wales - 1913, Sydney: N.S.W. Government Printer, p. 607.

\(^{20}\) The Official Year Book of New South Wales - 1914, Sydney: N.S.W. Government Printer, p. 87

\(^{21}\) Appendix A shows total licensed theatres and public halls and total seating capacities in relation to state and national populations. Perusal of this list shows a continuing increase over the pre-television years of both premises and seating capacities.

\(^{22}\) A picture show is a cinema: a legitimate theatre is one that is used for live performances only.

\(^{23}\) After 1921, there was a steady decline in live performance theatres so the official figures would probably be closer to the truth than those of earlier years.
replaced by 35mm picture theatres\textsuperscript{24} only, the public halls (licensed to screen films) having been deleted from the figure. Thus, for example, 1940/41 shows 2766 venues, while 1954 shows only 610.

A second, and more detailed, source is the \textit{Film Weekly's Motion Picture Directory}\textsuperscript{25} which commenced in 1936/7 and was published annually until 1971. These directories provide a breakdown of 35mm picture theatres in city, suburbs and country towns for each state of Australia, as well as the number of towns covered, number of touring shows in operation, seating capacities for city, suburbs and country towns, and the total population of each state. (The directories only include the licensed theatres and public halls that were actually screening 35mm films. The 16mm operations were listed separately once that ratio of exhibition became more popular, i.e. from 1951 to 1962.) Appendices B and C contain figures from a range of available directories. A minor problem with this source is that from 1950/51 to 1968/69, the total Australian suburban and country venues were added together, although the state totals were not combined. A similar problem is that total seating capacity figures are only given from 1950/51 onwards. Despite these two short-comings, the directories reveal important information about the growth of cinema exhibition in Australia and a few representative samples will illustrate this. The figures indicate that New South Wales was a major market for films, in relation to the rest of Australia. Besides what one might expect in terms of city and suburban areas, the figures for the country areas until the late 1960s appear to be quite impressive. Figures for New South Wales are shown over the total figure for Australia.

\textsuperscript{24}35mm was the standard film ratio and was used by nearly all cinemas. There were a few 16mm venues but these were not part of 'mainstream' exhibition.

\textsuperscript{25}Copies of \textit{Film Weekly Motion Picture Directory} available at the State Library of NSW.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DIRECTORY</th>
<th>CITY CINEMAS</th>
<th>SYDNEY SUBURBAN</th>
<th>NSW COUNTRY</th>
<th>No OF TOWNS COVERED</th>
<th>TOURING SHOWS</th>
<th>16mm SHOWS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>21/67</td>
<td>146/373</td>
<td>200/750</td>
<td>280/826</td>
<td>19/62</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947/48</td>
<td>26/84</td>
<td>166/473</td>
<td>391/1081</td>
<td>583/1638</td>
<td>11/54</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956/57</td>
<td>23/86</td>
<td>177 *</td>
<td>437*/1679</td>
<td>637/1765</td>
<td>4/40</td>
<td>40/126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969/70</td>
<td>21/81</td>
<td>49/142</td>
<td>157/522</td>
<td>228/744</td>
<td>0/0</td>
<td>0/2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(* - This Directory gave a combined suburban and country total - 1679.)

Since the directories ceased to be published in 1971, the only source of information about picture theatres after that is from The Official Year Book of New South Wales. The 1976 edition lists country centres for the last time which is probably an indication that their numbers had declined substantially. In it, 35mm pictures theatres are given as: Sydney and its suburbs: 69; Other NSW districts: 126; NSW drive-in theatres: 38.26 (It should be remembered that, while television came to Sydney in 1956, it did not reach many of the country districts until the early/middle 1960s.)

The Official Year Book of New South Wales of 1990 provides the figures for 1986/87 as "64 enterprises"27 but gives no breakdown of the figure. When one considers that the picture theatre was only ninety years old by then, as a mass medium it had made a phenomenal rise and an equally phenomenal decline within a relatively short period of time once the extension of hotel opening hours in 1955, the arrival of television in 1956, the growth of licensed clubs in the 1960s and the introduction of colour television and video from the mid-1970s took hold.

26 The Official Year Book of New South Wales, 1976, p. 769.

Appendix C, "Seating in 35mm Picture Theatres" shows a comparison of seating capacities for the picture theatres in New South Wales in relation to Australia as a whole. Seating is also given in relation to overall population. Unfortunately, annual issues of The Film Weekly Motion Picture Directory only provide figures from 1950/51 to 1971 and they are not the same as those given in Appendix A that included all licensed theatres and public halls whether they were screening pictures or not. However, it would appear that in relation to the seats per one thousand head of population column, New South Wales people were well-served by picture theatres.

A selection of country towns, using Census figures for 1961, appears in the table below. It shows the ratio of theatre seats to the stated population in relation to the number of picture theatres in each town.\(^{28}\) The year was selected because it was the 'twilight' of the picture theatres in country areas of New South Wales - just before television made its impact. The towns selected are from various parts of the state and are similar in size to Parkes and Forbes, two of the towns that feature prominently in the area under examination in this thesis. As at 1994, only four of the towns listed below have a cinema (one of which, a video cinema, contains only 66 seats) and none of them capable of seating anywhere near what the 1961 figures show.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NSW TOWN</th>
<th>POPULATION (Census 1961)</th>
<th>THEATRE SEATS</th>
<th>SEATS TO POPULATION</th>
<th>THEATRES IN TOWN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Camden</td>
<td>6372</td>
<td>725</td>
<td>1 : 8.78</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casino</td>
<td>8091</td>
<td>990</td>
<td>1 : 8.17</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{28}\)Population figures were taken from The Official Year Book of New South Wales 1964, p. 58. Seating capacities and number of theatres are from Film Weekly Motion Picture Directory 1961/62, Sydney, various pages.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Tickets Sold</th>
<th>Ratio</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cootamundra</td>
<td>5939</td>
<td>1068</td>
<td>1:5.56</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forbes</td>
<td>6826</td>
<td>1586</td>
<td>1:4.30</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cunnedah</td>
<td>6543</td>
<td>889</td>
<td>1:7.36</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inverell</td>
<td>8209</td>
<td>1325</td>
<td>1:6.20</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiama</td>
<td>5239</td>
<td>919</td>
<td>1:5.70</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moree</td>
<td>6795</td>
<td>1082 / 960 *</td>
<td>1:6.28 / 1:7.09</td>
<td>2 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parkes</td>
<td>8223</td>
<td>1545</td>
<td>1:5.32</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singleton</td>
<td>4519</td>
<td>1345</td>
<td>1:3.36</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young</td>
<td>5448</td>
<td>964</td>
<td>1:5.65</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Note: the Moree theatres: the hard top (1082 seats) was used in cooler months and the open air (960 seats) was used in the warmer months.)

Finding figures to show numbers of venues is relatively easy. It is much more difficult trying to find figures of attendance at picture theatres in Australia. Sources are very limited. The Official Year Book of New South Wales gives taxable admissions from 1921 to 1953, these years covering most of the existence of the Commonwealth Entertainments Tax. Introduced in 1919, the Federal Government taxed admissions (above a certain amount) to live theatre, picture theatres, racing, skating, dancing and miscellaneous functions. During the years when the tax was collected, picture theatre admissions far outweighed all other taxable entertainments.29 (See Appendix D.)

Considering that the population of New South Wales increased over those years (as is shown in Appendix A), the taxable admissions figures seem to indicate at the most basic level that everyone (from babies to senior citizens) attended the pictures many times in any one year. In reality, this would not have been the case for each person. However, the figures suggest that the people of

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29 The Official Year Book of New South Wales 1930/31, p.404: "There was a marked increase in taxable admissions to picture shows in 1929/30, as a result of the introduction of sound-equipment, and there was a decrease in respect of nearly all other classes of entertainment, especially theatres."
New South Wales attended regularly. It should also be noted that only taxable admissions were recorded officially. The cheaper, untaxed tickets (see Appendix D for notes) were not recorded. It would be impossible to ascertain total admissions to picture theatres prior to the introduction of television in 1956 but they would have been higher than those given in Appendix D.

Knowing that, in pre-television times, Australia boasted many picture theatres and that they were, generally, strongly supported, the question remains: Why was this so? Elwyn Spratt, writing in the Sun-Herald in 1962, suggested that, for thousands of people, a night at the pictures before the days of television was a "...get-together in an atmosphere of low-hum gossip that was not stilled until the lowering of the lights brought three hours of escapist to the screen." The idea of a "get-together" with "gossip" suggests a strong social aspect. The suburban centres that provided two shows each weekday were supported by a largely female patronage, keen to do their shopping or whatever, then spend the afternoon at the pictures. So much a social thing was it in the 1930s that in some Sydney suburban cinemas Dress Circle patrons could order afternoon tea and have it brought to them at their seats during Interval (probably while they listened to Knight Barnett or equivalent at the theatre organ). In a similar vein, Donald Horne, suggested, "Since in the suburban shopping centres everything shut down at six o'clock, the packed suburban cinemas

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30 The year 1956 saw the introduction of television to Sydney. By 1958, its effect had started to spread to picture audiences and the decline in attendance patterns commenced. By 1964, there were 691,652 television viewers' licences issued in a population of 4,116,706. The number of unlicensed sets could not be estimated. (Gregory's Guide to New South Wales, 21st Edition, 1964, Sydney, p.9.)


32 Information from J Jennings, Winston Hills, 1981, who was a former theatre manager for Western Suburbs Cinemas in Sydney from the late 1920s to the late 1940s, before moving into a supervisory role with Hoyts Theatres Ltd.
were the main opportunity for the people from a suburb to gather together and look at each other... Other than these, the suburbs provided no sense of community...”

Thus, from the ‘teens until the mid-1950s in New South Wales, with the exception of the occasional dance at the local hall, the picture theatre was the ‘light’ that drew the ‘moths’ night after night (and Saturday matinee after Saturday matinee). Shopping centres were closed on Saturday afternoons and in the evenings (except for some limited pre-World War II late night shopping). Once school and work had finished, the picture theatre became the major social gathering place and provider of visual entertainment, far out-stripping churches, lodges, dances, race-meetings and everything else. (See Appendix D.)

It is commonly acknowledged that places hold strong significance for people, either as groups or as individuals. English environmental psychologist, David Canter, believed that wars throughout history have related to people wanting to either retain or regain places of special significance. He explained this by saying that it was, “Possibly because places represent in the most concrete fashion the great mixture of associations, actions and emotions which contribute to our conceptions of ourselves.” Furthermore, “The concept of self, then, that system of thoughts and experiences which enables each one of us to regard ourselves as unique and to distinguish ourselves from others, is an integral aspect of the psychology of place.”

Picture theatres did hold a special place for Australians and, for far too long, this ‘place’ has not been acknowledged.

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33 D. Horne, *The Australian People: Biography of a Nation*, Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1973, p. 232. It should be remembered that, after a referendum was held in 1916, NSW hotels were forced to close at 6pm. This situation remained until a referendum in 1954 reversed the decision and the infamous ‘six o’clock swill’ came to an end on 31 January 1955.

Perhaps the most poignant thought about sense of place came from a chance meeting on a bus after the 1989 Newcastle earthquake between Margaret Henry, associated with The National Trust, and a lady. While passing the severely damaged, former Century Theatre at Broadmeadow, then in the process of being demolished, the lady recalled,

"You know, my husband died ten years ago, and I remember the Century and I can't pass it without tears in my eyes. I remember that he used to book seats, that he used to get dressed up - men don't do that any more - and he used to buy me a box of Old Gold chocolates - and I can't pass that building; she said to me, without feeling sadness."  

The architects who designed the picture theatres of yesteryear knew what the picture-goers wanted and gave it, when economics and clients allowed. Little was done before 1950 to systematically study the reactions of non-architects (ie cinema patrons) in relation to picture theatres and other public buildings. Since the 1970s, Australian architectural historian Ross Thorne has undertaken research into this field. He has commented that theatre architects from c1913 to the 1930s "...argued their case on psychological grounds and evaluated their success through patronage" (ie ticket sales). Some architects have labelled cinema buildings as "pastiche of architecture" or, simply, "non-architecture". These 'purists' (as they liked to think of themselves) ignored the "need to identify the initial objectives or goals for the creation of the place" and dismissed the


\[\text{37 D. Canter, op. cit., p. 164.}\]
buildings out of hand, much to their own and posterity's detriment. Picture theatres, whatever their physical appearance or location, met certain criteria when they were designed and built and were judged successful or not by the number of tickets sold. Thorne concluded his study by saying that picture theatre architects of old aimed "to create environments which would provide feelings of emotional well-being". They possessed "a sensitivity to the nature of an environment, and proceeded to communicate to the patron a strong sense of place." No more is this evident than from a New South Wales' selection of contemporary opening night programmes from various years.

Leichhardt New Strand, Monday, 9 May 1921:

"...one of the most Up-To-Date and Luxurious Photoplay Houses in Sydney...introducing gorgeous and majestic decorations, lavish appointments, together with the best in the world of Music and Pictorial Drama."

Haberfield Theatre, Monday, 24 August 1925:

"This Theatre has been built for you, our patrons - your comfort, your convenience, has been studied to the last detail."

Lindfield Theatre, Friday, 21 May 1926:

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38 In the past decade or so people have come to value the historical nature of cinema buildings but, in most cases, they have been demolished or converted beyond restoration. Consequently, at a time when these buildings might have been recognised for what they were worth, they no longer exist.


40 All of those cited are in the possession of the writer and have come mainly from ex-exhibitors. Only a few similar programmes exist in public libraries.
"The appointments, lighting effects and novel constructional design are supreme achievements of the brains of architects and engineers...You believe that nothing but the best will suffice. So do we..."

Forbes New Strand Theatre, Monday, 27 June 1927:

"A Message from the Home of Happy Hours."

"It has been my humble inspiration to attempt to give it (Forbes) a Theatre worthy of its progress and traditions...and each month I trust to add just 'that little more' in improvement and refinement, and so ere the year closes, nothing for your comfort and entertainment will be lacking."

Auburn Civic Theatre, Tuesday, 13 February 1934:

"Nothing that goes for the comfort of its guests has been left out...surroundings that are the envy of every eye...with restful ease and refinement radiating from its every point...TO YOU...the future guests...is dedicated this veritable fairyland, that will leave a lasting memory indelibly printed on your mind."

Hurstville Savoy Theatre, Wednesday, 4 August 1937:

"One step into the Savoy and its true grandeur dawns - dawns into the glow of sunrise, fades softly into purples of night, changing its hue with each mood of music...craftsmen have built a

\[4\) A theatre organ was installed in this theatre and the auditorium lights were equipped with several colours that changed as the mood of the piece being played changed. Hence the "sunrise", the "purples of night". From interviewing past patrons and a former manager of the theatre, the lighting was quite startling. It was not uncommon in some theatres to go through lighting colour changes prior to the commencement of the show. Hoyts was renowned (pre World War II) for this in a number of its theatres. The atmospheric Sydney Capitol went from 'daylight' through 'dusk'
The lounge and seating are a study in comfort...The new Savoy, in its sparkling dignity, symbolises Suburban Cinemas Pty. Ltd. progress and solidity in Hurstville."

Wellington Macquarie Theatre, Saturday, 21 May 1938:

"In the construction and fitting of this Theatre, no expense has been saved in providing comfort, and an atmosphere of charm to the surroundings. Wellington has thus been provided, after months of intense work, in matching materials, negotiating for the latest fittings, selecting designs, etc., with theatre conditions unequalled in inland New South Wales."

Blacktown Warrick, Wednesday, 30 March 1949:

"It has been our object to provide a modern, attractively-designed Theatre to meet the demands of this important provincial centre...We hope that, in 'the Warrick', will be found a suitable environment for the presentation of the products from the outstanding science of the Motion Picture Industry."

Exhibitors constantly sought to improve their picture theatres in one way or another so that patrons would be provided with "an environment of entertainment rather than an environment for entertainment". Early in 1994, one of the writer's supervisors casually remarked that he thought people went to the pictures only to see the film. This statement, from one of the generation of 'television-children', may be true to a greater extent today, although the sense of occasion is still present among picture-goers. (See Appendix E.) In pre-television times, going to the pictures to the 'setting of the sun and 'night' (complete with twinkling stars) prior to the pictures starting.

meant going to the building (as has already been discussed in Chapter 1) and experiencing all that it had to offer. Harking back to 1926, American theatre architect John Eberson stated, "I want to create theatres where pictures can be enjoyed in restful and beautiful surroundings rather than one that would be a mere flaunt of lavishness. I want my theatres to create the feeling that one wants to come back and enjoy the restfulness of its surroundings." Australian picture exhibitors, where practicable, usually endeavoured to give their patrons pleasant surroundings (as well as a few hours of entertainment), thereby seeking to create some sense of occasion about going to the pictures and establishing a sense of place for their theatres in the minds of the patrons. The exhibitors thought they were doing it to make money, but the patrons came because the more the exhibitors did, the greater was the sense of occasion created and the intrinsic excitement of a social outing. This was not restricted to city and suburbs. It was equally so in country areas of New South Wales (where people often had to travel long distances in order to attend) and the following chapters present this. Chapter 4 (The History) traces the development of the picture venues in a rural area from early film exhibition days to the present, and Chapter 5 (Personalising The Picture!) presents the qualitative research findings.

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40 "The Atmospheric Theatre - An Interview With John Eberson, Architect", in Motion Picture News (Better Theatres Section), USA, November 1926, no pagination. Eberson's designs were used for four Australian 'atmospheric' theatres, including Sydney's Capitol Theatre, and a fifth borrowed his ideas.
CHAPTER 3

THE SUBJECT AREA - TWENTY-FOUR MILES AROUND NELUNGAŁOO
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Nelungaloo is a small siding on the railway between Parkes and Condobolin in central-west New South Wales. Besides a couple of houses and a silo, there is only the galvanised-iron hall to act as a witness that a settlement exists. To the best of everyone's memories, pictures were never screened at Nelungaloo. However, the settlement provides the centrepoint of a circle that can be drawn around part of the state that had a strong and varied tradition of picture exhibition.

Australian cinema exhibition was originally in the hands of independent operators. It was not long into this century before the economic benefits were seen in relation to mergers from which a number of chains developed. Some were large (eg Union Theatres and Hoyts), some were medium (eg Western Suburbs Cinemas Ltd, Snider and Dean Pty Ltd), some were small (eg Tom's Amusé Touring Talkies¹). Many exhibitors maintained their independence but, occasionally, banded together to form film buying groups (eg Annandale/Leichhardt/Fivedock/Haberfield²). In the suburbs and the country towns, right across the nation, one could find a variety of theatre building types either controlled by a chain or an independent operator. Competition was seen as good for the industry, although it was heavily biased towards the overseas' film companies that controlled


² Australasian Exhibitor, Sydney, 31.3.1955, p.1. This film buying pool had existed for many years prior to this reference that refers to the signing of one film contract. Cross shareholding arrangements in the Haberfield Theatre between the owners of the other theatres had been in existence for many years and the film-buying pool was mentioned to the writer by others who were involved with the Haberfield Theatre when this theatre was being researched in 1985/86.
most of the product. For some, competition brought expensive lessons when both talking pictures and the Great Depression arrived almost simultaneously. This part of Australian cinema history is relatively well-documented in a variety of sources.

A much larger research project could be undertaken to investigate the picture-going habits of Australians throughout the years, one that would include a variety of ethnic groups and indigenous people. It could seek to ascertain differences or similarities between Sydney and Perth, Broome and Rockhampton, Fitzroy and Ryde, etc. For the purposes of this thesis, one area in New South Wales was selected, within which was once a wide representation of various types of picture theatres. The area selected is a 'V' shape, the bottom point of the 'V' being Forbes, the right hand line connecting with Parkes and Alectown, the left hand line connecting with Bogan Gate and Trundle. Between, there are a number of small settlements. The area contained picture theatres operated by a large chain, a small chain, independent operators, travelling picture shows and, lately, a new satellite cinema (part of a new idea in cinema development). Within the area was (and still is) a wide cross-section of population typical of much of New South Wales - business people, professionals, tradespeople, townsfolk, wealthy pastoralists, rural workers, the elderly and children.

See, for example:
S. Brand, Picture Palaces and Flea Pits. Sydney: Dreamweaver Books, 1983;

Film distributors and cinema companies have only ever done this type of thing in a piecemeal fashion. Theatre managers observations and film distribution statisticians using box office receipts to ascertain if a film is doing well at a particular location were and are about the limits of the investigation. Old-time theatre managers of particular circuits, in discussion with the writer, have stated that they met once a week with film bookers and discussed promotional activities and how particular films went. A telephone discussion in May 1994 with a Sydney-based film distributor’s statistician (Mr R Threlfall) revealed that the box office receipts were considered to be the best guide to a film’s success in a particular area. Films are offered to particular areas after an appraisal has been made as to the suitability of the films in relation to what is known or perceived about particular areas. The statistician said that nothing was written down.
The subject area falls into two local government areas: to the north, the Shire of Parkes, (formed from the Municipality of Parkes and the Shire of Goobang in 1980)⁵; to the south, the Shire of Forbes (formed from Municipality of Forbes and the Shire of Jemalong in 1981)⁶. With regards to cinema exhibition in Australia, the area is an excellent microcosm. Insofar as the lack of preservation of the history of their picture theatres is concerned, the area is typical of the nation.

The subject area is approximately 250 miles west of Sydney, about a five hour drive on today's roads, although a full day by train in years gone by. The undulating Western Slopes stretch from the Victorian border to the Queensland border. Its history is as old as the rest of Australia, and European settlement came almost as soon as Blaxland, Lawson and Wentworth crossed the Blue Mountains in 1813. It is predominantly a sheep and wheat growing area and has been since last century. There have been mining booms in parts of it, and other land uses tried. It has suffered from droughts, fires and floods, as have many parts of the state. While some settlements sprang up as a result of gold discoveries, others emerged slowly from a need to service the rural families once the enormous pastoral runs of the squatting days were divided for closer settlement in the latter part of the last century and the early years of this. Whatever their reason for forming, the settlements' continued growth and development were nourished by serving the needs of the farming communities that surrounded them. The development of the railways saw the area criss-crossed with steel rails that helped to bring the farmers' produce to market as well as to strengthen the settlements through which they passed. These towns and villages, no less than their city and suburban counterparts, were in need of entertainment venues and the picture theatres played a very important part in the social life of those places.


The settlements included in the subject area range from very small villages to large country towns and their associated cinema histories run the full range from chains to independents. Some places had nightly screenings, while others had screenings a few times each month. They range through halls, purpose-built theatres, travelling tent shows and open air venues. While Parkes and Forbes once were able to boast chain cinemas on a par with quality Sydney suburban shows, Bogan Gate can proudly declare in 1994 that it has a genuine silent movie theatre that operated from 1926 to c1929 and is almost unaltered. The records of these places have, for the most, disappeared and the communities in which they once operated have retained very little material.

Researching the past requires finding suitable sources. An old African proverb states, "When an old person dies, a library burns to the ground." The 'conflagration' continues day by day. Not only are people's memories extinguished, so too are company and personal records once they are believed to be of no further use. Diane Collins, twenty years ago, noted that archives of film distributors and exhibitors are "either unavailable or destroyed." The writer of this thesis has found that "destroyed" is more often the case. The research undertaken for this thesis has taken the writer into a number of public libraries and archives, personal records and the memories of those who worked in or attended the pictures. Within the subject area the local historical societies and libraries are almost devoid of any information about the picture theatre venues in their areas including personal histories. For the subject area, it is the first time that anyone has researched extensively about its picture venues and their relevance. Parkes' venues were mentioned in a brief

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manner in a 1933 short history of the town\textsuperscript{109}, and in a 1983 book\textsuperscript{110} that repeated the 1933 material but with the addition of incorrect material. A 1987 history of Trundle\textsuperscript{111} contained brief information about the town's picture history. Nothing has been written about the picture venues of Forbes or the other villages in the area.

Because of this lack of a historical record, it was considered appropriate to undertake a systematic historical analysis of the venues used for showing pictures prior to gathering qualitative data. By adopting this approach, the historical overview could be used as a check against people's memories. Similarly, the oral histories and correspondence (the qualitative material) would add an extra dimension to the record once created. This, in itself, was not a new idea. Allen and Montell in 1981 suggested this: "Information gained in this manner will serve to direct attention to topics of potential interest, as well as to provide valuable background information."\textsuperscript{112} Because very little work had been done on the topic within the subject area, the creation of Chapter 4 (The History) brought together for the first time a number of primary sources and a few secondary sources.

Having determined the subject area, a detailed map was studied and towns and villages were noted. From research into the history of picture theatres in other parts of New South Wales already


\textsuperscript{112} B. Allen and W.L. Montell, op. cit., p. 102.
undertaken by the writer, it was possible to create a list of picture venues within the area.\textsuperscript{113} However, this was not a complete list as primary source material discovered afterwards (including newspapers and files at the New South Wales State Archives) contained other venues. Histories of each venue were compiled using a variety of primary sources. If a secondary source was available, it was used but was checked against existing primary sources. On occasions (for example, Trundle's early picture days) primary sources were unprocurable. For the most, however, secondary sources do not exist.

The historical record (Chapter 4) of picture venues thus created covers the New South Wales' settlements of Alectown, Bedgerebong, Bogan Gate, Cookamidgera, Forbes, Gunningbland, Parkes, Tichborne and Trundle. In order to assist with the creation of The History, holdings from a number of public institutions were utilised. These included the New South Wales State Archives, the New South Wales State Library (General Reference Library and Mitchell Library), the Fisher Library (University of Sydney) and the Australian Securities Commission. Many of the theatres and public halls within the study area had their own Chief Secretary's Department files. From 1909 it was law that any public theatre or public hall had to be licensed by the Chief Secretary's Department. This ensured a certain amount of safety for the public and allowed the government to know what was going on in those venues. Unfortunately, the extant files commence in the middle 1920s and it is not known what has happened to earlier documents (although there were occasional discoveries of pre-1920s items). At times, there are gaps in the files when certain years are missing. Local newspapers (where available) provided some information for the pre-1920s and the missing years. Contained within the Chief Secretary's files were annual inspection reports that

\textsuperscript{113} Sources used for this first step included Film Weekly Motion Picture Directory (1937 - 1971), the Chief Secretary's Department Theatres and Public Halls Lists 1959 and 1964, and R.T. Tindall, op. cit.
gave building dimensions and construction materials, seating capacities, position of operating box, details of type of screen in use, occasional sanitation reports and notes on safety equipment. Government Gazettes relating to licensing of the venues, licensing and de-licensing dates, letters to and from the Chief Secretary's Department, letters from exhibitors, complaints by others against exhibitors, letters to and from the Board of Fire Commissioners, Police Reports and certifications of fire proofing of curtains, stage drapes and screens were among the items in the files. In one file, details of ticket sales for a particular year were given.\textsuperscript{114} This was a most unexpected find as it was not been found anywhere else. The particular operating company's files were long ago discarded.\textsuperscript{115}

Also discovered in the New South Wales State Archives were the Board of Fire Commissioners' Theatres and Public Halls files. These provided similar information to those of the Chief Secretary's Department but did not include as diverse a range of material. As the Board was more concerned with safety in relation to fire, the information contained in these files often pertained to fire retardant measures undertaken by exhibitors and subsequent reports. Where a fire had taken place (for example a film fire in a projector), reports were completed and filed, and a copy sent to the Chief Secretary's Department.

Extensive newspaper holdings are contained in The State Library of New South Wales and, among these are a number of newspapers that provided excellent primary source material for the area.

\textsuperscript{114}It was not usual for this information to be on file with the Chief Secretary and occurred only because it was part of a Statutory Declaration regarding an appeal against the issuing of a licence for a new picture theatre.

\textsuperscript{115} The sales were for the Broadway Theatre, Parkes for 1938. This allowed an analysis of attendance in relation to population for that year. If one were to assume that the figures were accurate, then they give more detail than those in The Official Year Book of New South Wales because those figures included only taxable admissions and would not have included, for example, children's matinee tickets as they were under the taxable starting-point.
being studied. Newspapers used were: Peak Hill Express (incomplete set); Western Champion, Parkes; Forbes Advocate; Forbes Gazette; Parkes Champion Post; Champion Post, Parkes; Parkes Examiner; Forbes Times; Trundle Star (incomplete); Trundle and Tullamore Star; Sun-Herald, Sydney; Land (Sydney); Daily Mirror, Sydney; Australian Financial Review (Sydney). Contained in these newspapers is information about openings, closings, occasional disasters\textsuperscript{116}, performances, coming attractions. At times, owing to a lack of other source material, the newspapers provided the only information about the picture venues. On rare occasions, a photograph was found in a newspaper that related to a venue.

The Australian Securities Commission provided some records for three companies that were associated with picture theatres in the subject area. Unfortunately, a lot of the older material was not available, presumably having been discarded or not considered necessary to have been placed onto microfilm. Individual exhibitors have either passed away or have failed, in general terms, to have kept anything.\textsuperscript{117} Larger companies suffer from a similar malady. Western Cinemas Pty Ltd (controlling theatres in Parkes and Forbes) indicated that no records exist at the office. Another business source, the Register of Firms (held by the New South Wales State Archives), although perused, yielded nothing in relation to the subject area.\textsuperscript{118}

Australian film exhibition trade journals ceased to be produced in the 1980s. They were in

\textsuperscript{116}For example, the explosion at the Royal Hall, Parkes in 1906 and the wall collapsing at the Broadway Theatre, Parkes in 1949.

\textsuperscript{117}One example is a past exhibitor at Trundle who wrote that he had disposed of documents after the seven year mandatory period. This was mainly owing to lack of space.

\textsuperscript{118}This source was checked in the hope of finding details about registered partnerships that operated picture theatres within the subject area. None were found.
existence from the early years of this century and provided material in relation to films available and, to a lesser extent, information about exhibitors and picture venues. The journals that were useful included Film Weekly (incomplete set); Film Weekly Motion Picture Directory (annual publication 1936 - 1971); Australasian Cinema; Australasian Exhibitor; Everyones (ceased in 1937).

The only Australian architectural journal that contained information about the subject area was Building and it provided one architectural drawing.\textsuperscript{119}

Opening night programmes should provide a primary source for opening dates, contractors, opening films and other pertinent information\textsuperscript{120}. Despite inquiries to local historical societies, searching libraries, letters to newspapers and speaking with a number of past exhibitors and patrons, only one opening night programme from within the subject area was found, it being in the hands of a local history group in Forbes.

The Official Year Book of New South Wales provided general data about population and taxable admissions to entertainment venues (when the tax was in existence). The information was useful only to a limited degree and has been quoted mainly in the Appendices.

While photographs provided an excellent primary source, in some cases, no photographs exist even though buildings stood in a community for many years. The writer took photographs of all the


\textsuperscript{120}Extracts from a number of programmes are cited in Chapter 2 of this thesis.
extant picture venues so that they might be recorded for posterity. Where useful, aspects of the photographs have been included in Chapter 4 (The History). In some cases, they provide the only information available. A selection of photographs has been included in the thesis as it is felt that they provide an extra dimension to the written text.

When written and photographic sources cease to exist or have been depleted, it is then that the researcher turns to the people. "When newspaper files, court records, and other written resources normally utilized by historians have been destroyed by fire...and simple neglect, the only remaining source materials may be the oral recollections and personal reminiscences of local people."121 On a few occasions in Chapter 4, it was necessary to utilise some material from interviews and correspondence with current or former residents of the subject area in order to complete the picture. When used, this source was useful and provided enrichment as well as supplementing other sources. In some instances people's memories were incorrect and information that had been gained from other material was able to establish this.

"The significance of our surroundings, geographical or architectural, is crucial to our sane survival, but it cannot be determined by polemic and opinion, no matter how imaginatively expressed or tenaciously held. Evidence is needed together with the development of a scientific analysis which will enable us to make sense of that evidence."122

Places, whatever they are, "have an impact", according to David Canter, English environmental

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121 B. Allen and W.L. Montell, op. cit., p. 67.

psychologist, and "...our understanding of them influences our actions..."\textsuperscript{123} Having completed The History, the next step was the human side of the research. Once an understanding of the picture buildings themselves had been established through the creation of Chapter 4, it was necessary to discover the relevance and importance that those buildings had for the people of their respective areas.

In order to add a 'human' element to the story, oral histories (group and single interviews) and correspondence were gathered. Prior to this, no known attempt has been made to interview the people of the subject area with regards to picture-going in pre-television times. As such, there were neither primary nor secondary sources available. Because this part of the research was to explore an aspect of human social interaction, it needed to draw heavily on people's memories. The participants in the oral history groups were senior citizens from Parkes and Forbes. Fortunately, the variety of people in the groups was such that good population cross-sections of both towns were achieved. Single interviews took place with former exhibitors, former theatre staff and the wives of former theatre managers. Correspondence from people who either live or have lived in the area under study was randomly acquired, mainly as responses to letters in two newspapers. They comprised townsfolk and farmfolk, and elderly to middle-age groups. As a result of the research, it can be stated that the people who lived in the area went to the pictures regardless of the films' titles because the picture theatre was their meeting place, their social gathering place that was not usurped until the early 1960s when television reached rural New South Wales.\textsuperscript{124} In the preceding years, cinema exhibitors had spent money on their theatres and equipment in order to

\textsuperscript{123} \textit{ibid.}, p.2.

\textsuperscript{124} By the early 1960s, licensed clubs had started to become the social meeting places for mixed groups. Even children could go into the dining rooms.
attract patrons and to give them appropriate surroundings in which to enjoy their time away from the humdrum of daily life. The following quotation, from an American writer, may aptly apply to Australia: "...the picture on the screen at the Xanadu was secondary to the total adventure."\(^{25}\)

Consequently, qualitative research was made use of in order to construct the 'human' side of the picture and the results of this are recorded in Chapter 5 (Personalising The Picture!). Group interviews ensured that a large amount of information was gathered quickly. Single interviews offered the opportunity to select specific people to fill-in gaps and offer information from a particular vantage point (for example, theatre managers). Both of these collection techniques have been described as "purposeful conversations"\(^{26}\) and are not like formal, structured interviews. As Marchall and Rossman point out, they allow "...the participant's perspective on the social phenomenon of interest... [to]...unfold as the participant views it, not as the researcher views it."\(^{27}\) The third primary information collection technique was correspondence that was solicited through newspapers by a general letter from the writer. This afforded the opportunity for unbiased information as the respondents were unknown to the writer and the original letter used general terms. It was also possible to use the correspondence as a check against distortion, a thought that was mentioned by Marshall and Rossman when they wrote, "When interviews are used alone, distortions are more likely, as interviewers may interject personal biases."\(^{28}\) From the qualitative research (the oral history and correspondence), a series of categories emerged that may


\(^{127}\) Ibid., p. 82.

\(^{128}\) Ibid., p. 83. (Having two of the four focus groups conducted by the writer’s wife, who is dispassionate about the whole topic, also helped to ensure lack of bias.)
be of use to future researchers who might undertake similar, or a more sociologically-based, piece of research. (These are recorded in Chapter 5.)

For the most, the picture buildings themselves have disappeared as has the technology that operated them. The staff that comprised an essential part of the operation have gone, either to senior citizenry or to their graves. The use of qualitative research with people who lived a substantial part of their lives before the introduction of television to the subject area was the only way of discovering the relevance and importance that the picture venues had for them in their daily lives. Having sought earlier works in Australia of a similar nature to this thesis, and having been unsuccessful, the writer was left with the challenge to gather his own information. Since no prior study of this nature and, in particular, for the subject area has been found, this makes the assembling of the material unique.

As a consequence of this thesis, it may be that a greater awareness will be raised with regards to the history of the New South Wales country picture theatre and its relevance to people in pre-television times. If it encourages others to commence recording this aspect of the past, then a little less of our heritage may, in future, be ignored or so carelessly discarded.

[There are some villages in the subject area whose halls were not known to have been used as picture venues. Since each hall was a social centre for its village and surrounding community, their histories are in Appendix G. Like the majority of their picture counterparts, the halls have not been documented by local people. The writer felt that they should be recorded for the sake of posterity.]
MAP OF PARKES, NSW showing sites of picture venues.
MAP OF BOGAN GATE, NSW showing sites of picture venues.

Map Source: Forbes Tourist Information Office.
MAP OF TRUNDLE, NSW showing sites of picture venues.

LEGEND
1. PMG Depot
2. Service & Citizens Club
3. Hospital
4. Swimming Pool
5. Tennis Courts
6. Post Office
7. Police Station
8. Central School
9. Bowling Club
10. CWA
11. Convent School

SCHOOL OF ARTS
PALACE GARDENS OPEN-AIR
WESTON STAR THEATRE
ELECTRA PICTURES

CHAPTER 4

THE HISTORY
of Cinema Exhibition -
Twenty-four Miles Around Nelungaloo

From the Earliest Days to the Early 1960s.
CHAPTER 4
THE HISTORY

TWENTY-FOUR MILES AROUND NELUNGALOO:
EARLY YEARS OF FILM EXHIBITION - TO 1920

Forbes, Parkes, Bogan Gate and Trundle were visited by travelling live shows during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. However, from the number of advertisements in the Forbes newspapers, it would seem that Forbes was the most popular centre for the travelling companies. Travellers generally stayed for a night or two's performances, then departed, sometimes returning many months later with a new production. In the last years of the nineteenth and early years of this century, included in some of the programmes were lantern slides and early cinematograph films. With the interest shown in moving picture exhibition in Sydney from late 1896, it was to be expected that this new type of entertainment would travel the state with the live companies or itinerant exhibitors, all ever-hopeful of making that extra bit of money. From contemporary newspaper reports of the events, the people within the subject area greeted each traveller with enthusiasm.

It is not known when the first moving pictures were screened in the subject area as available

1 Tolhurst’s Hall is mentioned in Western Champion (Parkes) on a number of occasions as being a venue for entertainments including live companies. (Eg Fri. 2.6.1911, p.12.)

2 A perusal of existing local newspapers reveals this. However, these shows are outside the scope of this thesis but would be an interesting topic for further research.

3 No reasons have been forthcoming as to why this was so except that, in those early years, Forbes was the larger town (Official Census figures taken from The Official Year Book of N.S.W. (1961) - 1901: Parkes 3181; Forbes 4294; 1911: Parkes 2935; Forbes 4436) and had a large Town Hall suitable for stage shows. This was something that Parkes did not have.
primary sources do not disclose this. However, from early 1897 there were intermittent visits by travelling companies to Forbes and, one could assume, Parkes. In Forbes, on 8-10 March 1897, The Hellier's appeared at the Town Hall, during the course of their tour which would ultimately see them in Bourke. With them was "The Royal Cinematograph - as exhibited to the Crowned Heads of Europe". Admission prices were three shillings, two shillings and one shilling.

The cinematograph has created a great sensation in all circles of society throughout the world...and lately Sydney and Melbourne gone crazy over the mystical and marvellous production of this great photo electric sensation of the 19th century, totally eclipsing anything ever seen here.5

After the event, the newspaper commented that there had been "a fair audience and the views given by the Cinematograph were much admired.6 The Forbes Town Hall (1891) (see Figure 9) is situated at the corner of Harold and Court Streets, although the Hall's entrance is from Harold Street.7

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4 See Appendix E. One suggestion states that the Osborne Hall (see Figure 8) was the first venue.

5 Forbes and Parkes Gazette, Fri. 5.3.1897, Forbes, p. 3.


7 The building forms part of the perimeter of the centre of the town, Victoria Square, and is an important part of Forbes' nineteenth century architectural heritage. It is interesting to note that the hall section is not architecturally the same as the rest of the building, perhaps indicating that the architect wanted it to stand not completely separate from the main building, but at least making its own architectural statement.

Inspection Report of Forbes Town Hall 25.8.1924. NSW State Archives - Board of Fire Commissioners: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 20/14937 File 135 Forbes. This is the earliest reference found that gives the hall's dimensions. The auditorium was 100 feet by 37 feet, with a stage of 35 feet by 20 feet, and a seating capacity of 750 on a single level. The hall was of brick with an iron roof and timber floor. An internal operating box (of wood and fibro-cement construction) was built during the first decade of this century and was situated over the main entrance to the hall.
It was not until mid-1898 that another picture was screened in Forbes, this time by The Biograph, "in conjunction with the Concert Gramophone," under the auspices of Messrs St Hill and Moodie. Amongst the films screened was the previous year's Melbourne Cup. The Forbes' newspaper wrote 
"We have not seen the exhibition ourselves, but from our exchanges understand that it is a vast improvement on the Cinmatographe, the pictures being much larger, which is so marked in the latter." The same company travelled to Parkes and screened in the Royal Hall but not without a few problems. "Owing to the inclemency of the weather on Tuesday night, the exhibition of the Biograph did not come off. However the marvellous attraction will claim attention at the Royal Hall this (Friday) evening, and again to-morrow night." The screening did eventuate and the local Parkes newspaper reported that the show had "...attracted very large audiences...[it was] a distinct advance on the cinematograph...On each evening the audience expressed its high appreciation of the performance by means of lusty applause." Parkes' Royal Hall in Court Street, next to the Royal Hotel, had played a prominent part in the town's social life for some years prior to the turn of the century.

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Report 25.8.1924. NSW State Archives - Board of Fire Commissioners: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 20/14937 File 135 Forbes. "Used for all classes of entertainments except pictures. The Operating Box being now out of use."

8 Forbes and Parkes Gazette, Fri. 17.6.1898, Forbes, p. 9.


10 Western Champion, Fri. 1.7.1898, Parkes, p. 8.

11 A sketch, the only known visual representation of the Royal Hall, appears in R.T. Tindall, Parkes: One Hundred Years of Local Government, Parkes: Parkes Shire Council, 1983, p. 188. The hall appears to have been about 20 feet wide, of one storey, with a verandah supported by posts and connected to the hotel's stables. It was used for all types of entertainment (as local newspaper advertisements testify) and the occasional travelling salesman who needed somewhere to display his wares.
Almost a year passed before Parkes saw another picture. St Hill returned, in the company of a Mr Forbes and screened a Spanish Bull Fight picture, using a "Peerless Cinematograph" at Blamey's Hall\(^ {12}\) during Show Week (from Monday, 7 August 1899).\(^ {13}\)

In December 1899, Fox Bros presented a series of films as part of their variety programme at the Royal Hall. Included was the 1899 Melbourne Cup film.\(^ {14}\) In March 1900, O M M'Adoo's (later spelt McAdoo) Famous Original Jubilee Singers appeared at Forbes Town Hall and Parkes Royal Hall. Besides the twelve artists, there was "a special presentation of the Passion Play by the Kinetoscope[sic]" and other pictures including the Australian Contingent of soldiers leaving for South Africa.\(^ {15}\) The Parkes newspaper seemed impressed with the show. "The sanguine anticipation of the large audience were fully realised, for the entertainment was a pronounced success." The second part of the programme - the Kinetoscope - was "greatly enjoyed". Both nights were "crowded".\(^ {16}\) July witnessed J C Williamson and Wybert Reeve presenting "The War!" (Boer War pictures) at both Forbes and Parkes, using "The Theatograph" projector. Both towns commented favourably. Forbes said, "Some of the pictures were most realistic - particularly that of General French's cavalry march to the relief of Kimberley, which alone was worth the

\(^{12}\) Blamey's Hall was adjacent to the Club House Hotel at the corner of Clarinda and Court Streets, the hall facing Court Street. It was used for numerous social functions and is believed to have been demolished when the hotel was rebuilt in 1908, the previous hotel building on the site having been destroyed not long before by fire.

\(^{13}\) *Western Champion*, Fri. 4.8.1899, Parkes, p. 9.

\(^{14}\) *Western Champion*, Fri. 1.12.1899, Parkes, p. 9.

\(^{15}\) *Western Champion*, Fri. 9.3.1900, Parkes, p. 10; *Forbes Gazette*, Mon 12.3.1900. Forbes, p. 3.

\(^{16}\) *Western Champion*, Fri. 16.3.1900, Parkes, p. 10.
admission fee." Parkes commented on the "...appreciative audiences, who thoroughly enjoyed the lifelike pictures shown by this marvellous invention." 8

Once the Boer War pictures had been seen, pictures ceased within the subject area (similar to the situation in Sydney). 19 Although live shows continued to tour during the 1900 - 1902 period, it was not until 1903 that pictures were once again shown in Parkes. On 21 and 23 February, the Bio-Tableau Co (late Williamson and Musgrove's) presented the latest animated living pictures. Two entertainers, Alf Martin and Miss L Davis, completed the show. A sacred and classical concert was given on the evening of Sunday 22. 20 In April, McAdoo's Original Fisk Jubilee Singers returned to the Royal Hall, although there was no mention made of films being part of the presentation. 21 The Crown Concert and Bioscope Company, with 10,000 feet of Living Moving Pictures and ten vaudeville artists appeared at the Royal Hall during Show Week in August.

The next cinematic visit to the area of any importance was The Electric Wonderscope Company, headed by Messrs Opitz and Harrison. Travelling around much of western and southern New South Wales by train from late 1905 until April 1906, this company entertained the country people


18 Western Champion, Fri. 27.7.1900, Parkes, p. 8.


20 Western Champion, Fri. 20.2.1903, Parkes, p. 9.

21 Western Champion, Fri. 10.4.1903, Parkes, p. 10.
wherever it went. Among the pictures screened at Parkes' Royal Hall on 4 and 5 January 1906 were "Cow Boys and Indians", "Bold Bank Robbery", "Tragedy(sic) in Mid Air", "The Village Blacksmith's Daughter" (described as "the Great Dramatic Picture"). Also on the programme were illustrated songs (led by Miss Edie Opitz) and changes of programme were able to take place because the exhibitors carried a number of films from which to make-up the programme. A short article in the Parkes Examiner\(^\text{23}\) mentioned that "their apparatus ... is the largest and latest machine which has been brought to Australia, and that it has absolutely got rid of the flicker..."

The same company also played at Forbes Town Hall on 6 and 8 January 1906. The reaction from the local people to this first all-picture company to visit the town was most positive and comprised "...large and appreciative audiences who were much pleased with the exceedingly life-like scenes displayed. The exhibition is one of the best it has been our lot to see, and the machine is certainly a vast improvement on those in use hitherto."\(^\text{24}\) The novelty value of motion pictures and the desire to make money had spurred on Opitz\(^\text{25}\) and, presumably, Harrison. It could be assumed that they were no less similar to other travelling picture show men of their time.

Besides the Wonderscope visit to Parkes in January 1906, the Dan Barry Cinematograph Company

\(^{22}\) Fortunately, the original scrap book in which is contained newspaper advertisements and write-ups is extant, in the possession of Opitz's son. A photocopy was made available for the writer during the course of research.

\(^{23}\) Parkes Examiner, date unknown. Advertisement in Opitz's scrapbook. Refers to screenings in Parkes at the Royal Hall on 4 and 5 January 1906.

\(^{24}\) Forbes Gazette, Fri. 12.1.1906, Forbes, p. 2.

\(^{25}\) Personal interview with F Opitz's son, F Opitz, in July 1990. In a subsequent letter to the writer (17.9.1990), F Opitz wrote that "Father told me that the realism of the film showing the train approaching sometimes drove patrons out of their seats." F Opitz's father did not like his children being away from home on the Sabbath (i.e Saturday) and, according to F Opitz, it was mainly this reason that saw an end to the Wonderscope Company in 1906.
booked the Royal Hall for 29 July of that year and presented "Bio Picture Spectacles" that included film of the 1905 San Francisco earthquake. A large audience was present on that Friday evening in July. During the screening of the programme, the projection equipment exploded in a mass of smoke and flames. The audience left quickly and the fire brigade arrived. Some of the audience, however, had managed to extinguish the fire, but not before the hall door was charred and damage to the value of £5 had been done to the hall. The projector was damaged and 6000 feet of film, including that of the San Francisco earthquake, was destroyed. The loss to the exhibitor was placed at £150. In an explanation to the public, the local newspaper told that the explosion was due to an escape of gas from one of the saturators at the back of the projector, the cap probably having been knocked off by a member of the audience brushing against it. The newspaper concluded that, "...the shock will be remembered by those people who formed the audience."26

Gaumont's Grand Double Power Biograph (screening "the latest London and Paris pictures") and Entertainers appeared at the Royal Hall in early March 190727, followed by Cook's All New Pictures with "The Sign of the Cross" later that month28. Dan Barry's World-Wide Wonder Show returned in May with the "Latest and Enthralling Moving Pictures".29 There appeared to be no shortage of travelling picture show men. There were "...reckoned to be no less than forty on the road in New South Wales" in 1907.30

26 Western Champion, Fri. 3.8.1906, Parkes, p. 11.
27 Western Champion, Fri. 1.3.1907, Parkes, p. 11.
28 Western Champion, Fri. 22.3.1907, Parkes, p. 12.
29 Western Champion, Fri. 17.5.1907, Parkes, p. 12.
30 Theatre, 1.1.1907, Sydney, p. 6.
While the Royal Hall remained for some years as a public hall, it was not surprising that, with no Town Hall of any kind in Parkes, a more substantial entertainment venue would be built. West’s Hall (Figures 10 and 11) in Browne Street, took its place as the foremost hall from the time that it was built in 1907. It was reputed to be a large auditorium with a high ceiling but having poor acoustics. The hall measured 78 feet 6 inches long by 35 feet and had a stage 35 feet by 26 feet. There was no vestibule, the main doors opened straight onto the street. A small ticket office was provided, but this was a tacked-on affair at the side of the building and there was no projection box in the hall. Seating was for 460, although 600 could be accommodated for dances. The official opening took place on Thursday, 29 August with a live show entitled "Caste", presented by local people. Once opened, it took the visiting shows in preference to the old Royal Hall. The Fisk Jubilee Singers with their entertainers and moving pictures opened on 2 September and more followed. Of interest was a visit in April 1908 by William Anderson showing "McMahon’s Exquisite Picture" - "Robbery Under Arms" (and other films) using a "Magnificent Electric Light Plant imported direct from Europe at a cost of £500. The appreciation of the Parkes’ audience was expressed in "hearty applause" and the local newspaper commented that the films were "by far the best that have yet been exhibited in Parkes, being absolutely flickerless." Other picture showmen visited, including Verto with his new "Electric Biotint" and West’s Pictures. West’s

31 R.T. Tindall, _op. cit._, pp. 197-198.

32 Govt Architect Report 25.5.1953. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 10/53162 File T3028 Parkes Orange (West's) Hall. Plan attached to report. The supper room had been added in 1928.

33 _Western Champion_, Fri. 26.7.1907, Parkes, p. 12.

34 _Western Champion_, Fri. 24.4.1908, Parkes, p. 12.

35 _Western Champion_, Fri. 1.5.1908, Parkes, p. 12.

36 _Western Champion_, Fri. 3.7.1908, Parkes, p. 12; Fri. 9.10.1908, p. 12 respectively.
Top: FIGURE 10. West’s Hall, Parkes - 1920s. (Source: Unknown)
Lower: FIGURE 11. Former West’s Hall, Parkes - 1990. (Source: K J Cork)
(Note the unsympathetic metal cladding on the facade.)

West’s Hall Browne St., Parkes
"All Black's Pictures" screened at the hall in October 1910 and the Magnet Picture Company visited in December 1910. Part of that occasion was R G Perry who was billed as a "handcuff king." Globe Pictures screened on 2 January 1911, showing the famous Johnson-Jeffries boxing contest. A special biograph entertainment in aid of St Andrew's Church was held in May 1911. September 1911 saw the touring Premierscope company and films that were advertised as coming direct from Spencer's Lyceum Theatre, Sydney. The local newspaper noted that a large attendance had greeted the opening performance on Tuesday, 5th. It was intended that this company would screen each week. The opening of the Parkes Palace Pictures ("PPP") in mid-September possibly brought an end to this venture and the Premierscope ceased to advertise after the performance of Wednesday, 4 October. That also brought an end to West's Hall as a picture show although it continued as a concert and social venue for many years. At one time it was used by the local

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37 *Western Champion*, Fri. 29.1.1909, Parkes, p. 12; Fri. 19.3.1909, p. 12.

38 *Western Champion*, Fri. 28.10.1910, Parkes, p. 12.

39 *Western Champion*, Fri. 23.12.1910, Parkes, p. 14. The same Magnet Picture Co screened at Molong School of Arts in November 1911 and lost 2000 feet of film in a fire. The audience was reported to have "resumed their seats to watch the flames burn out" while two employees had their hands and faces burnt. (*Western Champion*, Fri. 6.11.1911, Parkes, p. 11.)

40 *Western Champion*, Fri. 30.12.1910, Parkes, p. 11.

41 *Western Champion*, Fri. 5.5.1911, Parkes, p. 10.


43 There are no advertisements in the *Western Champion* after this date for the Premierscope. It advertised for the Wednesday 4th performance, having changed from Tuesday screening for that week. The opening of the new Parkes Picture Palace would have brought about the Premierscope's demise since the "PPP" was a permanent operation run by locals whereas the Premierscope was only a touring company.
Lutheran community as a place of worship.  

Appearing in Forbes, at the Town Hall on 27 and 28 April 1905, was the John Lemmone Company - basically a variety show with some films in the programme. The films were of the Russo-Japanese War plus two comedies entitled "The Burglar" and "Off for the Holidays". The company played to "a very large audience". Other touring companies to visit included The Famous Keith Kennedy & Co - Grand Concert and Biograph ("from the Criterion Theatre, Sydney"), Opitz and Harrison in January 1906 (already mentioned above), the Lynch Family Bellringers and "Their New English Concert Company" with Edison's Latest "Dux" Bioscope in December 1906 (and they played to "a large audience"), Dan Barry's World Wide Wonder Show with the "Latest and Most Enthralling Moving Pictures" in May 1907, the Fisk Jubilee

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44 Taken over in c1927 by a Protestant association, it was renamed the Protestant Hall. Skating, dances, amateur theatricals and an application in 1949 to screen 16mm films filled-in the years. In 1953, the hall was taken over by the Orange Lodge and renamed the Orange Hall. New toilet facilities were constructed in that year. From 1963, it was sublet at various times for business premises, including a brief stint in 1966 as temporary classroom accommodation for the NSW Department of Education. Its licence was revoked in 1970 after its sale to Burns Philp for use as a furniture store. [NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 10/53162 File T3028 Parkes Orange (West's) Hall. Various documents in the file. NSW Govt Gazette No 51, 10.4.1970 listed this hall as no longer a venue for public entertainment.] From personal observations of the writer over the years, the original, tall, brick facade was an impressive addition to the streetscape although it was only ever a tacked-on affair. The hall is currently (1994) in use as a video shop and the facade has been clad in an unsympathetic, corrugated metal.

45 Forbes Times, Sat. 22.4.1905, Forbes, p. 3 and Sat. 29.4.1905, p. 2.


49 Forbes Gazette, Fri. 17.5.1907, Forbes, p. 5.
Singers with "New Pictures" in August 1907 ("...opened to a good house...")\textsuperscript{50}, The Famous Musical Kennedy's with variety and "new living pictures" in November 1907\textsuperscript{51}.

The year 1908 was a quiet year for pictures in Forbes.\textsuperscript{52} In 1909, travelling picture show men included J T McIntyre and the Burns-Johnson Contest film ("all 14 rounds") in February \textsuperscript{53} and Cook's Pictures in late 1909 and in early 1910\textsuperscript{54}, Jack Hines' Premier Electric Bioscope Company ("well-known to Forbes' audiences") screened in January 1910\textsuperscript{55} and William Anderson with "The Kelly Gang" film in January 1910\textsuperscript{56}. By late 1911, the Lachlan Moving Picture Company announced that its first show would be at the Town Hall on Tuesday, 14 March and then announced its intention to establish a small circuit (including Forbes, Parkes, Manildra, Molong, Condobolin and Bogan Gate).\textsuperscript{57} For a short time, it returned on a regular basis. From Wednesday, 20 September 1911, The Premierscope Company commenced regular screenings at the Town Hall. (Bookings could be made at E J Grinsted's newsagency.) The Premierscope screened on Monday and Wednesday evenings, although the following newspaper advertisement showed that things could sometimes go wrong.

*Premierscope postponed till Monday 23 November. Owing to altered Train Service, our*

\textsuperscript{50} Forbes Gazette, Fri. 30.8.1907, Forbes, p. 5.

\textsuperscript{51} Forbes Gazette, Fri. 15.11.1907, Forbes, p. 5.

\textsuperscript{52} Although live companies visited the Town Hall, picture screenings were not mentioned.

\textsuperscript{53} Forbes Times, Sat. 13.2.1909, Forbes, p. 5.

\textsuperscript{54} Forbes Times, Sat. 1.1.1910, Forbes, p. 2. This reference mentions his second visit.


\textsuperscript{57} Forbes Times, Wed. 8.11.1911, Forbes, p. 6 and Sat. 25.3.1911, p. 2.
Plant was inadvertently left at Lithgow on Wednesday night, hence we are unable to show in Forbes this week.\footnote{Forbes Times, Sat. 21.10.1911, Forbes, p. 5.}

The next picture show man to exhibit pictures at the Town Hall was F H Brook in 1912 and it was he who was to establish the first permanent picture show in the town. This gentleman ("late of Grong Grong and Lockhart") had taken over Forbes’ Hotel Victoria in June 1910\footnote{Forbes Times, Wed. 29.6.1910, Forbes, p. 5.} but had disposed of it to E Nock ("late of Grenfell") by December 1911\footnote{Forbes Times, Sat. 2.12.1911, Forbes, p. 5.}. How Brook became interested in the moving picture business is lost in time. Perhaps he saw it as a better money-maker than the hotel business. Brook’s picture show opened at the Town Hall on Easter Monday night, 1912. From a contemporary newspaper report, the town was delighted with Brook’s Pictures.

*The large hall was filled, in fact many could not obtain a seat. The projection was the best ever screened in Forbes...next performance will take place on Wednesday night.*\footnote{Forbes Times, Sat. 13.4.1912, Forbes, p. 7.}

As moving picture exhibition continued to expand in Sydney in these early years, more and more public halls were pressed into service, often by itinerant travelling exhibitors. From 1910, a number of exhibitors, realising that the exhibition of moving pictures was profitable, started to build purpose-built cinemas. These buildings ranged from comfortable, well-decorated venues (such as the Lyric in George Street, Sydney) to primitive, cheap to erect, open-air affairs (such as the galvanised-iron Picture Palace at Campsie). The country areas of New South Wales did not take long to emulate Sydney. Local halls had to be shared with flower shows, balls, meetings, etc. By
1910 local businessmen could see the value in having a permanent picture theatre rather than having itinerant travellers take money out of town. The time was ripe for the construction of purpose-built picture theatres in the subject area.

By the beginning of the second decade of this century, in the two large towns within the subject area, a permancy had started to develop in the picture theatre business. In Forbes, Brook, obviously with an eye to business, was having constructed a picture hall of his own. Parkes, although the smaller town\(^{62}\), beat Forbes to the honour of having a permanent picture theatre. William Freebairn (licensee of Tattersall's Hotel, Parkes) and Edwin A Lane (chemist) erected and equipped a picture theatre on a property (owned by Michael Matthew McGlynn) at the corner of Bogan and Dalton Streets.\(^{63}\) Using a "Motoscope" projector (advertised as "The Last Word in Projection"), the open-air Parkes Picture Palace (aka "PPP") opened on Saturday, 16 September 1911. Over five hundred people attended the opening and it was reported that the pictures were "...beautifully clear, and absolutely flickerless". There were "...no waits beyond the customary interval, everything running smoothly...".\(^{64}\) Screenings were to be held on Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays. While the reasons for an open-air have been lost in the passage of time, this type of building was cheaper to erect and maintain when compared to an enclosed hall. It could have been the size of Parkes at the time (2935 compared to Forbes with 4436\(^{65}\)) that caused Messrs

\(^{62}\) Official Census figures taken from The Official Year Book of N.S.W. (1961) - 1911: Parkes 2935; Forbes 4436.

\(^{63}\) Parkes Jubilee Souvenir, Parkes: Parkes Municipal Council, 1933, p. 39. Certificate of Title Volume 1966 Folio 116 shows that Freebairn and Lane were granted a lease from 8 December 1911. (Land Titles Office)

\(^{64}\) Western Champion, Fri. 22.9.1911, Parkes, p. 17.

\(^{65}\) The Official Year Book of New South Wales - 1913, Sydney: N.S.W. Government Printer, p. 93. These figures were the official Census figures for 1911.
Freebairn and Lane to build the open-air.

In Forbes, Brook employed local builder, J Patterson, to erect an entertainment hall in Spring Street in 1912. Francis Harold Brook had acquired the site in late 1911 (in a half share with Joseph McDowell, a Presbyterian clergyman). The Forbes Public Hall (as it was to be named) was licensed from 15 May 1912.

_The new picture palace in Spring-street is on the eve of completion, and immediately the necessary licence is procured it will be opened. This is said to be the biggest hall west of Sydney, having a clear roof span of 47 feet. The roof is fitted with steel ribs, and two large sections can be slid off in warm weather._

Pictures commenced at Brook's Hall (as it was named) on 3 June 1912 when "Glimpses of the Upper Thames" and "Father and Son" were screened. A photograph in the local newspaper in 1984 shows the hall under construction in 1912. It was a plain, basic brick building with a large, central arch entrance. Dimensions given were 130 feet in length by 45 feet in width and seating accommodation for 1000. The floor had been specially laid for roller skating and was of a New Zealand timber with the boards mitred at the corners (that was better for skating and dancing). Cost of the building was approximately £3000. Under the direction of Brook, it was known

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66 Certificate of Title Volume 2202 Folios 86 and 87 show Brook and McDowell receiving estate in fee simple on 20.11.1911. McDowell transferred his half share to Brook on 10.8.1917. (Land Titles Office, Sydney.)

67 NSW State Archives - Board of Fire Commissioners files: Theatres & Public Halls - Box 20/14937 File 135 Forbes - original licensing date listed in various annual reports.


69 Forbes Advocate, 18.12.1984, Forbes. The article was printed just after the Strand/Century had burnt down and was an attempt to evoke some nostalgia amongst the townspeople.
locally as "Brook's Skating Rink and Theatre" and, for convenience's sake, he had a residence constructed adjoining the building. The first skating season was promoted by a skating carnival on Wednesday, 18 September that was considered to have been "one of the most successful entertainments of the winter season now drawing to a close". The social nature of skating was possibly one of the reasons that the season was so successful. The season concluded on Saturday, 12 October 1912 although the final major event had been held on the Thursday evening when "a large attendance of spectators at Brook's theatre...when the second fancy poster and comic-dress skating carnival of the season took place...". Moving pictures commenced the following Friday with a special benefit screening for the Forbes District Infant School Piano Fund. Not long after, on November, a concert took place in aid of the Church of England Rectory Restoration Fund.

The possibility of Brook's successes at the Town Hall and the new Skating Rink and Theatre may have been what spurred on other interests in 1912 to erect an opposition picture theatre in Templar Street, Forbes.

Another Picture Show.

Forbes is to have another picture show in full swing before the close of this month. The

In the article, Forbes Advocate 4.6.1912 was referred to with regard to the opening on "the previous night" of Brook's new picture show - "The New Hall. Most Successful Opening Night".

70 Forbes Times, Wed. 2.10.1912, Forbes, p. 2.


72 Forbes Times, Sat. 12.10.1912, Forbes, p. 4.

73 Forbes Times, Wed. 16.10.1912, Forbes, p. 2 - The benefit screenings were typical of those early years of the century when communities banded together in order to support themselves.

74 Forbes Times, Wed. 6.11.1912, Forbes, p. 3.
application for the site next to the Federal Hotel having been refused at Tuesday's Court, Mr. E. Nock informs us that he has secured a lease of a block of ground at the rear of the Vandenberg Hotel, and fronting Mrs. Thomas' Anglesey's House. Mr. Nock has already purchased an extensive plant, and on Wednesday journeyed to Sydney to make final arrangements as regards the hire of films, etc. Mr. J. H. Bates has been entrusted with the designing of the plans for the new open-air theatre, and we are assured that everything will be in running order before the end of the month. 76

In October 1912, E Nock, who managed his father's local cordial factory 77, had been in no way perturbed about the thwarting of his plans that involved the lessee of the Federal Hotel 78 applying to the Forbes Licensing Court to subdivide adjacent land and to lease it to Nock who planned to erect a £500 picture hall on it. The local licensing inspector opposed the venture, maintaining that the hotel patrons and neighbouring houses would be affected by the close proximity of a picture hall. The court refused the application. 79 Nock acquired another site (owned by Charles Smith MacPhillamy, a grazier at Warroo 80) in Templar Street and tenders for the erection of the new

75 Magistrate's Court.

76 Forbes Times, Sat. 2.11.1912, Forbes, p. 4.

77 E Nock is given in Forbes Times advertisements in December 1911 as having taken over the Hotel Victoria. In Forbes Times, Wed. 30.10.1912, Forbes, p. 2, E Nock is said to be managing a cordial factory for his father. Perhaps the father was E Nock as well, and he might have been licensee of the Hotel Victoria.

78 Forbes and Parkes Gazette, Fri. 24.11.1899, Forbes, p. 3. The Federal Hotel was opened "recently" in the "Old Land Offices" in Templar Street, James Lyell being the licensee.


80 Certificate of Title Volume 26 Folio 95 shows that the property was transferred to MacPhillamy on 8.2.1912. He leased it to Edward Nock who was titled "Moving Pictures Proprietor" from 20.12.1912. (Land Titles Office.)
picture palace were invited until Saturday, 9 November.\textsuperscript{81} Although building proceeded with
alacrity, the intended opening night of Wednesday, 4 December was postponed until Saturday, 7.
A special benefit night for the Forbes Hospital marked the occasion.\textsuperscript{82} The local council offered
no objections to the granting of a cinematographic licence.\textsuperscript{83} With that, the Lyceum Pictures, as
the new open-air was called, opened to the general public on Monday, 9 December\textsuperscript{84} and
continued to screen on Monday, Wednesday and Friday nights.\textsuperscript{85} This continued until mid-April
1913 when the theatre closed owing to the onset of cooler weather.\textsuperscript{86} There is no evidence in the
local newspaper to indicate that it reopened when the warmer weather returned. (One suggestion
has been made that Brook probably tied up the film distributors and starved the Lyceum of
product. Again, no records exist to substantiate or refute this.) Owing to the lack of local records
and people from that era, it is not known what happened to the open-air theatre from 1913 until
1916 when the site was reused for a new picture theatre. There is, however, one piece of
information that suggests that, by 1916, the building was in the hands of Messrs Hassett and
Brook.\textsuperscript{87}

\textsuperscript{81} \textit{Forbes Times}, Wed. 6.11.1912, Forbes, p. 3.

\textsuperscript{82} \textit{Forbes Times}, Sat. 7.12.1912, Forbes, p. 5.

\textsuperscript{83} \textit{Forbes Times}, Sat. 7.12.1912, Forbes, p. 3.

\textsuperscript{84} \textit{Forbes Times}, Wed. 11.12.1912, Forbes, p. 3.

\textsuperscript{85} \textit{Forbes Times}, Sat. 7.12.1912, Forbes, p. 5.

\textsuperscript{86} \textit{Forbes Times}, April 1913, Forbes. Various issues.

\textsuperscript{87} \textit{Forbes Times}, Fri. 8.12.1916, p.4. "...the site of the building that was owned by Messrs.
Hassett and Brook. "However, Certificate of Title Volume 26 Folio 95 does not indicate anything
about Hassett and Brook. Perhaps they had an unregistered lease on the building. Nock's lease
"expired by effluxion of time" in July 1917 and was duly noted on the Certificate of Title.
Meanwhile, in Parkes, the Star Pictures (see Figure 12) opened on Saturday, 15 February 1913. Situated on a piece of waste ground in Court Street, it was under the direction of Arthur Guest ("well-known in the West as an operator"\textsuperscript{88}) and screened Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays\textsuperscript{89} in direct competition with the "PPP". The Star was reported as having a "pretty embossed steel front". The opening of this new open-air theatre attracted a "splendid attendance" and "adjacent roofs and balconies held a number not on the official free list". Unfortunately, it rained that night and the following Monday. The following Wednesday was fine and a large crowd attended. The lucky ones gained the cushioned seats and standing room was offered to the unlucky ones. The music "was good" and included an Interlude sung by Mrs Guest entitled "Hymns of the old Church Choir".\textsuperscript{90} A contemporary photograph of the building shows it to be plain-looking, approximately 30 or so feet wide and approximately 30 feet high. No attempt was made to hide the gabled roof and the facade was relieved by four pilasters that reached to about half way up the wall. A central entrance had a light fitting above it and higher up was the "Star" electric sign, the electricity being provided by the theatre's own generator.\textsuperscript{91} It was at this theatre that Frank Townsend (who went on to manage both the Broadway and Palace theatres in Parkes from the 1940s until his death in 1969) started his career. For the princely sum of one shilling, he was employed each night to switch the "Star" electric sign on and off so that it appeared to be flashing\textsuperscript{92}

\textsuperscript{88} \textit{Western Champion}, Thurs. 13.2.1913, Parkes, p.19. No indication is given in the newspaper as to where in the west he was "well-known".

\textsuperscript{89} \textit{Western Champion}, Thurs. 13.2.1913, Parkes, p. 17.

\textsuperscript{90} \textit{Western Champion}, Thurs. 20.2.1913, Parkes, pp. 16, 19.

\textsuperscript{91} Photograph in the possession of the writer. Original with the Parkes and District Historical Society.

\textsuperscript{92} R.T. Tindall, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 198.
FIGURE 12
Star Theatre, Court Street, Parkes - c1916.
(Source: L. A Unger, Parkes)
Northwest from Forbes, the small town of Trundle had grown up around a lagoon on a stock route in the late 1880s. The town experienced a building boom between the years 1910 and 1914 when the local population increased owing to the opening of the railway. Moving pictures first arrived when the Palace Gradens Picture Show opened on 27 July 1914 under the organisation of John H Bewes and Christopher Young. This open-air theatre was erected by Alfred E Ware and was situated behind the Trundle Hotel in Forbes Street. Young, a retired vaudevillian, had taken a lease on the hotel. With moving pictures surplanting vaudeville and proving to be popular with audiences, it is understandable that a small picture theatre at the rear of his hotel would have been a good business venture. After a few months of operating the enterprise, Young sold out to Jack Medlyn, a local merchant (who was involved with operating the picture show until about 1920).

By the time that World War I erupted in late 1914, the main settlements in the subject area were well-catered for by picture theatres. Parkes had its "PPP" and Star, Forbes had its Brook's Skating Rink and Theatre, and Trundle had its Palace Gardens. It should be remembered that, at least as

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94 ibid., p. 209.

95 ibid., p. 203.

96 Certificate of Title Volume 2385 Folio 137. By 1913, the site was owned by Evan Lewis Jones. This was an extremely large block of land that included lots 5 to 10 inclusive. A lease "of part" was granted to Christopher Reid Young, "of Sydney, Hotelkeeper" from 9.4.1913. The property was not transferred to Alfred E Ware until 11.7.1917. It is not known how Ware was connected with the site prior to this date.


98 ibid., p. 203.
far as Parkes and Forbes went\textsuperscript{99}, screenings were not nightly but on selected nights of each week. Sometimes this varied but usually Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays were preferred. (Owing to a lack of primary sources, it is not known how often the show in Trundle screened.) Of the other settlements in the subject area, only Alectown and Bogan Gate had halls and nothing has been found in Parkes' or Forbes' newspapers to indicate that travelling picture show men had exhibited in those settlements up to this time.

While the boys might have marched off to war, pictures were still an important part of a town's entertainment. In Parkes, the management of the "PPP" changed in 1915 when Curran (who was managing the business) left and the Marcus Pictures Circuit (headed by H H Marcus) commenced its term of exhibitorship from Tuesday, 9 February\textsuperscript{100}. It was reported at the time that the new owners intended to overhaul the machinery.\textsuperscript{101} The Marcus Circuit had theatres in other towns and T Parks was placed in charge at the "PPP".\textsuperscript{102} Parks continued to operate the show after the Marcus Picture Circuit withdrew in March 1915\textsuperscript{103}, although this did not last past November. In December the "PPP" again reopened under new management, this time under Arthur Guest who had moved over from the Star Theatre in Court Street.\textsuperscript{104} This event followed the dissolution of

\textsuperscript{99} Trundle newspapers no longer exist for this period.

\textsuperscript{100} Western Champion, Thurs. 11.2.1915, Parkes, p. 21.

\textsuperscript{101} Western Champion, Thurs. 7.1.1915, Parkes, p. 16. Perhaps Curran had been the original exhibitor. Just what overhauling the machinery meant is unknown.

\textsuperscript{102} Western Champion, Thurs. 18.2.1915, Parkes, p. 16.

\textsuperscript{103} Western Champion, Thurs. 11.3.1915, Parkes, p. 16. The advertisement no longer contained "Marcus Picture Circuit". Instead the words "Direction: T. Parks" replaced it.

\textsuperscript{104} Western Champion, Thurs. 9.12.1915, Parkes, p. 19. Guest's involvement was not mentioned in this issue. His name appeared in a small news item in the issue of Thurs 23.12.1915 p. 20.
the partnership between C Leighton and A Guest in December 1915.

While the Star was reported to be reopening under Messrs Leighton and Sons\textsuperscript{105}, it opened under the direction of Leighton Bros on Saturday, 19 February 1916.\textsuperscript{106} To take-on the challenge of Guest at the "PPP", Leighton Bros proudly announced that they had installed the latest Powers Camerograph.\textsuperscript{107} Screenings were to take place on Tuesdays and Saturdays.\textsuperscript{108} For some unknown reason, success was not forthcoming and the Star closed on Saturday, 7 July 1917.\textsuperscript{109} It did not reopen.

In Forbes, a new theatre (on the site of the former Lyceum) was heralded in November 1916. In the local newspaper was a brief note and mention that tenders were being called.\textsuperscript{110} H Bates (the architect for the earlier Lyceum) had been engaged once again. The chosen builder was a local man, T Twist.\textsuperscript{111}

The new Olympic Picture Palace was planned to be 110 feet long by 66 feet with galvanised iron

\textsuperscript{105} Western Champion, Thurs. 16.12.1915, Parkes, p. 19. Guest had recently taken over Parkes Picture Palace it was reported in Western Champion, Thurs. 23.12.1915 p. 20.

\textsuperscript{106} Western Champion, Thurs. 17.2.1916, Parkes, p. 18.

\textsuperscript{107} Western Champion, Thurs. 10.2.1916, Parkes, p. 19.

\textsuperscript{108} Western Champion, Thurs. 24.2.1916, Parkes, p. 17.

\textsuperscript{109} Western Champion, Thurs. 5.7.1917, Parkes, p. 16. This was the last advertisement for the Star. It was still standing in August when a fire broke out in an adjoining shop. It was mentioned in the news item that no damage was done to the theatre. (Western Champion, Thurs. 2.8.1917, p. 19.)

\textsuperscript{110} Forbes Times, Fri. 24.11.1916, Forbes, p. 4.

\textsuperscript{111} Forbes Times, Fri. 13.4.1917, Forbes, p. 2.
walls and roof, although part of the roof could be left open for fresh air. Wunderlich pressed metal was to be used for cladding the facade. The front entrance gave access to a 21 feet wide by 15 feet deep vestibule and an iron stairway that led to a large gallery. A contemporary newspaper report, written after the reporter had viewed the plans for the new building, attempted to describe the theatre. It was mentioned that the front of the building contained a first storey, a covered balcony and was supported by stout wooden posts. Doors at the back of the gallery could be opened so that the audience could overflow into this area if the need arose.

_The large gallery or dress circle opened on to a balcony 66 x 12 feet, and the whole can be practically thrown open, and the seating can be made continue from the front of the gallery to the back of the balcony, so that it would hold 400 people...The comfort of the lady patrons has been well looked after, a large and well fitted cloak room forming the feature of the ground floor on the eastern front._

The main body of the hall could seat 600 and a large refreshment room was to be provided for the convenience of patrons. The newspaper report concluded that the owner, McPhillamy, was "bringing to our doors a touch of the city" with his new picture theatre. A later report made mention that the builder was making good use of the then-current daylight savings which had been introduced as part of improving the war effort.

As the building neared completion another newspaper report appeared which, while repeating

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112 *Forbes Times*, Fri. 8.12.1916, Forbes, p. 4. From an early photograph c1920 in *Ten Years in the Motion Picture Industry in Australia*, Sydney: Union Theatres, 1921, unnumbered pages, the Olympic Theatre is shown with a substantial-looking balcony.


much of what had been written the previous December, did make the following point, "Altogether the new building is a structure that adds to the importance of the town.\[^{115}\]

In March 1917 it was announced that the soon-to-be-opened theatre had been leased to Messrs James Maguire and Les Davis who had gone to Sydney to arrange for film product.\[^{116}\] The two prospective exhibitors returned to Forbes on 23 March, having made arrangements for machinery, an operator and films.\[^{117}\] Their planned opening on Easter Monday, 9 April was postponed out of courtesy to the competition picture theatre after it was learned that a special benefit night in aid of the Red Cross and Returned Soldier' Fund was being held on the same night.\[^{118}\] The war effort and community spirit were alive and well in Forbes in 1917. Hence, the Olympic's opening took place on Tuesday, 10 April and the Mayor performed the official opening ceremony. So popular was the event that, according to the local newspaper,

...the new proprietors were greeted with an audience which outdistanced that for any similar function ever held in Forbes. At an early hour a large crowd had gathered outside the theatre, and the jostle for tickets reminded one forcibly of the rush at the local railway station each year when the special for the Parkes Show leaves. A few minutes after eight the sale of tickets had to be stopped, and many people suffered the disappointment of being turned away. It was some minutes before the huge audience

\[^{115}\] Forbes Times, Tues. 22.2.1917, Forbes, p. 2.

\[^{116}\] Forbes Times, Tues. 20.3.1917, Forbes, p. 2. The Certificate of Title Volume 26 Folio 95 shows that a lease to James Maguire, "of Forbes, Tailor" was granted on 9.6.1917. Perhaps the earlier announcement was relating to a gentlemen's agreement?

\[^{117}\] Forbes Times, Fri. 23.3.1917, Forbes, p. 2.

\[^{118}\] Forbes Times, Tues. 3.5.1917, Forbes, p. 3.
The newspaper described the Olympic in very flattering terms. However, it should be remembered that it was basically a large, galvanised iron shed. "The building is a palatial one, perhaps the finest picture show in the country." The opening night presentation was well-received by those who were fortunate enough to gain admission. The films were described as "up-to-date", and "were shown very clear and life-like". Among those screened was "Silks and Satins" starring Marguerite Clark. Remembering that the pictures shown in those far-off days were silent, the newspaper made special mention of that integral part of the programme, the musical accompaniment. It was provided by the local, and very popular, Acret's Orchestra which "provided excellent music from a stand specially prepared for the purpose". With that, the Olympic screened on Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays. James Maguire bought out his partner in May 1917 and took over the complete operation of the Olympic. This was short-lived as the exhibitor at the opposition theatre managed to secure the Olympic and was advertising in early September 1917 that he, F H Brooks, was the "Proprietor". As might have been anticipated, he wasted no time in closing the Olympic, thus ensuring security of operation for his

119 Forbes Times, Fri. 13.4.1917, Forbes, p. 2.
120 Forbes Times, Fri. 13.4.1917, Forbes, p. 2.
121 Forbes Times, Fri. 13.4.1917, Forbes, p. 2.
122 Forbes Times, Fri. 13.4.1917, Forbes, p. 2.
123 Forbes Times, Fri. 4.5.1917, Forbes, p. 5.
124 There is nothing on the relevant Certificate of Title (Volume 2783 Folio 172) to indicate Brook. However, the newspaper advertisements of the time state that he was operating the theatre.
125 Forbes Times, Fri. 7.9.1917, Forbes, p. 5.
nearby Spring Street Picture Hall. The Olympic closed on Saturday, 7 September 1917 with a programme that included "The Trail of the Lonesome Pine". There were a few benefit nights held at the Olympic shortly afterwards. One such benefit night was on Friday, 28 September 1917 when "Australia In Action" was presented. (During World War I, Brook also offered his Spring Street hall for a number of special benefit screenings in aid of various organisations.) The next advertisement for the Olympic was in May 1918 and it proclaimed that "Sequah (a health mystic)" would speak nightly at 8pm at the "Olympic Picture Palace". From available sources, it appears that the Olympic was used very little thereafter.

However, Brook's acquisition of the Olympic did not stop another enterprise, known as Lorne Pictures, from opening at the Forbes Town Hall. The new venture commenced on Tuesday, 2 April 1918 under the direction of Mulcany and Grime (of the Lorne Photographic Studio in Rankin Street). They intended to screen twice weekly.

At an early hour there was scarcely standing room in the hall, and the sale of tickets had to be stopped, the police being vigilant in the matter of keeping the exits clear. The management experienced no difficulty with their new plant, and a high class programme

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126 Forbes Times, Fri. 7.9.1917, Forbes, p. 5. This closure was not unexpected as the Spring Street Hall already had an open-air theatre adjacent (date of construction unknown) and the Olympic would have been seen as an unnecessary intrusion.

127 Forbes Times, Tues. 25.9.1917, Forbes, p. 5.

128 Forbes Times, Fri. 30.3.1917, Forbes, p. 2.

129 Forbes Times, Fri. 31.5.1918, Forbes, p. 5.


131 Forbes Times, Fri. 22.3.1918, Forbes, p. 2.
On 21 September, 1918, a special treat lay in store for Forbes when the Lorne Pictures presented the Ediphone Talking Pictures, an early attempt at trying to link film with a gramophone device. Only a novelty, and difficult to synchronise, it was to be another decade before talking pictures became a viable situation. Regardless, the Lorne Pictures continued to operate but was soon under the exhibitorship of T L Jones.

In early September 1918, Forbes Times announced that Ernest Reeves, "well-known to the old picture goers of Forbes, has assumed sole control of Brook's Picture Palace, and commenced last night." No details were given as to why this had occurred.

By the time that the war was drawing to a close in 1918, a new picture theatre was nearly ready to be opened in Parkes. This was the Princess Theatre (see Figures 13 and 14) at 155 Clarinda Street, near Chamberlain Square. Its grand opening took place on Saturday, 5 October. The site came into the possession of Donald M Lett in January 1918 and, with a mortgage from W E Shaw ("of Austinmer, Gentleman"), the theatre was constructed. Messrs H W Lett and L Kendall.

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132 Forbes Times, Fri. 20.9.1918, Forbes, p. 5.
135 Forbes Times, Tues. 3.9.1918, Forbes, p. 2.
136 Western Champion, Thurs. 3.10.1918, Parkes, p. 13.
137 Certificate of Title Volume 431 Folio 23. According to the information on the certificate, D M Lett was a builder from Austinmer.
Top: FIGURE 13. Princess Theatre, Parkes - early 1920s.
(Source: Exhibitor, 11.11.1923, Sydney, p. 25)
(Source: Chambers, I., Parkes: A Photographic History, Parkes: I. Chambers, 1988.)
were the "General Managers". The theatre was constructed on a vacant block of land adjoining Medlyn's Cambridge Hotel and was reported to seat 1000. The opening night report stated that it was densely packed and, although extra seats were put in, several hundred had to be turned away. In all, it was stated that about 1200 people were present. Although figures for 1918 are not available, when one considers that the 1921 Census showed Parkes as having a population of 3947, then the opening night attendance at the Princess in 1918 suggests the esteem in which the local people held the event. The orchestra (trio) comprised Mr Kendall on violin, Mr Kitto on cornet, and Mr D Mitchell on piano. A special benefit screening in aid of the Parkes District Hospital was held on Thursday, 10 October. Screenings were listed for Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday evenings with a matinee on Saturday afternoons.

The Princess was described as big and roomy with, "...plenty of air as it is a combined open-air and hall theatre, with most comfortable seats." Its almost-Edwardian style facade, complete with large entrance archway, was typical of the cinemas built around that time. The pressed metal cladding on the stepped facade attempted to give it an air of respectability. Its single storey front section almost managed to hide the hipped roof of the auditorium behind. For Parkes of the time, with its wide street verandas, the theatre could have been described as one of a lesser quality,

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138 Kendall was a greengrocer who went on to operate a music store in Parkes. It is not known who H W Lett was. He may have been a son of D M Lett. Another management team was mentioned in I. Chambers, Parkes: A Photographic History. Parkes: Ian Chambers, 1988, p. 145. He stated Messrs Lett, Leonard Kendall and Watt. The text is not referenced.

139 Western Champion, Thurs. 10.10.1918, Parkes, p. 18.

140 Western Champion, Thurs. 3.10.1918, Parkes, p. 13.

141 Western Champion, Thurs. 10.10.1918, Parkes, p. 18.

reminiscent of cheap commercial buildings that were prevalent in 'frontier' towns in the past (and are still being built today). A 1923 inspection report by the local fire brigade described the building as being 120 feet long and 42 feet wide. Its walls were of fibro cement and the roof on the covered section was of iron. It had no stage and no dressing rooms. The operating box was at the rear of the hall and seven feet off the ground. Seating was provided for 1000 and there was no gallery.\footnote{Annual Inspection Report 28.11.1923. NSW State Archives - Board of Fire Commissioners: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 20/14968 File No 184 Parkes.}

Ernest Guest at the "PPP" faced this new challenge enthusiastically.

'*Les Miserables' will be shown al fresco tonight, in the rear of Giffin's warehouse, just below the 'Champion' office. Arthur Guest has a gang of ten removing everything necessary from the PPP, which old building is being scrapped to make room for a new and complete public hall for pictures and other entertainments. Mr. Guest assures us that he will provide for the comfort of his patrons on the make-shift site until the new hall is built. In unfavourable weather the public gather in the adjoining warehouse.*\footnote{Western Champion, Thurs. 14.11.1918, Parkes, p. 15.}

This was followed by:

*From a glance at the plans, designed by the architect, Mr. Dodd, we anticipate the hall will not only be handsome as to the facade, but will be roomy and comfortable.*\footnote{Western Champion, Thurs. 24.12.1918, Parkes, p. 13.}

Construction proceeded but the opening was postponed a week for reasons unknown. The programme chosen for the intended opening on Saturday, 11 January 1919 was screened at the
open-air stadium instead. The new Parkes Picture Palace (see Figure 15) opened on Saturday, 18 January 1919 with "By Right of Purchase" starring Norma Talmadge, and other films. The new theatre, described as being "airy" and "roomy", and measuring 81 feet long by 58 feet wide, could seat 750 in proper "theatre chairs". Fans, operated by electricity from the theatre's generator, provided movement of air. Louvre windows, set low in the side walls to allow air currents to pass close over the tops of patrons' heads, provided ventilation. The roof was fitted with four sliding panels (each measuring 14 feet by 12 feet). There were six exits for emergency use. Two-thirds of the floor was flat and could be used for dancing. A stage was provided. The architect for the project had been W G Dodd and the contractor had been A Davis.

In mid-September 1919, it was reported that the Lorne Pictures in Forbes was to become the Star Pictures, having been taken over by a local newsagent and a local garage proprietor. "...Lorne Pictures at Forbes, which have been held solely of late by Mr. T. L. Jones, were acquired by Messrs Reg Gristed and A. F. Peppercorn..." The grand opening of the new Star Pictures took place on Wednesday, 17 September. "The Star Pictures will be only shown on Wednesdays and

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146 Western Champion, Thurs. 9.1.1919, Parkes, p. 5. There is no newspaper available for Thurs. 2.1.1919 in the State Library of New South Wales so any reason given for the postponement of the opening on the 11th is not known.


148 Annual Inspection Report 30.1.1925. NSW State Archives - Board of Fire Commissioners: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 20/14968 File No 184 Parkes. The report states that the stage was 42 feet by 18 feet and that two dressing rooms were provided. Auditorium seating was listed as 1000. The building's dimensions were given as 145 feet by 56 feet and the projection box was situated over the vestibule at the main entrance.

149 Western Champion, Thurs. 23.1.1919, Parkes, p. 12. The opening of the new theatre was reported in some detail. The "theatre chairs" may very well have been of the tip-up variety which very becoming very popular.

FIGURE 15
Parkes Picture Palace ("PPP") - c1923.
(Source: Exhibitor, 14.11.1923, Sydney, p. 25.)
Saturdays till the open-air theatre in the summer is available...

In 1920, Reginald P Grinsted bought out Peppercorn's interest in the Star Pictures and ceased screenings. The Star closed with D W Griffiths' "The Great Love" on Saturday, 10 July 1920.

Tomorrow is the last performance of the Star Pictures. R. P. Grinsted has purchased Mr. Peppercorn's interest and as sole proprietor has amalgamated with Union Theatres Ltd...He will continue to be interested in the venture.

Prior to this changeover at the Star, the "Grand Farewell Program" of Brook's Pictures' took place at the Spring Street theatre on Saturday, 7 June 1919. Mr Brook announced in the newspaper that he had disposed of his interests ("which I have conducted for the past seven years") to Mr L Linklater, formerly of Leeton. From Monday, 9 June, the theatres (enclosed and open-air) would be known as "The Amusu Theatres". In the same newspaper there was a small item about the change of ownership and it mentioned that the new exhibitor intended to "reopen" the Olympic

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The Forbes Family History Group Inc suggested (in correspondence in 1993) that the Open-air Picture Theatre referred to was situated at the corner of Court Lane and Rankin Street, was operated by Messrs Grinsted and Peppercorn and was used during the warmer months while it existed. It became a roller skating rink after its picture days had ceased. With the lack of information available, it has not been possible to determine when this venue commenced operation. Forbes Advocate, Fri. 1.8.1930, Forbes, p. 8 contains an advertisement for the Gaiety, Court Street - "Jazz Dance and Skating Entertainment...Wednesday Next...". There is a listing in the Chief Secretary's Department Theatres & Public Halls files of a Regal Skating Rink and Palais Open-Air Dancing Saloon in Forbes in 1930. Unfortunately no address is given.

152 Forbes Advocate, Fri. 9.7.1920, Forbes, p. 8. (Of special interest in this quotation is the mention of Union Theatres Ltd, a Sydney-based company that was expanding rapidly throughout the 'teens and into the 1920s.) To conclude the Town Hall story, it continued to be used for live shows, both local and touring. L Tod, Assistant Archivist of the Australian Theatre Historical Society Inc., stated in January 1994 that it may have been used irregularly from the early 1970s to the early 1980s for film screenings.

153 Forbes Times, Fri. 6.6.1919, Forbes, p. 5.
Picture Palace "in the Spring". Since the Lorne/Star Pictures had been screening at the Forbes Town Hall since April 1918, it was understandable that Mr Linklater might want to state that he intended to reopen the Olympic merely as a bluff in order to intimidate his opposition.

The relevant Certificates of Title for the Amusu theatres do not record any leases or transfers to Linklater. (The theatre properties remained in the hands of F H Brook until the mid-1920s.) On 14 June 1919, a lease to Australasian Films Ltd was granted (renewed 2 June 1921). What the arrangements were regarding Linklater are unknown as no documentation has been found relating to his situation. By April 1920, the Amusu was being converted into the Strand Theatre and was advertised as being under the direction of Union Theatres Ltd. (Australasian Films Ltd was part of the Union Theatres Ltd organisation.) The lessee was a major film production and distribution house, and this arrangement ensured top films for Forbes and financial gains for the licensee. "Watch the New Strand Grow!" read the advertisements. It was also reported that the theatre was being entirely renovated and "tastefully decorated". At the time of the Strand's re-opening on Saturday, 17 April, Mr Arthur A Read was the manager. By August, 1920, Reginald

154 *Forbes Times*, Fri. 6.6.1919, Forbes, p. 2. The item mentioned that Linklater had been involved with film screenings at Holsworthy military camp for a number of years. There is nothing on the relevant Certificate of Title (Volume 2877 Folio 47) to indicate that it was a registered lease.

155 *Forbes Times*, Fri. 22.3.1918, Forbes, p. 2.

156 Certificates of Title Volume 2877 Folio 47 (hardtop theatre); Volume 40 Folio 140, Volume 4065 Folios 108 and 109 (open-air theatre). (Land Titles Office.)

157 Certificates of Title Volume 2877 Folio 47 (hardtop theatre); Volume 40 Folio 140, Volume 4065 Folios 108 and 109 (open-air theatre). (Land Titles Office.)

158 *Forbes Advocate*, Tues. 13.4.1920, Forbes, p. 3.

159 *Forbes Advocate*, Fri. 16.4.1920, Forbes, p. 8.
Grinstead (who had closed the Star Pictures in July) was advertised as the Manager at the Strand.\textsuperscript{160}

A 1920 photograph of the Strand (see Figure 16) shows a plain, cement-rendered brick facade pierced by a centrally placed, double doorway surmounted by a fanlight. On either side of the doorway is a long, vertical window. The painted words "\textit{Strand Theatre}" appear above the fanlight and above that is a small circular window which would have provided light for the projection box situated just inside, above the entry. With the exception of a small amount of decoration on the top of the facade, it is nondescript. An island ticket box can been seen in the photograph. The street entry could be sealed off by means of a metal concertina grille.\textsuperscript{161} While original dimensions are not known, a Board of Fire Commissioners' report of 1924 gives the dimensions of the building as being 133 feet long by 48 feet 6 inches wide, with walls of brick, roof of galvanised iron and timber floor. A stage, measuring 45 feet by 30 feet 6 inches was provided and there was a large dressing room under the stage. Seating accommodation was given as 750. An accompanying sketch of the building (see Figure 17), drawn by the Captain of the local Fire Brigade, showed a series of windows along the southern side wall and a pair of doors at the rear of the stage, presumably suitable for moving items of scenery onto the stage in order to accommodate live performances.\textsuperscript{162} The open-air theatre that was adjacent to the Strand (see Figure 18) was in operation prior to 1920\textsuperscript{163} but its exact origins have not been determined. It is believed to have been used in the warmer months only. Newspaper advertisements for screenings

\textsuperscript{160} \textit{Forbes Advocate}, Fri. 27.8.1920, Forbes, p. 6.

\textsuperscript{161} Photograph of Forbes Strand Theatre in \textit{Ten Years of Progress in the Motion Picture Industry in Australia}, Sydney: Union Theatres, 1921, no pagination.

\textsuperscript{162} Annual Inspection Report 30.5.1924. NSW State Archives - Board of Fire Commissioners: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 20/14937 File 135 Forbes.

\textsuperscript{163} Reference made to Brooks' Picture Palaces in \textit{Forbes Times}, Tues. 3.9.1918, p. 2.
FIGURE 16
(Source: Ten Years of Progress in the Motion Picture Industry in Australia. Sydney: Union Theatres, 1921.)
FIGURE 17
Sketch of Strand Picture Theatre, Forbes.
(Source: Part of Annual Inspection Report 30.5.1924. NSW State Archives, Board of Fire Commissioners Theatres and Public Halls Files. Box 20-14937 File 135 Forbes.)
FIGURE 18
(Source: Ten Years of Progress in the Motion Picture Industry in Australia. Sydney: Union Theatres, 1921.)
did not indicate whether it or the enclosed theatre were in use. This would have been local knowledge.\textsuperscript{164}

The Olympic\textsuperscript{163} reopened under Union Theatres Ltd's programming on Wednesday, 14 April 1920 (see Figure 19), being renamed "The Big Olympic" for the occasion.\textsuperscript{165} Unfortunately, the event did not go according to plan and the following item appeared in the local newspaper that Friday. (It is printed here with the exact wording.)

\begin{quote}
The management of the Olympic Theatre wish to state that passes issued on Wednesday night, owing to a break down of the engine, will be available any night they are presented. The Manager regrets he was unable to refund cash, owing to the Olympic not being fitted with gas. [sic]\textsuperscript{167}
\end{quote}

There is no evidence to indicate that the Olympic did re-open for pictures. The licence was

\textsuperscript{164} Australasian Films Ltd (part of Union Theatres Ltd) was granted leases on the open-air show from 14.6.1919 and 2 June 1921 (along with the neighbouring hardtop cinema). See footnote 114 for details of relevant Certificates of Title. 'Talkies' never appeared at the open-air and the property was transferred to Western Cinemas on 31 October 1939 although it was little more than a grassy paddock at the stage. In more recent years it, along with the hardtop site, has been engulfed in a motel development.

N.S.W. State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 17/3269 No.414 Forbes Century/Strand: A 1928 report in these files stated that plans to remodel the open-air theatre had been abandoned. Another report, dated 4.7.1934 to the Commissioner of Police, Sydney, stated that the theatre had been closed for the past three years.

\textsuperscript{165} How this was done is unknown. The relevant Certificates of Title Volume 26 Folio 95 and Volume 2783 Folio 172 give no mention to Mr Grinsted.

\textsuperscript{166} Forbes Advocate, Tues. 13.4.1920, Forbes, p. 3.

\textsuperscript{167} Forbes Advocate, Fri. 16.4.1920, Forbes, p. 8. It is difficult to may sense out of this statement except that the engine broke down and some form of free pass was issued for another night.
FIGURE 19
(Source: Ten Years of Progress in the Motion Picture Industry in Australia, Sydney: Union Theatres, 1921.)
maintained in order to stop any opposition from setting up business in Forbes.\textsuperscript{168} Having the two theatres and the open-air show meant that, even if one were closed, it could be reopened if required. Should an application by some opposition party for another licence be made, it could be appealed against on the grounds that the other theatre could be reopened if business demanded it.

The Parkes Princess was leased to Alfred L Waddington ("of Parkes, Picture Show Operator") and Leonard R Kendall ("of Parkes, Fruitier") from 5 April 1919.\textsuperscript{169} By February 1920, Kendall was advertising as having sole control.\textsuperscript{170} After Guest handed over the reins of the "PPP" to Mr Crane from Monday, 18 October, an amalgamation of the Picture Palace and the Princess took place in late October 1920. The new organisation was known as "The Amalgamated Picture Theatres" (ie F W Crane and L R Kendall)\textsuperscript{171} and the new management took over operation of the two theatres from 25 October. The "PPP" was relegated to screen on Mondays and Saturdays. The local newspaper recorded the event.

\begin{quote}
For something like eight years Mr. Arthur Guest has been in the picture show business in Parkes. He has relinquished his enterprise at the Picture Palace to Mr. F. W. Crane, a Sydney gentleman. Saturday next will be the last day of Mr. Guest's proprietorship,
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{168} Forbes Police Report 9.6.1924 to the Commissioner of Police, Sydney. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 10/53032 File T574 Forbes Studio Theatre. "...they keep the Olympic Hall for the keeping out of opposition."

\textsuperscript{169} Certificate of Title Volume 431 Folio 23 (Land Titles Office). The local newspaper advertised that Waddington and Kendall were in-charge. For example, \textit{Western Champion}, Thurs. 1.1.1920, Parkes, p. 9.

\textsuperscript{170} \textit{Western Champion}, Thurs. 26.2.1920, Parkes, p. 15.

\textsuperscript{171} \textit{Western Champion}, Thurs. 21.10.1920, Parkes, p. 12. Also 28.10.1920. Notice appeared: "The Amalgamated Picture theatres announce that on and after Monday next, October 5th 1920, the Princess Theatre will open each Wednesday and Saturday, and the Parkes Picture Palace each Monday and Saturday. Super attractions will be shown on Special Nights."
Mr. Crane succeeding him on the following Monday. Mr. Guest will, however, remain for a few weeks as manager, until Mr. Crane is able to take up residence in Parkes. We understand the businesses of the Princess Theatre and the Picture Palace to be amalgamated, and run as one concern.\textsuperscript{172}

A week later, the newspaper reported:

Falling into line with Forbes and other country towns, an amalgamation of the two local picture theatres has been arranged, commencing from Monday, 18th inst. On account of the high cost of production and increased changes for film hire, the amalgamation has been compelled to enter into new contracts which will only permit of shows opening each Monday, Wednesday and Saturday, with special nights for any super-attraction. A special feature of the amalgamation is the engagement of the leading Sydney photo-play critic (Mr. G. B. Dean) to view and select all pictures for local programmes so that Parkes picture patrons will be specially catered for.\textsuperscript{173}

The "PPP" became a much-used venue for non-film events. For example, live shows were presented including "The Parkes Pierrotts" (under the auspices of the Parkes Musical Society) in November 1921. Dances and balls, including the annual balls for the Parkes and District Hospital and the Empire Balls were also held there.\textsuperscript{174}

\textsuperscript{172} Western Champion, Thurs. 14.10.1920, Parkes, p. 13.

\textsuperscript{173} Western Champion, Thurs. 21.10.1920, Parkes, p. 12. It is possible that the G B Dean referred to became involved with the company Snider and Dean that took over Western Cinemas. This company controlled a number of theatres in western NSW including Parkes.

\textsuperscript{174} Western Champion, Parkes - various issues including Thurs. 3.11.1921 p. 10 (Pierrotts), Thurs. 14.6.1923 p10 (Hospital ball), Thurs. 25.4.1929 p. 10 (Empire ball). These are only a
Picture-going had come a long way since the first travelling shows had passed through the area just twenty-three years earlier. Local halls had given way in the main towns to purpose-built picture shows that announced their presence with large facades, arched entrances, electric lights and posters. They had became part of the streetscape and offered the local people "environments of entertainment", thereby firmly establishing a sense of place in the minds of those who attended.

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176 Two other pictures shows have been mentioned as existing in Parkes. Despite checking through the local newspapers, no mention of them has been found. R.T. Tindall, *op. cit.*, p. 198 stated that there was an open-air show facing Chamberlain Square in Clarinda Street prior to the Star Theatre opening. The *Parkes Jubilee Souvenir*, Parkes, 1933, no pagination, stated under "Catering For Parkes Amusement" that after the "PPP" opened, "The next picture show was controlled by Messrs. Woodward and Coleman, in a hall behind Lockhart's store." Nothing has been discovered about either of these two venues.
TWENTY-FOUR MILES AROUND NELUNGALEO:
1921 - 1948

The year 1920 saw the Trundle School of Arts Hall (see Figure 20) taken over once a fortnight for picture screenings by a travelling showman, W Nash. Kendall's Pictures (out of Condobolin) took over in 1921 and remained until 1923.1 The hall, erected in 18932, provided its local community with a venue for social activities as well as a lending library. It was destroyed by fire in the early hours of Friday, 23 March 1923.3 A hasty telegram was despatched to the Chief Secretary from the Trundle constabulary that read, "Trundle hall burnt down last night please advise if police approve of holding pictures in store room Saturday twenty fourth would you approve. Shadwick, Trundle." Approval was forthcoming, provided the police had no objections. The site of the store room has not been discovered. However, it could be assumed from the urgency of the telegram that the pictures were important to the townsfolk. A short time after that, the Electra Pictures (an open-air cinema) commenced operations in Forbes Street, Trundle almost opposite Parkes Street.5

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2 Newspaper clipping in file from Sydney Morning Herald, Monday, 26.3.1923, no page marked. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 17/3382 File 2142 Trundle War Memorial Hall. Short item about the fire which occurred at "about 2.30am on Friday morning". The hall was reported to have been built "27 years ago, and a 30ft. extension was made in recent years..."

3 J.P. Watts and C.F. Wright, op. cit., p. 91.

4 Telegram dated 23.3.1923. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 17/3382 File 2142 Trundle War Memorial Hall. Subsequent reply dated 23.3.1923 also in file.

5 J.P. Watts and C.F. Wright, op. cit., p. 203. Unfortunately the local newspaper is not available and nothing more has been found about this venue, including its exact opening date. One of the authors of the book died in early 1994 and it has not been possible to make contact with the
FIGURE 20
School of Arts, Trundle - date unknown.
North of Parkes, the small village of Alectown was visited on infrequent occasions by a travelling picture show in the early 1920s. The venue used was the Jersey Hall.

At Forbes, in order to keep opposition out of town, the licence of the Olympic was renewed in the name of R P Grinsted on 7 April 1922. Seating was noted at the time as 543 in the stalls and 160 in the gallery. (A contemporary report stated that the gallery was 20 feet wide.) By 1923 the local police were complaining of the filthy condition of the building and the lack of interest shown in it by its owner. The local Church of England cleaned it prior to a special dinner held there on 20 April 1923 but it quickly reverted to its previous condition. The local police continued to complain. This time the report was more specific. It stated that the hall was in a very dirty other in order to seek more information.

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6 Interview with H Unger, long time resident of Alectown, 6.4.1994. This has not been substantiated by any primary sources.

7 L A Unger, Stories of Alectown, Parkes: Parkes & District Historical Society, 1983, pp. 10-11. Originally, the hall was situated on the northern edge of the village, opposite the Presbyterian Church. Built by a Mr Corrigan, it was called the JERSEY HALL in honour of the then-Governor of NSW. Mr Stewart, manager of Mickibri Station, became its owner, then Arthur Foster, a local storekeeper. On 3 December 1900 it was blown down in a windstorm. Mrs G Nicholas bought the wreckage and re-erected it on a site just east of the post office. In 1910, the Cook family bought the hall and ran it for many years before it was demolished, having become unsafe. With that, there was no hall in the village until 1934. The old hall had been used for social gatherings, dances and concerts. One, on 22 February 1905, was in aid of the Peak Hill Hospital, while another, on 18 December 1907, was in aid of the Parkes District Hospital.

8 NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 10/53032 File T574 Forbes Studio Theatre. A 1922 document in this file noted that Mr McPhillany of "Warrow", Forbes was the owner and that Union Theatres Ltd paid a rent of six pounds per week. Mr Grinsted had "full control".


condition owing to the numerous pigeons that inhabited the premises. There was a quantity of bird
manure in the hall and also on the gallery, the roof near the stage and openings at the sides needed
to be wire netted, and the gallery "...is in a dangerous condition owing to a wind storm breaking
three of the rafters that hold the iron roofing".\textsuperscript{11} Nevertheless, the licence was renewed in 1924
in Grinstead's favour.\textsuperscript{12} The Church of England (which obviously did not mind providing the
occasional working bee) was able to use the hall for its Annual Market Day on Saturday, 12
April.\textsuperscript{13} Frustrated by the lack of interest shown by its owner, the local police sent a list of
requirements to the Chief Secretary's Department in 1924. Work was undertaken and the police
were pleased to be able to report on 16 April that the hall had "undergone extensive repairs".\textsuperscript{14}
Then, in May 1924, it was the Government Architect's turn to report on the premises to the Chief
Secretary's Department. He mentioned the alterations to the premises that had been required by
the Forbes police. These were that all ant-eaten posts were to be removed and replaced, strutting
of the purlins carrying the roof was to be done and such portions of the building that were not
roofed had to be pigeon-proofed. He reported that all the work had been done by a Mr Miller and
that the front had been closed off by a collapsible gate and that the building had been made
pigeon-proof. Light wire screens on pin hinges (which could be lifted right off) had been installed

\textsuperscript{11} Forbes Police Report to the Commissioner of Police, Sydney 16.5.1923. NSW State
Archives - ChiefSecretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 10/53032 File T574 Forbes
Studio Theatre.

\textsuperscript{12} Copy of theatre licence documentation in file. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's

\textsuperscript{13} Forbes Advocate, Tues. 5.4.1924, Forbes, unnumbered pages.

\textsuperscript{14} Forbes Police Report to the Commissioner of Police, Sydney 16.4.1924. NSW State
Archives - ChiefSecretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 10/53032 File T574 Forbes
Studio Theatre.
at the entrance to the staircases in the front section of the building.\textsuperscript{15}

Although the requirements had been attended to, it was never the intention of either the licensee or Union Theatres Ltd to reopen the Olympic as a picture theatre. The Forbes police reported in June 1924 that although R P Grinsted was the licensee,

\begin{quote}
The Olympic Hall is really controlled by a Company and this company have no intention of using this hall for any public purpose as they are the lessee of the Strand Picture Hall, Forbes, which is a better hall in every respect and they keep the Olympic Hall for the keeping out opposition.\textsuperscript{16}
\end{quote}

A short time later, the solicitors for the owner wrote to the Chief Secretary and indicated that the theatre was to be reopened "as soon as possible" and current licensed seating was 750.\textsuperscript{17} What prompted this sudden move is not known. It may have been a possible competitor nosing around town. Nothing came of the move, however, and the Olympic remained closed.

The first tangible piece of evidence since 1916 about the theatre's dimensions appeared in the 1925 Board of Fire Commissioners Annual Inspection Report. It showed that the building was 116 feet 6 inches in length, 65 feet wide, its walls were of iron and asbestos, its roof was of iron and the floor was asphalt. There was a stage, 27 feet by 14 feet, but no dressing rooms. The operating box

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\textsuperscript{15} Report from the Chief Secretary's Dept Architect, Henry E Budden 2.5.1924. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 10/53032 File T574 Forbes Studio Theatre.
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\textsuperscript{17} Letter from Fisher and Macansh, Solicitors, Sydney to Chief Secretary's Department 7.7.1924. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 10/53032 File T574 Forbes Studio Theatre.
\end{flushright}
was situated over the main entrance, in the centre of the gallery, and had a wooden frame covered with asbestos sheeting. Seating was listed as 600 in the body of the hall and 140 in the gallery. Of interest was the sentence under the heading "Uses" - "NOT AT PRESENT IN USE".  

A Fire Brigade report in September 1925 stated that the building was still not in use and that there was no prospect of it being utilised. Some boxing did take place in 1929.  

Just as Sydney was experiencing a post-war growth of picture theatres, so was country New South Wales. The main difference from pre-war days was that the architects tended to make a statement with each building, one that added to the streetscape in which it stood and one that was easily identifiable by the public as a place of entertainment. Parkes announced in 1923 that such an event was to take place. Unfortunately, a contemporary architectural magazine was not flattering with its remarks.  

In making due provision for crush space, and other requirements for the comfort and convenience of the public at the entrance of a theatre, architectural principles are apt to be overlooked, and in the above case the cavernous central opening with the small ticket box in the centre and the solid side walls, make no exception. The ground floor forms the base of the more ornate superstructure, where elongated brackets stretching down the

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20 Report 1.7.1929. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary’s Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 10/53032 File T574 Forbes Studio Theatre. It should be noted that during Show Week 1926, the Strand was in use as a live venue and the Olympic was pressed into service for pictures. (Forbes Advocate, Tues 7.9.1926, p. 3)
wall are substituted for more structural abutments and piers to the projecting arches, that no doubt are intended to form canopies to the windows. Had they been mere canopies instead of solid masses, as is shown by the shadows, the construction would have been quite permissible: but to support great solids such as these on brackets detracts from rather than enhances the purpose of decoration intended. The heaviest feature comes over the great opening, and this cannot be regarded as satisfactory, but the use of steel girders has made this form of construction possible. The theatre is to cost about £8,000.\textsuperscript{21}

So wrote the reviewer of the architectural drawing of the proposed Broadway Theatre, at 334 Clarinda Street, Parkes in 1923. (See Figure 21.) From what was written, it would seem that the architect of the project, J Lundholm, had not set any new standards of excellence in design. Regardless of that, the new building would add an extra dimension to the street in which it was to be erected. The Broadway Land and Building Investment Company Ltd\textsuperscript{22} did not acquire the site until 26 September 1923.\textsuperscript{23} The building plans, submitted in early 1923, had to be amended to provide a ladies' retiring room for the Gallery and a rewind room in part of the projection room.

\textsuperscript{21} Building, 11.8.1923, Sydney: Building Publishing Company, p. 61. There is a strong possibility that Lundholm also designed the Strand Theatre, Orange (1919/20). It is similar to the 1923 Broadway but on a smaller scale. There are, also, similarities with the 1929 Theatre Molong.

\textsuperscript{22} Australian Securities Commission file no. 000013472. The Broadway Land and Building Investment Company Ltd was incorporated on 10 September 1923. The Subscribers to the company were all local people: L Mazoudier (financier), G Manyon (farmer), F J Gray (farmer), J V Morgan (land holder), J F Barr (storekeeper), J P Sheahan (constable of police), F W Spicer (hairdresser). The objects of the company were very broad and did not mention the picture theatre at all. (The Snider and Dean Theatres office, in August 1994, stated that the company was acquired by Snider and Dean Theatres in the early 1950s.)

\textsuperscript{23} Certificate of Title Volume 502 Folio 188. (Land Titles Office.)
FIGURE 21
(Source: Building, 11.8.1923, Sydney: Building Publishing Company, p. 61.)
so as to satisfy the Office of Public Health's requirements. In March, the plans were finally accepted and returned to the architect. By September, building materials were on site and tenders had been sought. A shortage of bricklayers caused further delays and it was not until late 1924 that it could be reported that the walls and roof were finished. The reasons offered for the seemingly slow pace were that there was a shortage of skilled labour in the town and materials had been difficult to obtain at times. Despite the setbacks, the new, 950-seat theatre was almost ready to open in mid-November 1925.

On 22 October 1925, James Hamilton (who was about to gain the lease of the new Broadway

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24 Letter from J Lundholm, architect, 9.3.1923. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 17/3404 File 2504 Parkes Century Theatre. The letter to Under Secretary of Office of Public Health, Sydney stated that both items had now been provided. It also stated that there was no need for lavatories for artists as there was no stage nor curtain and the dressing rooms consisted merely of a screen with no ceiling. It was not envisaged that the theatre would be used for theatricals, but simply concerts and lectures.

25 Letter from Chief Secretary's Dept to J E Lundholm 23.3.1923. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 17/3404 File 2504 Parkes Century Theatre. In a reply to Lundholm's letter of 7.2.1923 to the Under Secretary, Public Health Office, Sydney, it was pointed out that the proposed exit courts were not large enough for a theatre of the proposed 1100 seats. If the seating were reduced to 1000, then the site would be acceptable.


27 Parkes Police Reports to Chief Secretary's Dept 7.4.1924 and 7.11.1924. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 17/3404 File 2504 Parkes Century Theatre.

28 Board of Fire Commissioners Annual Inspection Report 21.12.1925. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 17/3404 File 2504 Parkes Century Theatre. The report stated that there were 650 seats in the stalls and 300 in the gallery.

29 Parkes Police Report to Chief Secretary's Dept 13.11.1925. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 17/3404 File 2504 Parkes Century Theatre. The report stated that the theatre could be opened on 14 November and that F Spicer, Secretary of the company would telegraph the two pounds licence fee. For some unknown reason, the theatre did not open until 2 December.
Theatre) was granted a lease on the Princess. This secured the position of the new theatre at the other end of Clarinda Street from possible competition. The semi open-air Princess closed its doors on Saturday, 28 November 1925.³⁰ The theatre was retained on lease until sold in 1938.³¹ (Of interest was a restrictive covenant associated with the transfer that forbade the use of the building as a picture theatre, public hall or a place of amusement for a period of 25 years.³² While still under lease to Hamilton, the building was converted into a motor garage. It is currently in use as a tyre service/auto spares store.)

Prior to its opening, the Broadway Theatre was leased from 23 October 1925³³ to James Henry Hamilton, "of Orange, Picture Show Proprietor". This ensured that the new show was operated by an experienced film person who had contacts with picture distributors.³⁴ The Broadway was officially opened on Wednesday, 2 December 1925 by the Mayor, Alderman Howard whose

³⁰ Western Champion, Thurs. 26.11.1925 p. 11. The advertisement shows both the Princess and Picture Palace screening the same programme on Saturday, 28th. There is a programme listed for Monday, 30th but no indication about which theatre. As the Picture Palace screened on Mondays, then it can be assumed that the Princess closed after the Saturday screening.

³¹ Certificate of Title Volume 431 Folio 23 (Land Titles Office). Leases to James H Hamilton 10.5.1926; Western Cinemas Ltd 23.11.1931; Western Cinemas Ltd 1.5.1938. Transfer to JT Manson of Parkes, Tyre Repairer on 4.7.1938 (Certificate of Title Volume 4974 Folio 36).

³² Certificate of Title Volume 431 Folio 23. (Land Titles Office.)

³³ Certificate of Title Volume 502 Folio 188. (Land Titles Office.)

³⁴ Western Champion, Thurs. 3.12.1925, Parkes, p. 15: "This fine theatre has been leased by Mr. J. Hamilton, successor to Crane and Kendall, for a number of years, under the direction of Mr. Len Kendall." The advertisement on page 11 stated "Direction - Crane & Kendall." Perhaps this was a newspaper error. Crane and Kendall appeared for the last time in Western Champion, Thurs. 21.1.1926, p. 11 to be replaced the following week with "Direction: J.H. Hamilton" and "Manager: Len Kendall". No explanations were given in the newspaper. It is also known that Hamilton was involved, at this time, with operating cinemas in Orange and Sydney and his ability to purchase films would have already been established. The films for Parkes would have been most likely bought at the same time as the rest of Hamilton's film purchases.
arrival was delayed owing to another engagement, that being the official opening of the new hall at nearby Tichborne. At the opening ceremony, the Universal Film Company's representative said that "...as far as his company was concerned nothing but the best would be screened in Parkes." The Mayor stated that it was his honour to open the theatre and described it as a "stately building". (See Figures 22 and 23.)

According to the supervising architect, it had cost approximately £13,000 to build. Even for 1923, it was a rather old-fashioned building, looking like a remnant from earlier times - simplified Edwardian, with a touch of the Neo-Classical. The little cornices supported on triangular consoles, the heavy arches, the Adams-esque pilasters, the cement-rendered facade with its semicircular leadlight windows and cantilevered bay window all contribute to the idea of it looking much earlier than when it was designed. Yet, in its own way, it did not spoil the streetscape of the period. Much of Parkes, in 1925, still retained turn-of-the-century style buildings with two-storey verandahs. The Broadway was a break with this older tradition and brought more of an urban style of architecture to the town, providing the sort of quality that an inner suburb of Sydney might have had ten years earlier. There is almost a monumental quality about the design that suggests Parkes might have been growing out of its nineteenth century colonial style of architecture, thereby providing a bit of the city in the bush.

The entrance vestibule, with its tiled floor and walls lined to a height of 7 feet, contained a central ticket box of maple with lead lights. This area could be closed to the street by means of an expanding steel grille. Inside, the auditorium measured 84 feet long by 62 feet and contained a

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35 Western Champion, Thurs. 3.12.1925, Parkes, p. 15.
Top: **FIGURE 22.** Broadway Theatre, Parkes - c1920s.

Lower: **FIGURE 23.** Broadway Theatre, Parkes - c1939.
(Source: K J Cork Collection)
stage that had a depth of 18 feet. Two dressing rooms (both 16 feet by 16 feet) were situated at the rear. Two sets of stairs from the vestibule led to the dress circle that was semicircular and could seat three hundred people. The ceilings of the building were Crane steel sheeting as was the proscenium arch. Main curtains were provided in a deep blue with the letters "BT" appliqued in gold fabric. The stalls' floor sloped to the stage and comfortable, upholstered seating was provided in all parts of the theatre.

In total contrast to the new Broadway Theatre, the year 1926 produced a different type of picture theatre at Bogan Gate, west of Parkes. Bogan Gate, situated at the railway junction of lines to Condobolin (main line to Broken Hill) and Trundle/Tottenham (branch), is the hub of a small rural community whose livelihood has depended for many years primarily on wheat and sheep. Since the late 1940s/early 1950s the commercial side of the village has declined and what is left of its commercial centre is situated in Station Street (between Hutton and East Streets). It is in this street, and cleverly hidden, that one finds a most important piece of cinema history. Partially concealed behind a shop is the Bogan Gate Picture Hall of 1926 (see Figures 24 and 25).

Mentioned under the Parkes’ Council News in Western Champion, 14 January 1926, was the news that the village of Bogan Gate was to have its own picture show (something that could have been regarded as a status symbol at the time).

_F. P. Beazeville (contractor) forwarded plans for picture theatre at Bogan Gate, which_

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37 Board of Fire Commissioners Annual Inspection Report 21.12.1925. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 17/3404 2504 Parkes Century Theatre. The report stated that the stage was 28 feet by 55 feet. It is not clear from documentation in the file as to whether there was to be a stage in the proposed 1923 theatre.

38 Similar to Wunderlich pressed metal.
Top: FIGURE 24. Bogan Gate Picture Hall - view of main entry - 1994. (Source: K J Cork)

had received the approval of the Chief Secretary. It was resolved to ask the contractor to supply a second copy of the plans, and that final approval be left in the hands of the President, Shire Engineer, and Shire Clerk.39

At the rear of what is now the general store, the new, unlined building was constructed of galvanised iron and timber. Overall measurements were approximately 68 feet long by 30 feet wide. (By anyone's standards it was, and still is, a very primitive building.) A semi-detached projection box (measuring approximately 8 feet by 17 feet) was built onto the street or southern end of the building and a stage (11 feet deep) was erected inside the building at the northern end. Natural light and extra ventilation were provided by five large windows (three on the western wall, two on the eastern). One concession to comfort was a flat wooden floor. Three exits on the eastern wall gave access to a paddock. Entry to the hall was through a 6 foot wide doorway that faced the street while entry to the projection box was via the adjacent paddock at the rear of the shop. From remaining evidence,40 the room might have contained two projectors. The projector and the observation portholes appear to have been cut out with tin-snips.

Owing to the other hall in town, Hurley's Hall, (aka West's Hall, Clifford's Hall, Tolhurst's Hall, Priestley's Hall) having been booked for a social function on the night that the 1926 Bogan Gate Annual Show opened, the new Picture Hall was pressed into service by the Show organisers who used it for a ball. This was on Wednesday, 25 August and Forbes Advocate mentioned that the

39 Western Champion, Thurs. 14.1.1926, Parkes, p. 3. It is worth recording that F. P. Beuzeville was also the builder of the Trundle Weston Star Theatre in 1926/27.

40 Writer's observations 20.1.1994 and 6.4.1994. There were two projection portholes.
new hall had been constructed by L Jones.\footnote{Forbes Advocate, Fri. 3.9.1926, Forbes, p. 6.} (Perhaps he had subcontracted for Beuzeville who was a Trundle builder.) Kendall’s Pictures (of Condobolin) commenced screenings sometime in 1926 although the exact opening date is unknown. A benefit performance was screened in aid of the local cricket club on 23 October 1926.\footnote{Forbes Advocate, Fri. 15.10.1926, Forbes, p. 7.} Benefit screenings in picture theatres were usual in the early years of this century and available evidence suggests that W Kendall tried hard to assist the local community. Other benefits included one for the Church of England Building Fund on Saturday, 27 November 1926\footnote{Forbes Advocate, Fri. 26.11.1926, Forbes, p. 5.} and one for the local doctor’s residence fund on Saturday, 19 March 1927.\footnote{Forbes Advocate, Fri. 18.3.1927, Forbes, p. 9.} By May 1927 Kendall had moved on and Spelson’s Pictures had taken over. Nick Spelson had acquired the general store as well.\footnote{Correspondence from L Kearney, "Belara", Bogan Gate 2.2.1994. He was born in 1919 and is looked upon as being one of the local historians of the area.} Two benefits were known to have been given in May 1927\footnote{Forbes Advocate, Fri. 6.5.1927, Forbes, p. 3. Only a limited amount of primary source material is available.} although the reasons for them are unknown and it is not known what films were screened.

In 1926, Albert E (Pommy) Weston, who had worked on farms in the district and at one of the local sawmills, engaged F P Beuzeville\footnote{J.P. Watts and C.F. Wright, op. cit., p. 203.} to construct a picture theatre in Forbes Street, Trundle on a block of land that he acquired on 31 March 1926\footnote{Certificate of Title Volume 1582 Folio 62 - Lot 3 of Section C Forbes Street, Trundle. Weston’s occupation was given as "Trader". When a new Certificate of Title was issued to him,} Originally to be known as Weston’s
Picture Palace, it opened as Weston's Star (see Figures 26 and 27) on Saturday, 31 July 1927. Half of the proceeds from the opening night were donated to the Memorial Hall Building Fund. A report based on the submitted plans stated that,

...The exits are sufficient. The construction is round timber and the whole is sheeted with galvanised iron. The roof is of trussed construction, spaced 10'0"...The layout of the building provides an operating box 8' x 10' but no rewinding room is shown...a small ticket box and stage are shown...It is considered that the roof timbers be strengthened.  

The new building was to be 80 feet long by 33 feet wide, with galvanised iron walls and roof, a Wunderlich metal facade, wooden floor and a stage 10 feet by 33 feet. Seating was for 300 on one level and the projection box (of fibro cement and iron) was situated inside the hall, between the two sets of entrance doors. A small ticket box was tucked into one corner at the front and a ticket window opened onto the street. No provision was made for either dressing rooms or a

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Volume 4538 Folio 33, his occupation was given as "Picture Show Proprietor". A mortgage on the property was granted to E A Long, of Trundle, Storekeeper. This may have assisted with the theatre's construction costs. It was discharged in 1928.

Forbes Advocate, Fri. 6.8.1926, Forbes, p. 5: The War Memorial Hall, according to the Chief Secretary's Department Theatres and Public Halls Licensing Lists for 1959 and 1964, was licensed to screen films. However, it is not known if this ever took place. According to Mrs P Pike (involved with the Weston Star Theatre), the Memorial Hall did not screen pictures. There is nothing in the relevant Chief Secretary's Dept file to show that it was licensed to screen films. According to Forbes Advocate, 18.3.1927, Forbes, p. 5: Trundle War Memorial Hall - opened last Wednesday. Hall - 78ft x 40ft, large stage and dressing rooms, art fibrous plaster prosenium, brick building, electric lights. C Beale, Sydney, contractor and J B Macdonald, Dubbo, architect. Vestibule led to main hall, CWA room and staircase to first floor that contained the School of Arts library, reading room, and a meeting room for the RSL.

Report from Supervising Architect to Chief Secretary Dept 12.3.1926. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 10/53174 File T3596 Trundle Weston Star. It was because of the need to strengthen the roof and an insufficient number of fire extinguishers that the theatre was issued with a temporary licence at first (dated 30.7.1926). A full licence was issued from 26.12.1926.
vestibule. A wide street awning was built in order to offer patrons some protection from the elements. The theatre was used for dancing was well as for pictures.

By the mid-1920s, Union Theatres had withdrawn its interest in the Forbes Strand and, on 22 October 1925, the property was transferred to R P Grinstead. During 1926 Grinstead was reported to have spent £3000 on improvements to the theatre that, by then, seated 700. It was also reported that the stage had been improved and could now accommodate stage shows. This was only a precursor of better things. In 1927, Kaberry and Chard, well-known Sydney theatre architects, were commissioned to remodel the building. This included the raising of the roof and the construction of a dress circle. Having secured a pre-opening inspection, the newspaper reported, *A particularly pleasing characteristic of the new theatre is the tasteful interior appointments and complete seating accommodation, which leave nothing to be desired. These, and other evidence of the Strand, serve to illustrate what an unusually fine theatre it is.*

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52 Certificate of Title Volume 2877 Folio 47. (Land Titles Office.)

53 The Certificate of Title Volume 2877 Folio 47 shows that Grinstead took out two mortgages on the property in 1925. (Land Titles Office.)

54 Film Weekly, 2.9.1926, Forbes, page unknown.

55 Letter from Chief Secretary's Dept to Board of Fire Commissioners 16.2.1927. NSW State Archives - Board of Fire Commissioners: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 20/14937 File 135 Forbes.

56 Film Weekly, 31.3.1927, Sydney, p. 17. The relevant Certificate of Title (see footnote 47) shows that a mortgage taken out on 3.8.1927.

No large, clear exterior photographs of this remodelling have been uncovered. However, a small, streetscape photograph of the period does show a modest, plain-fronted theatre, apparently rendered and painted in a very light colour (white?). (See Figure 28.) The usual ornate Kaberry and Chard facade is missing and the Strand's new facade was nothing short of an understatement in relation to Parkes' Broadway Theatre. A contemporary photograph\(^58\) shows an auditorium with plastered side walls broken along their length by ceiling to floor pilasters surmounted by a nondescript cornice which carried a ceiling of pressed metal in patterned squares. The lower parts of the walls, to a height of about eight feet, appear to be more darkly painted than the upper section. The projection box was built into the auditorium at the rear of the dress circle. The balcony front of the dress circle was ornamented as were the fronts of the boxes on either side of the front circle. (See Figure 29.) These boxes were by no means 'proscenium boxes' and might better be described as 'loges'. The quality of the photograph does not allow close scrutiny as regards to the hanging light pendants nor the coverings over the windows in the walls of the circle.

Kaberry and Chard were prolific theatre architects in Australia at the time and had developed a 'house style' by the early 1920s that appeared over and over again with only slight variations. It could be concluded from what can be seen in the photograph that the theatre's decoration was 'typically' theirs and a glance at the better-documented theatres which they had designed (eg. Deluxe, Croydon NSW, Boomerang, Taree NSW, Star Court, Lismore NSW\(^60\)) would confirm this.

After the opening, the newspaper mentioned that the "wonderful scene will live long in the memories of those present"\(^56\) and that the theatre's magnificence was far beyond that which the

\(^{58}\) *Everyones*, 3.8.1927, Sydney, p. 2.

\(^{59}\) Photographs and other material in the possession of the writer.

\(^{60}\) *Forbes Advocate*, Tues. 28.6.1927, Forbes, p. 5.
FIGURE 28
Strand Theatre, Forbes - after the Kaberry and Chard remodelling - c1928.
(Source: The Mitchell Library, Sydney)
FIGURE 29
(Source: NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept files: Theatres & Public Halls - Box 17/3269 File 414 Forbes Century Theatre.)
first night audience expected. The new Strand was officially opened by the Mayor, Alderman Twogood, on Monday, 27 June. Grinsted's three small daughters, to whom the Mayor presented a pair of scissors each, cut the ribbon holding the main curtains that "rolled back, revealing the modishly designed screen upon which Forbes' pictures of the future will be shown." The people listed in the opening night programme under the heading "Roll of Recognition" were: Builder - WR Acket, Decorations - Prow and Fry, Ceiling - Wunderlich, Plaster Work - Lane and Bartlett, Projectionist - William Mills. Cost of the alterations was stated to be over six thousand pounds.

The improvements encouraged the use of the theatre and a perusal of the local newspaper around the time reveals a number of live touring companies using the Strand. These included the Frank Rigo Grand Opera Company in January 1929 and Fred Bluett in February 1929. The Fire Brigade Annual Inspection of 1929 gave seating capacity as 800 in the stalls and 300 in the gallery.

Sadly for Bogan Gate, the late 1920s saw little development for its picture theatre. With the

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62. Details from copy of opening night programme held by Forbes Family History Group Inc, copy in possession of writer. Acket was a local man. It is not known where the others originated.

63. Film Weekly, 7.7.1927, Sydney, p. 5. The Certificate of Title Volume 2877 Folio 47 shows that Grinsted took out a mortgage on the property on 3 August 1927. One of the previous mortgages was discharged on the same date but the other extant mortgage remained.

64. Forbes Advocate - various issues.

motion picture becoming an increasingly important medium for disseminating information in the 1920s, it was not surprising to find one company exploiting it in order to promote itself. The Sunshine Harvester Works offered a "Free Cinematograph Demonstration of Great Educational Value; To Farmers at the Picture Hall, Bogan Gate" on Monday, 7 October 1929.\textsuperscript{66} It can be presumed that the "value" was both to the farmers and the Sunshine Harvester Works.\textsuperscript{67} The advent of talking films in the late 1920s witnessed large sums of money spent by theatre proprietors on sound equipment and acoustic treatment for their theatres. The Bogan Gate Picture Hall is not known to have moved into the 'talkie' era. The cost of lining the building plus the cost of sound equipment would not have been a viable proposition in a village that, according to a long-time resident, was already starting to experience a decrease in its population\textsuperscript{68}. In 1930, the hall was mentioned along with the other hall in town (Priestley's) as being used for roller skating and socials.\textsuperscript{69} At the time it was known as Jones' Hall, Mr and Mrs H Jones having taken over the general store. In 1934, the hall was still in use for roller skating, as shown by contemporary advertisements in the \textit{Parkes Champion Post}.\textsuperscript{70} The proprietor of the shop in front, N Kouvelis, advertised that he was a confectioner and newsagent and "Don't Forget Skating every Saturday." Skates were available for hire from Kouvelis.

\textsuperscript{66} \textit{Western Champion}, Thurs. 26.9.1927, Parkes, p. 10.

\textsuperscript{67} A telephone call to the Melbourne firm that controls Sunshine failed to uncover anything more about the 1929 promotion.

\textsuperscript{68} L.Kearney, "Belara", Bogan Gate. The writer was taken on a driving tour of the village with L.Kearney on 6.4.1994. He told where former buildings had stood, mentioned when they had been demolished and spoke about the decline in the population from the late 1920s onwards.

\textsuperscript{69} \textit{Western Champion}, Thurs. 8.5.1930, Parkes, p. 13. Bogan Gate news: "Skating popular at Jones' and Priestley's Halls."

\textsuperscript{70} \textit{Parkes Champion Post}, Parkes, various issues.
Under the managership of Len Kendall, the Broadway and Parkes Picture Palace theatre commenced to advertise under the banner of "Hamilton’s Pictures" from September, 1926. Taking over the two Parkes theatres seemed a logical move on Hamilton’s part. Kendall was replaced in August 1927 by Percy Danby (from Orange) and the advertisements in the local newspaper listed the two theatres under the banner of "Hamilton’s Pictures". "Mr. J. H. Hamilton will resume control of the Australia and Strand Theatres (Orange), but will divide his interests by periodical visits to Parkes and Sydney, where his other theatres are." Danby was followed as manager by R C Thomas in 1928.

Mr. R. C. Thomas, who has been in control of the local Picture Theatres since Mr. Percy Danby relinquished the reins, left this morning for Orange, where he will manage the movie theatres in the City of the Canoblas for the Western Cinemas, successors to Hamilton’s. Mr. Thomas’ place here has been taken by Mr. H. Robinson, who recently

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71 Document dating from 1925. NSW State Archives - Board of Fire Commissioners: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 20/14968 File 184 Parkes. Owner in 1925 stated as being The Broadway Land and Building Investment Co Ltd. (Messrs Crane and Kendall had been the exhibitors at the two Parkes’ theatres for a number of years.)

72 There is nothing on the Certificate of Title Volume 4485 Folio 153 Parkes Palace to indicate Hamilton as having a lease. Crane and Kendall’s lease (of 30.12.1922 - see Certificate of Title Volume 1966 Folio 116) was surrendered 25.5.1931 owing to a new lease to Western Cinemas Ltd being granted. While Hamilton’s circuit did become "Western Cinemas" (not the company) during the 1920s, there is a note in the folio that Crane and Kendall’s lease was surrendered "by reason of the granting of fresh lease to Western Cinemas Limited." This is understandable because Western Cinemas Ltd was formed in 1929 and took over the operation of the former Western Cinemas’ theatres.

73 *Western Champion*, Thurs. 25.8.1927, Parkes, p. 10; Thurs. 8.9.1927 p. 10 respectively. Hamilton is mentioned in *Ten Years of Progress in the Motion Picture Industry of Australia, Sydney, Union Theatres Ltd*, 1921 as being the exhibitor of the Strand and Empire Theatres at Orange. *Exhibitor*, 27.8.1924, Sydney, p. 12 states that Hamilton had arranged a contract with Paramount Pictures for his Strand Theatre and that the "arrangement gives him the added privilege of screening practically only a fortnight after the city first-release run." *Film Weekly*, 9.9.1926, Sydney, p. 18 has him as proprietor of the Strand Theatre, Orange.
arrived from New Zealand. Mr. Thomas will occasionally visit Parkes, the local theatres
being also under the direction of Western Cinemas."74

"Western Cinemas" should not be confused with Western Cinemas Ltd. The latter company was
incorporated on 15 March 1929 and came about by the combining of theatres (owned and/or on
lease) of certain exhibitors in Orange, NSW. Edwin D Passlow (of Orange, "Picture Show
Proprietor"), Mary Hannah Robinson (widow, "at present in New Zealand") and Richard Carl
Thomas (of Orange, "Picture Show Proprietor"), trading under the name of "Western Cinemas",
agreed to transfer to the proposed Western Cinemas Ltd the leases held on the Parkes Broadway,
"PPP" and Princess theatres and the Orange Australian and Strand theatres. E D Passlow and T
J O'Brien agreed to sell to the proposed company their Theatre Orange at Orange. (When the
company was formed, Passlow and Thomas were among the subscribers and were later appointed
"Managers" by special resolutions in September 1929.) On 31 March 1929, the acquisitions took
place and the new company commenced a long association with those theatres.75

Prior to the renewal of the "PPP" licence in 1929, the Chief Secretary's Department set out a list
of important requirements. Among these were that the projection box had to meet departmental

74 Western Champion, Thurs. 8.11.1928, Parkes, p. 11. It would seem that, by this time,
Hamilton had either ceased to be involved with the theatres, or had become involved with Western
Cinemas. (No documentation, even after having searched files held by the Australian Securities
Commission, has been found to clarify the situation.) As well, the same edition of the newspaper
carried the last advertisement for "Hamilton's Pictures". The Monday, 12.11.1928 edition carried
the theatre advertisements on page 6 and they were under the direction of "Western Cinemas".

75 The information in this paragraph comes from Australian Securities Commission file no
000020815 Western Cinemas Pty Ltd. It explains how Thomas and Robinson were associated with
the Parkes' theatres through their involvement with the "registered firm" Western Cinemas. However,
there is no mention of J H Hamilton in the documentation and it is not known what
happened to him.
requirements, the exit doors had to open outwards, the hall had to be "generally overhauled and repaired" and the windows glazed. Western Cinemas' accountants, W H Bentley and Company of Orange, replied that there was difficulty in securing the finance to carry out the necessary alterations. They stated that a mutual decision between the owner and Western Cinemas Ltd had been reached whereby the theatre would close as from 14 December 1929. The property was owned by W McGlynn of Parkes and, although he had to close the building, it was his intention to replace it with a new one. "Some time ago these premises were condemned by the Local Sergeant of Police, at your instigation, and it is now intended to bring the Hall thoroughly up to date..."

To ensure continuity of its operations in Parkes, the fledgling Western Cinemas Ltd was granted a lease on the Broadway from 26 November 1930.

Work proceeded at the "PPP" site during 1930 and the new, brick hall was opened as the Parkes People's Palace on Wednesday, 24 September with a Military Ball. The venue was donated free of charge to the organisers. Reporting the very successful event, at which over two hundred

76 Letter from the Chief Secretary's Dept to R C Thomas, Managing Director of Western Cinemas 22.4.1929. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 10/53071 File T1222 Parkes Picture Palace.


78 Letter from W McGlynn to Chief Secretary's Dept 25.3.1930. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 10/53071 File T1222 Parkes Picture Palace.

79 Certificate of Title Volume 502 Folio 188. (Land Titles Office.)

80 A mortgage having been taken out on the property on 13.5.1930, presumably to assist with the rebuilding. (Certificate of Title Volume 4485 Folio 153.)

81 As it was not intended to operate the hall as a cinema at that time, the word "PICTURE" was replaced with "PEOPLE'S", thereby retaining the "PPP" tradition.
couples were present, the local newspaper stated that "It made everyone feel thankful that Bill McGlynn had that new building, the Parkes People's Palace, built, for no other building in town would have accommodated the crowd in anything like comfort." According to the Fire Brigade Annual Inspection Report of 1931, the building measured 146 feet long by 58 feet wide, was of brick with an iron roof and had a wooden floor, a stage 6 feet deep by 36 feet wide and two dressing rooms. The hall could accommodate 735 people. There was a projection box over the vestibule entrance and it was constructed of asbestos mill board on a concrete floor but it was not in use. The hall was leased to Western Cinemas Ltd from 21 April 1931.

The year 1929 witnessed two memorable entertainment events in the life of the people of Parkes. Firstly, Gladys Moncrieff appeared at the Broadway in "Rio Rita" on Thursday, 5 December 1929 with the original Sydney cast. This production brought to Parkes one of the most popular stage musicals performed in Sydney in the 1920s and gave them a chance to see "Our Glad" in person. The second event was when Hoyts Talking Pictures (a touring affair) played at the Broadway for a three-night season, commencing on Monday, 9 December. Hoyts Touring Talkies arrived in Forbes and screened at the Strand on Monday 16 December. Hoyts returned

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82 Western Champion, Thurs. 25.9.1930, Parkes, p. 6.


84 Certificate of Title Volume 4485 Folio 153. (Land Titles Office.)

85 Western Champion, Mon. 2.12.1929, Parkes, p. 10. While a reminder notice appeared in the newspaper Thurs. 5.12.1929, there was no further mention of the event.


87 Forbes Advocate, 13.12.1929, Forbes, p. 6. Prices for adults ranged from 3/3 to 1/6 (ie 34c to 15c) and children from 2/- to 1/- (ie 20c to 10c).
to the Strand at Forbes in March 1930.

After what must have been a successful visit by Hoyts, the Broadway management immediately set about equipping the theatre for sound. Alterations were considered necessary and the Sydney firm of theatre architects, Kaberry and Chard, was engaged.\textsuperscript{88} Plans and specifications for renovations were drawn-up and deposited with the Chief Secretary.\textsuperscript{89} These showed improvements to ventilation, alterations to the stage, and the construction of a new fire proof operating box. The alterations to the stage included cutting back the existing stage, removing the existing proscenium, installing new proscenium splay walls and a new proscenium, finishing the front of the stage and installing Wunderlich sheets in the new ceiling bay over the proscenium. In the dress circle, the floor was to be built up over the existing floor to improve sightlines.\textsuperscript{90} The local newspaper gave more details. The dress circle was to be re-raked for better sightlines and an extra one hundred seats would be installed. The stage was to be moved back 12 feet, allowing an extra 150 seats in the stalls. The dress circle seats would be moved into the stalls and new seats installed in the dress circle. "...special attention is being given to a new luxurious lighting system", but the newspaper did not elaborate. Since talking pictures required a larger projection box, a new one (8 feet by 14 feet) was to be installed. Supervising architects were Bradley and Fallick (for Kaberry and Chard), and S M Browne, a local man, was placed in-charge of the work. Cost of the renovations and

\textsuperscript{88} Letter from the Chief Secretary's Dept to the architects, Kaberry and Chard 4.12.1929. NSW State Archives - Board of Fire Commissioners: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 20/14968 File 184 Parkes.

\textsuperscript{89} Letter from Kaberry and Chard to Chief Secretary's Dept 22.11.1929. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 17/3404 File 2504 Parkes Century Theatre. The letter referred to some of the work to be done.

\textsuperscript{90} NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 17/3404 File 2504 Parkes Century Theatre. Blueprints in the file mention all of the items listed above.
installation of new equipment was reported to be between £6000 - 7000, the equipment alone costing £2780.\textsuperscript{91}

'Talkies' opened on Saturday, 22 March 1930 with "The Sky Hawk", starring John Garrick and Helen Chandler. "Western Cinemas Ltd...announces the coming of the Talkies to Parkes with justifiable pride, for in them they feel sure that the public will find healthy amusement and must realise that here they have the most up-to-date form of entertainment in the world..."\textsuperscript{92} Prior to the opening, the local newspaper featured a large article about the remodelling and gave more details than it had when the alterations were first announced. The theatre's projection box had been reconstructed to almost double its size to accommodate the relevant equipment that now included two new Western Electric projectors. A new sound screen had been installed in front of the two sound horns placed on the stage. The dress circle, now raised about 4 feet at the back, provided much-improved sight lines. New chairs had been installed in the circle and provided patrons with extra comfort. Also installed were a new ventilation system and a new auditorium lighting system. This latter included, according to the newspaper, stone vases being attached to the side walls. As well,

...a golden light, arranged to give an even effect, will flood the whole building during intervals. The proscenium will be a feature of the lighting arrangements. Through pink silk a hundred varied lights, blending softly into each other, will throw off different effects.\textsuperscript{93}

\textsuperscript{91} Western Champion, Thurs. 5.12.1929, Parkes, p.15.

\textsuperscript{92} Western Champion, Thurs. 20.3.1930, Parkes, p. 4.

\textsuperscript{93} Western Champion, Thurs. 20.2.1930, Parkes, p. 4. The "stone vases" were plaster light fittings which were also installed at the Rialto Theatre, Ryde NSW and the Royal Theatre, Windsor NSW. The proscenium lighting system, from a contemporary photograph, may have been
The new lighting system in the theatre must have impressed the average person in Parkes and greatly added to the sense of occasion associated with attending the pictures.\textsuperscript{94}

Kaberry and Chard's interior attempted to evoke a Classical atmosphere, giving a feel of respectability which the people of Parkes would have found most acceptable. The proscenium splay walls featured two horizontal bands (a large one above and a small one below) "representing an entablature and cornice". Below this, undecorated panelling enhanced an otherwise plain surface. The focal point of the building, the proscenium appeared as "the most decorated portion of the auditorium", with its Corinthian pilasters and "a more Edwardian version of a classical entablature".\textsuperscript{95} A new set of glass and timber doors replaced the iron concertina grille in the vestibule and new plastering was done on the walls and staircases. The colour scheme for the theatre was blue and gold and all furnishings were chosen to fit this scheme. It was mentioned that even the facade of the building had been painted in keeping. A contemporary inspection report stated that the building measured 110 feet by 60 feet 3 inches, had a stage of 54 feet by 12 feet and two dressing rooms. Seating comprised 737 in the stalls and 303 in the gallery. The projection little more than a fine lattice grille fixed to a frame around the inside of the proscenium with the lamps behind it. There appears to have been no provision made for cove lighting in the vicinity of the pilasters and surmounting pediment/entablature which were fixed to the proscenium wall.

\textsuperscript{94} R.T. Tindall. Parkes - One Hundred Years of Local Government. Parkes Municipal Council, 1983. pp. 81 - 82. Electricity had been supplied in a limited way to Parkes from December 1924. The northern section of Clarinda Street, known as The Broadway, was not supplied until 1927 and South Parkes received supply in 1929. It was not until 1950 that rural supply commenced, the first area being Cookamidgera on the eastern side of Parkes. The writer's wife, an ex-Alectown resident, did not experience electricity in the farm house where she lived until the mid-1950s. Illumination at night was by kerosene lamp or candles.

\textsuperscript{95} The writer is indebted to Prof' R Thorne, University of Sydney for his thoughts expressed in a letter 29.3.1994 in response to a copy of a photograph sent for his perusal. The photograph shows a ceiling that could be the 1925 Crane metal one. Kaberry and Chard may have only been commissioned to do limited work owing to the onset of the Depression and the expense of installing talking picture equipment.
box was of timber and asbestos, double lined, inside with galvanised iron. 96

With the Great Depression affecting the town, the manager of the Broadway, Reg Bisley, arranged for those who were suffering severe hardships to attend the pictures. As he told the local newspaper, "...when a family are having a bad time they need relaxation and amusement more than those more fortunately circumstanced." 97 Sometime during those torrid years, the following sign was emblazoned across the street awning of the theatre: "Perfect Pleasure At Your Leisure". (See Figure 23.)

In Forbes, the response to 'talkies' must have been very positive because Grinsted set about enlarging the Strand's projection box in order to install new 'talkie' equipment. 98 Sydney architects, Kaberry and Chard, were re-engaged to carry out the alterations that enlarged the box to 9 feet by 12 feet. 100 The last of the silent pictures were screened on Saturday, 9 August 1930 and 'talkies' opened on Monday 11th. Ruth Chatterton in "The Laughing Lady" was the opening attraction. So important was the occasion that the Mayor, Alderman W J Thomson was invited to perform

96 Board of Fire Commissioners Annual Inspection 18.2.1930. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 17/3404 File 2504 Parkes Century Theatre.

97 Western Champion, Thurs. 12.6.1930, Parkes, p. 8. This was not unusual as many theatres in suburban Sydney were known to have done the same thing. To what extent depended upon the relationship between the manager and the local people.

98 Certificate of Title Volume 2877 Folio 47 shows another mortgage being taken on the property on 12.9.1930. The property now had three mortgages on it. This latest one probably helped to pay for the cost of the 'talkie' equipment.


100 Report 31.5.1937. NSW State Archives - Board of Fire Commissioners: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 20/14937 File 135 Forbes.
the opening ceremony.\textsuperscript{101}

As the Depression started to take hold of Australia, Parkes and Forbes had been reduced to one picture theatre each while Trundle maintained its picture show. The beginning of the 1930s saw Tom's Amusu Touring Talkies take to the road and include in its itinerary such places as Bogan Gate, Bedgerebong and, later, Gunningbland - places that were too small to have permanent cinemas and too far removed from centres with established cinemas.

In January 1932, the people of Parkes saw the following item in the local newspaper:

\textit{No longer will men's collars go limp and ladies' silk frocks stick to the seats at the Broadway Theatre, for arrangements have been made for the immediate installation of an up-to-date cooling system. The system is worked on the suction-exhaust principle, and completely cleans out every cubic foot of air in the theatre every hour. It is the first country theatre to install the system, and the Manager (Mr. Reg. K. Bisley) and Directors of Western Cinemas are to be congratulated upon their enterprise.}\textsuperscript{102}

While audiences of today have come to expect air-conditioning (even in country cinemas), picture theatres of yesteryear were not always the most comfortable places to be in hot weather. The following item, from a Parkes newspaper of January 1932, gives an insight into the dangers associated with taking off one's tie in a picture theatre in order to 'cool down'.

\textit{A peculiar accident occurred at the Strand Theatre, Forbes, the other night. A picture

\textsuperscript{101} Forbes Advocate, Tues. 12.8.1930, Forbes, p. 4.

\textsuperscript{102} Western Champion, Mon. 11.1.1932, Parkes, p. 6.
fan, feeling hot undid his shirt front, and while folding his tie, placed the front stud in his mouth. Without realising it, he suddenly gulped and the stud slipped down his throat. The man was hurried to the public hospital, and an operation was immediately performed by Dr. Hair. The missing stud was found sticking in the throat, and was quickly dislodged.  

On the morning of 4 January 1932, McGlynn and Company's department store in Clarinda Street, Parkes burnt down. Rather than remain out of business while new premises were built, McGlynn converted the "PPP" into McGlynn's Bazaar in which role it remained until 1934. Western Cinemas wrote to the Chief Secretary's Department in February 1932 requesting that the licence on the theatre be cancelled as it was in use as a "general store". After McGlynn's moved into its new premises, the theatre was re-licensed and Western Cinemas Ltd was granted a new lease dating from 6 December 1933. The first event was the Diggers' Ball on 8 August 1934.


104 Western Champion. Thurs. 14.1.1932, Parkes, p. 15. An advertisement stated that the bazaar was to open on Saturday, 16 January.


106 Letter from Western Cinemas to the Chief Secretary's Dept 10.2.1932. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 10/53071 File T1222 Parkes Picture Palace. The letter pointed out that the licence was in the name of W J McGlynn.

107 Certificate of Title Volume 4485 Folio 153. (Land Titles Office.)

108 Parkes Police Report to Chief Secretary's Dept 15.8.1934. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 10/53071 File T1222 Parkes Picture Palace. It also stated that Bentley of the Orange office of Western Cinemas would forward the £2 licence fee. Attached to the report was a sketch map which showed measurements of the building. Interestingly, the stage was shown as a 24 feet by 9 feet platform protruding into the auditorium. In a photograph of the hall dating from the late 1930s, the stage had a proper proscenium and proscenium side walls which extended to the side walls of the auditorium. Whether the 1934 sketch was correct and if the proscenium was added later is unknown. The decoration of the proscenium and the side walls would date from much earlier than the late 1930s and is reminiscent of Kaberry and Chard (theatre architects) work of the 1920s.
In the course of research, several photographs of the building, taken in the late 1930s, came to light. The facade, in face brick with four brick pilasters surmounted by a plain pediment with a stepped parapet above, was a modest addition to the streetscape. It might have enhanced the building more if the facade had looked less false and an attempt had been made to curve it around the corner (for example, similar to the 1930 Regent Theatre at Islington, NSW). Despite this, the Palace proved to be a "monumental building" and leaves one with "a distinctly generic feel". The central window (light and ventilation for the projection box) appears to have its origin in Palladio's work but is without any ornament. Windows on either side provided light for the rear of the auditorium. "The elements of the facade are all classic, though flattened and simplified (as in the pilasters)." A cantilevered awning protected the central entrance area.

The proscenium comprised 1920s Classical style pilasters and pediment. This gave the stage a simple, but elegant appearance, with a hint of the Grecian temple about it to add respectability. Decorative panels with female heads inside them were fixed above the doors on either side of the stage that led to the supper room. The auditorium walls were undecorated, although piers were evenly spaced along them. High up in the spaces between the piers were windows for ventilation.

109 This was an important discovery as no other photographs are known to exist of the building prior to the 1960s.


111 Words in italics in this paragraph are quoted from a letter to the writer 10.3.1994 from Prof. Marvin Carlson, The City University of New York, in response to photographs of the "PPP" sent to him for comment.

112 It was noted when inspecting the theatre on 20.1.1994 that the proscenium pilasters, pediment and decorative pieces of the side proscenium walls were stained with shellac, most probably dating from the time they were erected. Various shades of shellac were a common and cheap form of colouring plaster work.

113 The writer is indebted to Prof. Marvin Carlson for his comments about the proscenium.
FIGURE 30
Parkes People's Palace - c1939.
(Source: K J Cork Collection)
FIGURES 31 and 32

Parkes People's Palace - prior to reopening as the Palace Theatre - c1939.
(Source: K J Cork Collection)
Of special interest, however, was the ceiling that appeared to have no particular period. It comprised large panels, the decoratively moulded borders exuding some sort of Greek influence. One suggestion has been that it is stylistically "simplified Edwardian". The middle section of the ceiling incorporates timber lattice for ventilation purposes while the side sections are solid fibrous plaster. Two sets of doors led into the auditorium from the small vestibule and on the Bogan Street side of the auditorium was a cloak room. The projection box was reached by stairs on either side of the vestibule. Hanging pendant lights provided general illumination.

Trundle was a little slower than Forbes and Parkes when it came to the installation of 'talkie' equipment. Perhaps it was the size of the town and the cost involved. In 1932, Weston submitted plans to the Chief Secretary's Department for the remodelling of the projection box. It was proposed to construct a new box 12 feet by 12 feet at the front of the theatre. With the Depression at the time, this action was considered too expensive and a compromise was submitted. The compromise was to increase the depth of the existing box by 20 inches and to pour a concrete floor to replace the original iron one. It was also noted around that time that the theatre contained "...no draperies, curtains, scenery or decorations". The projection box work was completed

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114 The writer is indebted to Prof. R Thorne, University of Sydney for his thoughts expressed in March 1994 about the building's architectural qualities.

115 Photographs taken of the Palace in the late 1930s in the possession of the writer. The three views show the exterior, from the stage to the vestibule, and from the vestibule to the stage.

116 Certificate of Title Volume 4538 Folio 33 shows that a mortgage was taken on the property by N Callil, a local farmer, on 11.7.1932. This money may have financed the alterations.


by September.\textsuperscript{119}

On 2 June 1933, Boyd William Power became owner and exhibitor at the Trundle picture show\textsuperscript{120} which he renamed 'Weston Star - Trundle Talkies'.\textsuperscript{121} The business changed hands yet again, on 1 March 1938, coming into the possession of Ernest James Simmons.\textsuperscript{122} At the time, pictures were screened twice weekly and dances held at irregular intervals.\textsuperscript{122} Keen to improve the quality of sound reproduction, Simmons organised for the installation of a Prismaphonic High Fidelity amplification system in order to give "perfect reproduction" of both speech and music. A Mr Giles installed the equipment that brought "... the Trundle Talkies into step with all the latest


\textsuperscript{120} Certificate of Title Volume 4538 Folio 33 gives the date of transfer as 2.6.1933. However, the only other available source (see footnote 106) gives the year 1935 as the date when Power took over.

\textsuperscript{121} J.P. Watts and C.F. Wright, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 204 states 1935. \textit{Wise's Post Office Directory 1935} in the theatres' section also lists B W Power. In the NSW State Archives Chief Secretary's Dept, Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 10/53174 File T3596 Trundle Weston Star, there is an application for endorsement of the licence for the theatre made on behalf of B W Power, but dated 8.2.1938.

\textsuperscript{122} Letters. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 10/53174 File T3596 Trundle Weston Star. Letter from E J Simmons to Chief Secretary's Dept 29.3.1938 "...having bought and taken over...". Also a letter from B W Power to the Chief Secretary's Dept 7.4.1938 stating that it would be "...quite in order to transfer the Licence to Mr Simmons". Certificate of Title Volume 4538 Folio 33 gives the date of transfer as 1.3.1938 and lists Simmons' occupation as "Sharefarmer". The property was mortgaged on 3.3.1938 to the Bank of NSW and this money may have paid for the refurbishing of equipment and other decoration.

\textsuperscript{122} Application for endorsement of licence to B W Power 8.2.1938. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 10/53174 File T3596 Trundle Weston Star.
modern devices, giving an exclusive wide range of reproduction to all talking pictures.\textsuperscript{124}

The Weston Star was an important part of Trundle's way-of-life. Besides the pictures and dances, other functions were held there. A farewell party was held in May 1938 for a local bank employee who was being transferred\textsuperscript{125} and a benefit picture show was held in July 1938 to raise funds for the Memorial Hall.\textsuperscript{126} (In a short obituary for Simmons in 1957, the newspaper made quite clear the relationship that existed between the man and the town. "His passing will be felt by many of his friends...who remember him as one who was always ready to give advice and a helping hand in time of trouble."\textsuperscript{127})

Advertisements exist which show that Tom's Amusé Touring Talkies came to the village of Bedgerebong (approximately 20 miles west of Forbes) in the early 1930s, screening in a large marquee. One such advertisement encouraged potential patrons to "Watch for the searchlight at 7.45 p.m." In March 1939 a proposal was put forward by which motion pictures could be officially screened in the School of Arts Hall.\textsuperscript{128} Also known as the Public Hall\textsuperscript{129}, it had been licensed from

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textit{Trundle Star}, Fri. 13.5.1938, Trundle, p. 1.
  \item \textit{Trundle Star}, Fri. 20.5.1938, Trundle, p. 1: "\textit{There was a large attendance at a social evening in the Trundle Talkie theatre on Wednesday evening, to say farewell to Mr. Des Brain who has been transferred to Tumut.}"
  \item \textit{Trundle Star}, Fri. 1.7.1938, Trundle, p. 1: Benefit night on Monday, 11 July.
  \item \textit{Trundle Star}, Fri. 3.5.1957. Trundle, p. 3.
  \item \textit{KINO}, Dec. 1992, No. 42, Australian Theatre Historical Society Inc, Sydney, p. 7. The marquee was used until 1938 when the Chief Secretary's Dept, fearful of fire, refused to renew the licence. After that, Tom used local halls in order to continue his circuit.
  \item Chief Secretary's Dept Architect Report 15.2.1933. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 10/53101 File T1701 pt 1 and Box 10/53102 File T1701 pt 2 Bedgerebong. According to information in the file, the hall was an iron-roofed,
22 December 1909, could accommodate 217 and was of a 'unique' construction. Dances were held regularly and the travelling picture show man was to be charged seven shillings and sixpence each night that he screened (which was approximately once a month). The Chief Secretary's Department wrote to the Theatres and Films Commission and said that, from information received, the films would be shown once a month during summer and that it had no objections to the hall licence being endorsed to screen films. The School of Arts was said to have been a "substantial one" and there were no other halls in the vicinity. The application was granted on 16 June 1939.

The Forbes Police reported that Tom's Amusé Touring Talkies visited Bedgerebong every three weeks and that Tom supplied the screen and the portable operating box. The box, it was stated, weatherboard building that measured approximately 40 feet by 20 feet. In 1933 an unlined, weatherboard supper room, measuring 40 feet by 14 feet, was added to the side of the building.

Chief Secretary's Dept Theatres & Public Halls Lists for 1959 and 1964 in possession of the writer. These were infrequent publications.

Chief Secretary's Dept Architect Report 18.1.1933. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 10/53101 File T1701 pt 1 and Box 10/53102 File T1701 pt 2 Bedgerebong. In this report, the Architect from the Chief Secretary's Department noted that its design was "most unusual". This was because five tie rods were stretched from posts sunk into the ground to the edge of the building and were there, according to the plans, to "take up the strain". The Architect inquired whether the building was out of alignment and, if so, should be straightened rather than rely on tie rods. (From the sketch provided in the report, the tie rods were reminiscent of wires attached to tents to hold them up.)

Chief Secretary's Dept Memo 29.3.1939. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 10/53101 File T1701 pt 1 and Box 10/53102 File T1701 pt 2 Bedgerebong.

Chief Secretary's Dept Report to Theatres and Films Commission 4.5.1939. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 10/53101 File T1701 pt 1 and Box 10/53102 File T1701 pt 2 Bedgerebong.

was a permanent fixture on the back of a truck. It measured 12 feet by 6 feet 6 inches, its walls were of sheet steel and its roof was of heavy canvas treated with fire retardant. Pictures were projected through apertures in the box. The truck was backed up to within fifteen feet of the building and the projectors were focussed through an open window. Tom screened at the School of Arts for many years throughout the warmer months. By the late 1940s, the days of pictures being shown in the hall were over. The last report was that from the Forbes Police when they claimed that to go out and check the equipment being used involved a 46 mile trip and they had already done so on two previous occasions. Because the screenings were "once a month", they felt that the journey and time involved was unnecessary as both the exhibitor and the equipment used were known to them. The distance involved and the wartime petrol restrictions made things difficult for the touring show.

In Forbes, ever desirous of satisfying the town's picture needs, Grinsted arranged for the installation at the Strand of a new "unit air-conditioner" in the winter of 1937. Besides providing warm air in the cooler months, it could also provide cool air in the warmer months. (One suspects, however, that the desire to satisfy was also tinged with a little concern about the fact that the Olympic Theatre was being rebuilt by an opposition exhibitor into the new Studio Theatre.) In 1937, Grinsted engaged the services of, at the time, Australia's foremost theatre architects, Crick

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136 Forbes Police Report to Chief Secretary's Dept 5.10.1947. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 10/53101 File T1701 pt 1 and Box 10/53102 File T1701 pt 2 Bedgerebong. The report included, "On two previous occasions an examination of this Showman's plant has been made, and same complied with the Regulations."

137 Forbes Advocate, Tues. 27.7.1937, Forbes, p. 1.
and Furse, to draw-up plans for a proposed remodelling of the Strand. Unfortunately nothing more was done about it. The Strand remained the Kaberry and Chard original that it was and missed out on being remodelled into a 'modernistic' cinema of which Crick and Furse were masters. Grinsted did install a new Masart-brand sound screen and a new "Western Electric Living Sound Mirrophonic" system. Screenings by that time were six nights each week plus matinees on Saturdays and occasional Wednesdays.

The year 1936 witnessed the possibility of the Forbes Olympic being converted into a roller skating rink. An inquiry was made by D Simpson about the suitability of converting the building. Unfortunately, the then-owner, Patrick McGirr, sought to defray the cost of proposed structural alterations by having Simpson pay half. The latter declined and the building stayed closed. In 1937, Michael Moroney of Sydney instigated the remodelling of the Olympic into a modern-looking cinema. On completion, it was renamed the Studio. Conversion was not achieved without


141 Letter from Chief Secretary's Dept to D Simpson 30.11.1936. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 10/53032 File T574 Forbes Studio Theatre. Letter also inquired if Simpson intended to proceed with the licensing of the old open air skating rink. This was possibly the former Star Theatre at the corner of Court Lane and Rankin Street that had a chequered history throughout the 1920s and 1930s.


143 In the early 1930s, Moroney was the exhibitor at a small picture theatre in lower George Street, named the Studio (previously the New York, then the Bridge Theatre). He also exhibited at the Australian Theatre in Mosman in 1936.
a certain amount of opposition from Grinsteed at the Strand. The Motion Picture Exhibitors' Association of NSW, ever-prepared to support its members from unnecessary competition, wrote to the Chief Secretary in January 1937 stressing that Moroney's receipt of a licence to screen motion pictures would affect the existing exhibitor who had so far invested £16,000 in his theatre and that a strict investigation should be carried out to ensure that the applicant (Moroney) complied in every way with all requirements. This subtly attempted to cast doubts on the quality of the Olympic's remodelling.144

The Government Architect inspected the building in February 1937 and made mention of a number of points. Among them, he noted that an application for renewal had been made in 1936 but had not been proceeded with owing to costly structural alterations being necessary. He also stated that the theatre's licence had expired on 2 June 1925. He commented on the state of the building, saying that "...the roof is in a shocking and precarious state which would not stand up to a decent storm". Included in the report were the specifications that had been submitted by the applicant's architect, H Helman of Forbes. These included the lining of the walls and ceiling with "Flexfelt" (a type of acoustic wallboard), the construction of certain new roof trusses and the repair of existing trusses, and the extension of the gallery to provide an additional eleven tiers to the existing five (the lowest one thereby terminating at the existing floor level) and to construct barriers in front of the gallery seating. It was stated that exits from the auditorium were sufficient, being as follows: from the stalls - two exits, one 5 feet 6 inches wide, the other 10 feet wide; from the gallery - two 5 feet wide exits connecting to a passageway which discharged into the main

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144 Letter from the Motion Picture Exhibitors' Association to the Chief Secretary's Dept 28.1.1937, NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 10/53032 File T574 Forbes Studio Theatre.
vestibule, with the front doorway of the main vestibule to the street being 25 feet wide.\textsuperscript{145}

The Fire Brigade Annual Inspection of May 1937 gave a brief insight into the modifications that were being made. The report stated that the interior had been lined with "Celetex" (an acoustic wallboard), suitable for talkie theatres.

Original gallery has been extended in the form of a ramp to the ground floor, communicating about the centre of the auditorium. Two new exit staircases are being installed from the gallery, one on each side, to the vestibule on ground floor. Bio box and rewinding room are adjoining at the rear of the gallery and are in the course of erection.\textsuperscript{146}

Michael Moroney sought permission from the Chief Secretary to open the new Studio Theatre (see Figure 33) on Saturday, 24 July 1937.\textsuperscript{147} The licence was delayed although the theatre opened that night, the programme consisting of "Love Is News" starring Loretta Young and Tyrone Power, plus "Charlie Chan At The Olympics". Stalls was one shilling and the circle was one shilling and sixpence.\textsuperscript{148} The local newspaper stated that approximately £3000 had been spent, "...which

\textsuperscript{145} Report from the Chief Secretary's Dept Architect 18.2.1937. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 10/53032 File T574 Forbes Studio Theatre.

\textsuperscript{146} Inspection Report 22.5.1937. NSW State Archives - Board of Fire Commissioners: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 20/14937 File 135 Forbes.

\textsuperscript{147} Letter from M Moroney to the Chief Secretary's Dept 12.7.1937. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 10/53032 File T574 Forbes Studio Theatre.

\textsuperscript{148} Forbes Advocate, Fri. 23.7.1937, Forbes, p. 3.
Western Cinemas is in process of giving all its theatres a complete facelift. A recent view of the Studio Theatre, Forbes, which has been accorded "the treatment".

FIGURE 33
(Source: Film Weekly, 13.10.1955, Sydney, p. 9)
amounted to a near enough complete rebuilding programme" both internally and externally.\textsuperscript{140}

The official opening ceremony that took place was performed by the Mayor, Alderman H K Ford.

The newspaper reported the event saying that the old Olympic had never looked so good.

... subtly secreted soft lights, the elaborate stage curtains... small army of tradesmen at the old Olympic - once the house of the silent movies, then in recent years a haunt of miniature golf fanatics; more recently still, an automobile laundry, and always an outside in rambling tin sheds... most impressive vestibule... carpeted aisles... two broad stairways... Mr. P. McGirr, well-known local financier and owner of the Studio building\textsuperscript{150}, who financed the rebuilding and renovation work for Mr. Moroney\textsuperscript{151}... H. Helman, the Forbes architect... Mr. J. Muir, the contractor...\textsuperscript{152}

Of interest was that the theatre's licence was officially held up because Moroney had failed to comply with regulations about sending a sample of screen for fire testing. The Chief Secretary's Department, in a rather informal internal memorandum, stated, "We had the same trouble with this man when he was running the Studio Theatre, George St., Sydney (old Bridge Theatre)."

The same memorandum raised the question as to whether Moroney intended to install mechanical

\textsuperscript{140} \textit{Forbes Advocate}, Tues. 20.7.1937, Forbes, p. 1.

\textsuperscript{150} Certificate of Title Volume 26 Folio 95 shows that the property was transferred to Mowbray C MacPhillam, Neil M MacPhillam, Angus O MacPhillam and George S MacPhillam on 11 May 1917. There is no indication that McGirr ever owned the theatre site, although he did own a lot of the surrounding blocks. It may have been that McGirr financed the re-construction of the building, thereby becoming the "owner" of the building. Attempts to contact P McGirr's descendants with a view to his business activities have yielded no results.

\textsuperscript{151} Attempts to trace Moroney and his descendants have proved unsuccessful.

\textsuperscript{152} \textit{Forbes Advocate}, Tues. 27.7.1937, Forbes, p. 1.
ventilation. Perhaps this question was raised because Grinsted at the Strand, in order to combat the new opposition, had recently installed a new "unit air-conditioner" which stated could offer "fireside warmth" in the winter or cool air in the summer. Screenings at the Studio, Forbes were presented every evening, Monday to Saturday, with matinees on Wednesday and Saturday. On at least one occasion it was used for a live stage presentation by the Young Australia League.

In May 1938 Moroney advised the Chief Secretary's Department that the licence for the Forbes Studio Theatre should be transferred to Western Cinemas Ltd as from Saturday, 7 May. With that, Moroney severed his connection with the Studio and Forbes. A new licence was issued, dated

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154 Forbes Advocate, Tues. 27.7.1937, Forbes, p. 1. This was not air-conditioning as we know it today. It was a primitive form of mechanical ventilation.

155 Note in file - no date, only year 1938. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 10/53032 File T574 Forbes Studio Theatre.

156 Letter from M Moroney to the Chief Secretary's Dept 3.5.1938. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 10/53032 File T574 Forbes Studio Theatre. Certificate of Title Volume 2783 Folio 172 shows no arrangement about the lease changing hands. There is a transfer of the title on 10.5.1940 to Cinema Holdings Pty Ltd and a new Certificate of Title (Volume 5165 Folio 82) was issued. This latter document shows a mortgage dating from 23.7.1940 to P M McGirr that was discharged on 25.7.1941 prior to the property being transferred to Western Cinemas Pty Ltd on 11.9.1941. Cinema Holdings Pty Ltd had only two subscribers: Kevin Ellis and David Lynton Williams (both solicitors, Sydney). According to Williams' son in a telephone interview on 27.8.1994, Williams and Ellis' firm was Snider and Dean Theatres' solicitors. While his father passed away in the middle 1940s, he assumed that Cinema Holdings Pty Ltd was a "front company" for Snider and Dean but could not offer any ideas as to why such an arrangement would have taken place. A search of the company's records (Australian Securities Commission file microfilm no. 965A Cinema Holdings Pty Ltd) sheds no further light on the matter. The Memorandum of Association was very broad and did not mention the Studio Theatre. By 1937, Snider and Dean Theatres (formed in December 1935) listed itself as "In Association With Western Cinemas Ltd". L Snider and G Dean were given as Joint Managing Directors of Western Cinemas Ltd which became 'Pty Ltd' by special resolution in July 1937. As at 16 April 1940, the registered office of the company was c/o Snider and Dean Theatres, 155 King Street, Sydney. This interlocking situation was not unusual in the picture theatre business from the 1920s through to the present.
24 July 1938, and seating was shown as 272 in the stalls and 363 in the gallery.\footnote{Copy of licence dated 24.7.1938. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 10/53032 File T574 Forbes Studio Theatre.}

By this time, Western Cinemas Ltd was part of the growing Snider and Dean Theatres group (that had commenced in 1935). As the circuit grew larger, it afforded greater film buying power.\footnote{According to Film Weekly Motion Picture Directory, 14.10.1937, p. 45, Snider and Dean Theatres Ltd either controlled, were "In association with" or were "Affiliated with" over forty theatres in NSW, Victoria, Queensland and Western Australia. Western Cinemas Ltd were classified as "In association with" through interlocking directors. See Footnote 153.}

The village of Gunningbland (to the north-west of Forbes) came into existence as a result of the railway being extended from Parkes to Bogan Gate in 1896.\footnote{R.T. Tindall, op. cit., p. 108. According to this source, from its earliest days the village relied on self-help in order to grow. One example of this was the first school that was constructed by voluntary labour. From later research, it has been discovered that the Public Hall was also constructed by voluntary labour.}

The Public Hall of 1922/23\footnote{Letter from Hon Secretary of the Gunningbland Hall Committee, B H Wilson, "Mia Mia", Gunningbland to Chief Secretary's Dept 14.4.1923. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 17/3262 File 349 Gunningbland. "Dear Sir

We built a Public Hall at Gunningbland and were ignorant of the fact, that we had to have the hall licensed. The Hall is vested in trustees and is built for the use of the residents of the district..."

As a result of this letter, B H Wilson, the Chief Secretary's Department requested plans and specifications for the hall and the sum of £1, as payment for the licence fee. G N Kenworthy* from the Government Architect's Office duly reported on the hall. Its dimensions were 59 feet by 24 feet, with 12 feet high walls, construction of which was wooden framed with galvanised iron cladding. The roof was also of galvanised iron. There was an open stage inside the hall of 24 feet by 12 feet. Ventilation was by means of wire panels in the ceiling and louvres in the gables. Six windows allowed extra ventilation. Seating accommodation was for 250.

*NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 17/3262 File 349 Gunningbland. The Supervising Architect's Report to Chief Secretary's Dept, dated 24.5.1923, was signed by G N Kenworthy. He went on to design a number of picture theatres in NSW. An English-born architect, he worked for the NSW Government Architect's Office for twelve years. He also worked in the office of Henry White, the foremost designer of picture theatres in Australia in the 1920s (eg Sydney's State and design theatres, Melbourne Design theatre, Rose Bay Wintergarden). Among the theatres that Kenworthy designed were Cremorne Orpheum and Hurstville Savoy. Among those that he remodelled were Manly Rialto, Lane Cove}
situated off the main Parkes to Bogan Gate road\textsuperscript{161}, provided a centre for social activities.\textsuperscript{162} (See Figures 34 and 35.) A licence was granted from 7 July 1923.\textsuperscript{163} In 1938, the Hall Secretary, A Scrivener, applied to have the licence endorsed for screening motion pictures. In his application he wrote that, during the past six months, \"...one exhibition by Tom’s Manilda, (Plant worked from lorrie outside hall)\" had taken place. He also drew to the attention of the Chief Secretary’s Department that some alterations had been done to the hall. Namely, three iron rods had been installed from side to side to prevent the walls from spreading and collar rafters had been inserted.\textsuperscript{164}

Talking pictures came to Bogan Gate in the form of the Tom’s Amusy Touring Talkies\textsuperscript{165}. Travelling showman, Allan Tom of Manilda, visited the village on a regular basis from the early 1930s as part of his large circuit of central-west venues. ‘Talkies’ were at first screened in a large, Rio, Cessnock Empire. He was also responsible for designing the State Ballroom situated underneath the Sydney State Theatre. (Art Deco Society Newsletter, Vol 4 No 3, Sydney, June/July 1993.]

\textsuperscript{161} When seen by the writer on 20.1.1994, it was a very bland-looking, typical country hall with its tacked-on, galvanised iron vestibule at the front and an equivalent on the eastern side purporting to be a supper-room. The construction of the building’s front section looked flimsy in relation to the body of the hall.

\textsuperscript{162} Telephone interview 2.1.1994 with Mr P J Johnson, "Miauna", Gunningbland who was Hon Secretary of the hall in 1953.

\textsuperscript{163} NSW Government Gazette 17.8.1923 which included the licence for Gunningbland Public Hall. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 17/3262 File 349.

\textsuperscript{164} Licence Application for Endorsement of Licence 11.3.1938 by Albert Scrivener, Hon Secretary. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 17/3262 File 349 Gunningbland.

\textsuperscript{165} It has been suggested to the writer that A Tom and his touring picture show would make a fascinating history. An short attempt was made in 1992 (see next footnote). However, this is a topic that could be further explored in the future.
FIGURES 34 and 35
(Source: K J Cork)
waterproof marquee which was trucked from place to place and erected where required.\textsuperscript{166} After 1938, when the Chief Secretary's Department refused to renew his licence for the marquee, Tom closed this part of his operation but continued his other country circuit that used halls.\textsuperscript{167} This included Priestley's Hall (the former West's/Clifford's/Hurley's/Tolhurst's Hall) in Edols Street, Bogan Gate\textsuperscript{168} where Tom built a projection annex at the front of the building. He screened pictures here into the early 1940s.\textsuperscript{169} (Sometime after the World War II, the hall was damaged by a freak storm and was demolished. A lot of the timber was salvaged for the proposed, new War Memorial Hall\textsuperscript{170} that was planned as the new picture theatre for the village.)

Having secured a renewal of its lease on the Parkes Broadway (Figures 36 and 37) from 18 June 1938\textsuperscript{171}, Western Cinemas Ltd undertook some renovations at the theatre. New seats were installed

\textsuperscript{166} \textit{KINO}, Dec. 1992, No. 42, Australian Theatre Historical Society Inc, Sydney, p. 7. Article on Allan Tom's Annual Touring Talkies advertised that it was "Screening in the Waterproof Marquee..." Among the places listed was Bogan Gate. In an interview with the writer on 5.4.1994, Allan Tom said that he remembered screening once in a hall at Bogan Gate when weather conditions made it impractical to set up the marquee. He thought that it could have been the former Picture Hall as it was definitely not the Tolhurst/Priestley's Hall.

\textsuperscript{167} ibid., p. 7. Also letter from Allan Tom to writer dated 10.3.1994 in which he stated "about 1940".

\textsuperscript{168} The hall was erected in 1899/1900 for S L West, along with the adjacent hotel. According to \textit{Western Champion}, Fri. 16.3.1900, Parkes, p. 8, C Clifford took over shortly after the hotel was opened in March 1900. (The hall changed names every time the licensee of the hotel changed.)

\textsuperscript{169} Telephone interviews on 3.3.1994 with J Williamson (068 64 1116), Bogan Gate who went to the pictures in the hall as a child in the early 1940s; Roy Lees (068 62 2844), Parkes who grew up in Bogan Gate and remembers seeing pictures in the marquee on at least one occasion and Allan Tom constructing the projection "annex" (as he called it). Mrs J McKeowen in letter 16.3.1994 stated that Tom screened on a week night, and dances were held in the hall on Saturdays. As with Gunningbland, wartime petrol restrictions did not help the touring shows.

\textsuperscript{170} Correspondence from L Kearney, "Belara", Bogan Gate 14.3.1994.

\textsuperscript{171} Certificate of Title Volume 502 Folio 188. (Land Titles Office.)
FIGURES 36 and 37
Broadway Theatre, Parkes - c1939.
(Source: K J Cork Collection)
in the dress circle (see Figure 38) and back stalls, "unit air-conditioners" were installed throughout, the ticket box was replaced with a more modern one, and part of the existing office was partitioned-off to form an extra ticket counter for busy nights. The dress circle and stairways were "close carpeted", new curtains were hung on the auditorium windows and on the stage, and all interior doors were veneered and polished. It may have been around this time that some slight alterations were made to the leadlight windows on the facade. The glass in the central bay window was replaced with louvres, the semicircular windows above were blocked-in and the two side semicircular windows were removed and replaced by smaller rectangular ones.

In 1939, R P Grinsted (of Forbes) submitted an application to erect, in Parkes, a 300-seat theatre with an adjoining 1000-seat open air theatre. With such a threat on its doorstep, Western Cinemas applied to the Chief Secretary for an endorsement to the "PPP" licence so that it could show films. The application contained much valuable information about the town and its existing theatre, the Broadway. The Palace was still owned by McGlynn to whom a weekly rental of £12/10/- was paid. McGlynn, it was claimed, was prepared to spend £3000 on the building to make it "the most outstanding picture theatre at Parkes". Figures of attendance for 1938 at the Broadway were given to show the need for another theatre (but, of course, one that was operated by Western Cinemas). During 1938, 128,980 people had purchased tickets at the Broadway.

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172 Letter from Western Cinemas Ltd to Chief Secretary's Dept 29.7.1938. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 17/3404 File 2504 Parkes Century Theatre.

173 See Figure 39. The photograph, dated 1948, shows the theatre looking much the poorer without the leadlights.

FIGURE 38
Dress Circle Seating Plan for Broadway Theatre, Parkes - pre 1949.
(Source: NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 17/3404 File 2504 Parkes Century Theatre.)
FIGURE 39
Clarinda Street, Parkes - 1948.
This part of the street was "The Broadway". (The theatre is on the RHS of the photograph.)
(Source: NSW Government Printer)
(With the population of Parkes in 1938 given as 6140, this means that everyone went to the pictures at least twenty-one times during the year.\textsuperscript{175}) Highest attendance was at a matinee when 1216 people were in the audience while the highest evening attendance was Saturday, 22 January when 1046 were present. The average for Saturday evenings was about 700. In their report, the Parkes Police were a little less optimistic. "Apart from Annual Show nights, there are usually 40 to 70 seats vacant [on Saturday nights]. The theatre would not average more than half capacity during the six week nights."\textsuperscript{176}

It may have been that Grinsted came to acknowledge that the film-buying power of such a large company was greater than his and, with the uncertainties associated with the recent outbreak of World War II, transferred his ownership\textsuperscript{177} and licence of the Strand to Western Cinemas in November 1939\textsuperscript{178}, thereby eliminating his threat of opposition to Western Cinemas in Parkes. Western Cinemas continued with its application for endorsement of the Palace licence which was

\textsuperscript{175} Statutory Declaration by D W Watt, Ass. Secretary of Western Cinemas, dated 15.9.1939. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 10/53071 File T1222 Parkes Picture Palace. The declaration provided a complete list of screening dates and admissions for the year 1938. A Theatres and Films Commission Report (undated) which related to the application, mentioned Grinsted's proposal and provided attendance information at the Broadway and a chart which compared the size of number of NSW towns and their seating ratios. (See Appendix F for this chart.) Regarding the population of Parkes, it was not stated how far a radius had been drawn around the town. The official estimate for the Dept. of Statistics for 1939 for Parkes was 6340.

\textsuperscript{176} Parkes Police Report to Chief Secretary's Dept 27.2.1940. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 10/53071 File T1222 Parkes Picture Palace.

\textsuperscript{177} Certificate of Title Volume 2877 Folio 47. Date of transfer to Western Cinemas Pty Ltd was 31.10.1939. (Land Titles Office.)

\textsuperscript{178} Letter from R P Grinsted to Chief Secretary's Dept 2.11.1939 requesting transfer of licence. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 17/3269 File 414 Forbes Century Theatre.
granted from 25 September 1940\textsuperscript{179}, the local police having reported that the projection box satisfied all requirements.\textsuperscript{180} Although the theatre did not open immediately for pictures, it continued to be used for dancing.\textsuperscript{181} Other renovations that were not expected to exceed £1000 were planned. These included the installation of three pairs of double doors (wood and glass) to replace the existing roller shutter at the front of the building and the construction of a draught break just inside the auditorium.\textsuperscript{182} The establishment of an air navigation training school on the eastern side of Parkes in the early years of the war brought economic benefits to the town and it may have been for this reason that Western Cinemas persisted with the opening of the Palace as a cinema.

The new Palace Theatre opened on Saturday, 27 September 1941 when a large crowd saw "\textit{Lillian Russell}", starring Alice Faye. According to the local newspaper at the time of the reopening, Western Cinemas Ltd had purchased the property (but this was incorrect). As a cinema, it now seated 600 on the latest Dunlopillo seats. The main stage curtain was of velour velvet (which would have added a touch of opulence to the place), the screen was mounted on the back wall and was covered by black velvet when not in use. The sound system was Australian-made

\textsuperscript{179} Copy of licence dated 25.9.1940. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 10/53071 File T1222 Parkes Picture Palace.

\textsuperscript{180} Parkes Police Report to Chief Secretary's Dept 18.9.1940. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 10/53071 File T1222 Parkes Picture Palace.

\textsuperscript{181} No reason has been found for the delay once the licence was endorsed.

\textsuperscript{182} Chief Secretary's Dept internal memo 12.9.1941. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 10/53071 File T1222 Parkes Picture Palace. The memo stated that the application and sketch plans had been received. Details as given above were listed, including a sketch. The cost would have been specially noted during the war years as all building renovations were carefully monitored for anything considered unnecessary.
Raycophone.\textsuperscript{183} Screenings were only on Saturdays and Tuesdays although the Tuesday screenings were soon discontinued. The theatre was still available for dances.\textsuperscript{184} On 7 January 1943 the property was transferred to Western Cinemas Pty Ltd.\textsuperscript{185}

In the latter part of the 1940s, public entertainments at the Gunningbland Public Hall were suspended until certain repairs were undertaken.\textsuperscript{186} A police report in August 1948 stated that "The required repairs and renewals have been completed...complies with the Chief Secretary's requirements, but is not suitable, nor is it equipped for Cinematographic projection."\textsuperscript{187} This was followed in September by another police report, part of which stated, "I have to report having noted the approval of the Chief Secretary's Dept. for the resumption of Public entertainments at the abovementioned Hall. The General List has been detached and is retained at this station for information."\textsuperscript{188}

The decade had almost passed when, in January 1949, a freak storm hit Parkes and caused the death of a child who was attending the pictures.

\begin{footnotes}
\item[183] Champion Post, Mon. 29.9.1941, Parkes, p. 2.
\item[184] Champion Post, Thurs. 25.9.1941, Parkes, p. 4. The advertisement for the opening night attractions also contained a footnote: "The Palace Theatre is available for Dancing. For Conditions and regulations governing same apply The Manager, Broadway Theatre."
\item[185] Certificate of Title Volume 4485 Folio 153. (Land Titles Office.)
\item[186] The nature of the repairs is unknown as available sources do not itemise them.
\item[187] Bogan Gate Police Report to the Commissioner of Police, Sydney 16.8.1948. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 17/3262 File 349 Gunningbland.
\item[188] Bogan Gate Police Report to the Commissioner of Police, Sydney 8.9.1948. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 17/3262 File 349 Gunningbland. The "list" referred to was of items attended to before the hall could reopen.
\end{footnotes}
TWENTY-FOUR MILES AROUND NELUNGAŁOO:
1949 - THE EARLY 1960s

What should have been a normal matinee at the Parkes Broadway on Saturday, 15 January 1949 turned into a disaster when a violent electrical storm struck the town at about 1.45pm. Inside the theatre, the National Anthem had finished and the first episode of a new serial had commenced.¹ At the subsequent inquest, the Coroner's Court took evidence from Sergeant S Willis, who lived a short distance from the Broadway Theatre.

_He noticed a very severe thunderstorm with rain and hail and wind of great velocity._

_There was also lightning. He looked up in the street and saw that electric light wires had blown down and a roof had been blown off and a shop balcony was down. There was roofing strewn across the street. He went to the scene and on his way was informed the rear wall of the Broadway Theatre had collapsed. He entered the theatre and saw the rear wall had collapsed and had carried away the screen. There was debris strewn over a number of front seats. He knew that children usually occupied the front seats. He saw that a number of men were already extricating children. He joined them. The last child to be removed from the building he knew now to be Wesley Ronald Noakes, who was found to be dead. He was face downwards with a quantity of bricks and mortar on top of him. He was severely injured in the head. He was immediately in front of the stage where the front seats had been._²

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² Western Champion, Thurs. 27.1.1949, Parkes, p. 1. It was also given in evidence that the storm had approached from the west and the Broadway's back wall was the only large brick wall in the line of the storm. On inspecting the site on Monday 17th, Sgt Willis noted that the southern wall of the auditorium had moved out of its position by one and a half inches since the collapse of the western wall. He would not give an opinion that it was consequential damage.
Further evidence stated that the back wall had been approximately 60 feet wide and 28 feet high. An area of approximately 7 feet by 10 feet in front of the stage had its floor broken by the falling bricks, such was the impact of the collapsing wall. (See Figures 40 and 41.) A finding of accidental death was handed-down. ³ The eight other victims, whose injuries ranged from severe shock to broken limbs, made favourable recoveries.⁴

A galvanised iron wall was erected to cover the gaping hole in the theatre's back wall. An application to rebuild the theatre was made almost immediately, along with other applications for the other premises that had also been storm-damaged.⁵ While special priority was given by the Department of Building Materials to supply necessary materials to repair damaged buildings⁶, it was to be nearly two years before the Broadway reopened its doors. Western Cinemas decided to completely remodel the Broadway (see Figure 42) so as to remove from it any associations with the afternoon of January 15 and, as if to signify its intentions to rebuild, a new lease was secured on the theatre dated 26 February 1949.⁷ From Monday, 17 January, the Palace commenced Monday to Saturday screenings.⁸ This continued until the Broadway (renamed Century) reopened in 1951, after which the Palace returned to Saturdays only. In 1952 a few alterations and additions

³ Western Champion, Thurs. 27.1.1949, Parkes, p. 1.


⁵ Western Champion, Thurs. 20.1.1949, Parkes, p. 1.

⁶ Western Champion, Thurs. 20.1.1949, Parkes, p. 1. Building materials were still in short supply even though World War II had ended in 1945. As the town had the Palace Theatre, it may have been considered not essential to rebuild the Broadway immediately.

⁷ Certificate of Title Volume 502 Folio 188. (Land Titles Office.)

⁸ According to Mrs J Townsend, on this particular Saturday night, her husband would not open the Palace as a mark of respect. During the fifty-two years he was associated with the picture theatres in Parkes, this was the only night when he had purposely stopped a screening.
Broadway Theatre, Parkes - aftermath of the windstorm of 15 January 1949.
Top: FIGURE 40. (Source: Sun, 17.1.1949, Sydney, p. 3)
Lower: FIGURE 41. (Source: Daily Mirror, 17.1.1949, Sydney, p. 6)
Lower: FIGURE 43. Interior of remodelled Century Theatre, Parkes - 1951.
(Source: Film Weekly, 27.11.1951, Sydney, p 43)

Architects' front elevation of Century Theatre, Parkes, reconstructed to simplified modern design. Porcelain enamel sheeting lines lower external walls under awning.

Century's interior was entirely modernised, uses a series of warm greys as a basic color tone, with mushroom pink contrasts. Main act drop and pelmet with swag drape is of Italian velours, in turquoise-blue, silver-trimmed. Torments, auditorium and stairway curtains, and dress-circle rail upholstery repeat the same color accent. Other drapes are canary-yellow figured silk brocade.
were undertaken at the Palace which included a new floor, a new roof on the supper room and additional lavatory accommodation.  

By 1950, Tom's Amusu Travelling Talkies was again showing pictures in the Gunningbland Public Hall. A Chief Secretary's Department report in April 1950 mentioned the pictures and that seating comprised twenty wooden forms with backs, each seating approximately five persons. A further report (in 1951) said that pictures were being screened every three weeks and that the travelling exhibitor was "A. Tom of Manildra." No projection box was provided in the hall and films were projected through the front doors that were left open for this purpose from a portable projection box. Seating in the hall was for approximately 150. Although reports for 1952 to 1962 (inclusive) state that no pictures were being shown, the film exhibition endorsement on the hall's

9 Chief Secretary's Dept Annual Inspection Report 6.8.1952. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 10/53071 File T1222 Parkes Picture Palace. Also Dept of Public Works Report by Govt Architect C Parkes September 1952. In this report certain dimensions of the building were given. These included: supper room 56 feet by 37 feet; kitchen 24 feet by 12 feet.

10 Telephone interview 2.1.1994 with P J Johnson, "Miauna", Gunningbland who was Hon Secretary on the hall in 1953.


12 Chief Secretary's Dept Report 23.5.1951. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 17/3262 File 349 Gunningbland.

13 KINO, Australian Theatre Historical Society Inc, No. 42 Dec. 1992, p. 7. Advertisement for Amusu Travelling Talkies. Allan Tom was the exhibitor at Manildra Amusu Theatre and had a travelling picture show named Amusu Travelling Talkies.

licence remained. The hall still exists (1994).

Tom's had also returned to Bedgerebong, but an advertisement for Amusa Touring Talkies, screening "Bush Christmas" and "Black Beauty", on Wednesday, 1 March 1950 may very well have been close to the end for the School of Arts hall as a picture venue. Subsequent Chief Secretary's Department annual inspections show that pictures were not screened. (By 1967 the hall was for sale and was expected to be demolished. Demolition came in 1968 but, by then, a new War Memorial Hall had already been built and the old hall had become redundant.)

For Parkes, Thursday, 16 August 1951 witnessed the reopening of the Broadway theatre, renamed as the Century. (The event was considered so important in the community that the Parkes Mechanical Hare Coursing Club moved its scheduled meeting on that date to the 15th.) The opening took the form of a charity performance and the proceeds were donated to the Parkes District Ambulance and the local hospital. Opening attractions were "Annie Get Your Gun" and

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15 Chief Secretary's Dept Theatres & Public Halls Licensing Lists of 1959 and 1964 in possession of the writer. These were infrequent publications.


19 Letter from H M J McKellar, Hall Secretary, to Chief Secretary's Dept 15.2.1968. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 10/53101 File T1701 pt 1 and Box 10/53102 File T1701 pt 2 Bedgerebong. In the letter, McKellar stated that the licence was not being renewed because the hall was "being demolished".

"Bird of Paradise".

The new Century was reputed to be one of Australia’s most modern theatres and was on a par with quality Sydney suburban cinemas. Western Cinemas Ltd had a threefold aim: to provide a theatre equal to any in comfort and appearance; to combine modernity in design and practicality in operation; to ensure and emphasise structural strength. All steel stanchions were attached to outside piers so that the side walls would be strong enough to take any outside thrust from roof pressure. The bases of the stanchions were buried in concrete to a depth of about 5 feet and extended 8 to 10 feet crosswise under the wall foundations. Wide buttresses helped to stiffen the new rear wall to avoid any repetition of 1949. Thus, the old building was reinforced with a steel frame structure.

The interior was completely modernised to the designs of architects Samuel Lipson and Peter Kaad of Sydney. (See Figures 43 and 44.) Ceilings of fibrous plaster (to the designs of James Lyall, well-known Victorian theatre architect of the 1940s/50s) had grooved and stippled sheets in alternate squares and windows were covered by fancy plaster grilles. The decoration, which included curving plasterwork on walls, indirect lighting and scallop-decorated proscenium, looked as though it had been drawn from anywhere between the 1930s and the 1950s. It was a mixture of effects that seemed to lack any form of coherence. The internal colour scheme used a series of warm greys, chosen as a cool basic colour. Contrasting mushroom pink was used in diminishing tones across the auditorium ceiling, down the walls of the circle stairs and into the main vestibule.

Well-known Sydney-based terrazzo workers, Melocco Brothers, created an all-over floral pattern in warm-toned terrazzo in the vestibule. This carpet-like effect looked impressive and meant that cleaning/replacement expenses could be kept to the minimum. A large mirror (10 feet by 9 feet)
FIGURE 44. Century Theatre, Parkes - 1951. (Source: Mrs J Townsend)
was centrally placed on the rear wall of the vestibule and, when flanked by flowers, provided an attractive focal point. As there was no upstairs foyer, the main vestibule was unusually large. Marble-patterned linoleum covered the floor of the stalls, helping to minimise maintenance. The standard Western Cinemas red and gold patterned carpet (supplied by Grace Bros) was used for stairways, crossover and aisles in the dress circle (which had been extended by an extra row\(^1\)). Seating was standardised throughout so that when the theatre was used for live shows, the front seats could be sold at a higher price and were of good quality. The new tip-up seats were covered in a dusty fawn with burgundy stripes with honey wood fittings. The main stage curtain was turquoise blue velour with silver trim. This was repeated in the valance's swags, other auditorium drapes and circle rail upholstery. Concealed lighting was used extensively in both the vestibule and the auditorium, especially around the proscenium. Combinations of coloured lighting were available, allowing the auditorium lighting to change from basic blue to green to red to flame.

An orchestra pit, capable of accommodating up to thirty musicians, was equipped with removable flooring so that, when not in use, it could be concealed. Two large dressing rooms (which included showers) were also constructed. The stage had reasonable wings and a small fly space.\(^2\) The projection box was air-conditioned as was the auditorium. Externally, the facade of the old Broadway was stripped of its arches and cornices and given a simplified style that relied on vertical

\(^1\) Dept of Public Works Report, August 1952, NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 17/3404 File 2504 Parkes Century Theatre. This report listed a number of alterations being made to the theatre including the extra row of seats in the circle, new toilet facilities, the alteration of the outer foyer doors. It also stated that the stage, which was to have been rebuilt to a height of 53 feet, had been reduced to 26 feet.

\(^2\) Report 26.4.1949, NSW State Archives - Board of Fire Commissioners: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 20/14968 File 184 Parkes. Part of the report stated "The plans show alterations and additions at the western end of the theatre to provide a new stage section. The building will be extended approximately 28ft westerly and will measure 104ft x 62ft when complete."
panels as relief. Three small, square windows gave external light to the projection box. The building’s pitched roof behind the parapet limited the remodelling somewhat and a form of stepping was provided, giving a pseudo-Art Deco appearance. At the top of the ends of the facade, where the side walls met it, the Dutch gable effects on the original theatre were retained. Beneath the awning, horizontal banding was used in an attempt to emphasise the theatre’s entrance. (This was standard Western Cinemas’ practice at that time.) Staff uniforms were junior navy blue and French grey, highlighted with silver.\(^{23}\) (See Figure 45.)

The same magazine reference reported that one of the staff could speak eight languages and was employed to deal with the language difficulties of the large number of new Australians who had moved into the area. During the war, an air gunners’ training school was established on the eastern outskirts of Parkes (where the current airport now stands). After the war, the training school was transformed into a migrant hostel and many hundreds of new Australians were accommodated there. The staff member mentioned in the magazine was Ida Babic, a Yugoslavian migrant stationed with her family at the camp. Frank Townsend (manager of the Parkes’ theatres) and his wife agreed to have Miss Babic board with them and she was given a job at the Century. With the number of migrants in Parkes over the next few years, Miss Babic’s language versatility proved invaluable, according to Mrs Townsend.\(^{24}\)

Because the re-opening of the theatre was such an important occasion for the town, it was not...

\(^{23}\) *Film Weekly*, Thurs. 22.11.1951, Sydney, pp. 43-46. This magazine provided a feature article on the reopening and several photographs. The colour of the seat fabric was reported as being yellow-fleck fawn with brown stripes, but the *Parkes Champion Post* (Thurs 2.8.1951 p3) gave the description stated above.

\(^{24}\) Telephone interview with Mrs Jean Townsend, 20.8.1994. Ida Babic boarded with the Townsends for eleven years. Now married, she resides in Canberra ACT.
suprising that R G Medcalf MLA and the Mayor of Parkes, Ald L L Miller, were among the
guests. Several Western Cinemas' directors arrived from Sydney by a special aeroplane belonging
to Butler Airline. Police directed the stream of cars of "first-nighters" and Hawkins' Orchestra
played on the footpath outside the theatre before the show. Messages of congratulations were read
during the evening from the Managing Director of Western Cinemas (Hon Leon S Snider, MLC)
who was in London, Miss Judy Breen (Miss Festival of Britain who was touring Australia) and
many Hollywood stars. Mr Maloney (of Western Cinemas) presented cheques of £150 each to
both the ambulance and hospital authorities. He also cut the ribbon stretched across the stage and
declared the theatre open. After the show, about 200 guests partook of a special supper at the
Masonic Hall.25

At Forbes, the Strand provided the local amateur musical and drama society with a venue for the
years spanning 1947 to the early 1950s. This was possible because the theatre, after having been
taken over by Western Cinemas Ltd, had been reduced to screening only three times weekly, but
it did have reasonable stage facilities. The Studio (which did not have stage facilities) screened
nightly (except Sundays) and provided a matinee on Saturdays.26 The year 1952 brought with it
devastating floods in many parts of New South Wales and Forbes received its share. Cinema
activity in the town was brought to a standstill for a time as floodwaters washed through the
theatres.

25 Parkes Champion Post, Mon. 20.8.1951, Parkes, p. 1. From reading the newspaper
account, it is clear that the reopening of the theatre was very important to the town. Western
Cinemas' publicity people had worked hard, and there was a genuine response from the town
which showed its support by buying all available tickets to the opening night. According to Film
Weekly Motion Picture Directory 1951/52, the Century could seat 1085. The official estimate for
the population of the Municipality of Parkes for 1949 was 7330.

26 Chief Secretary's Dept Report 22.6.1950. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept:
Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 10/53032 File T574 Forbes Studio Theatre.
The small village of Cookamidgera is situated on the main western railway line between Manildra and Parkes, thirteen miles on the eastern side of Parkes. The Mechanics' Institute Hall, in Flagstone Street, proved to be the shortest operational picture show in the subject area. Originally licensed from 10 August 1934\textsuperscript{27} and used for social functions, the hall was constructed of timber frame and galvanised iron wall cladding and roof. Its stepped facade of the 'cardboard cutout type' and the unlined interior were typical of many similar country halls. (See Figures 46 and 47.) A small stage was provided at the rear of the hall.\textsuperscript{28} In 1953 the hall committee sought approval from the Chief Secretary's Department to have the hall licence endorsed so that motion pictures could be exhibited. This was the result of the manager of the Parkes theatres, Frank Townsend, complaining to the local Member of Parliament about unlicensed halls in the district being used to screen pictures.\textsuperscript{29} Local police investigated the matter and discovered that the only hall being used as such was the one at Cookamidgera. (Interestingly enough, the Chief Secretary's Department Inspection Report of 1953 said that pictures were being shown in the hall but nothing was done about this at the time.) The police warned the organisers of the breach of regulations and screenings ceased on 29 September 1953. It was noted that the exhibitor, Reg Ashcroft, was registered for the Entertainment Tax and with the Film Renters Association\textsuperscript{30} and this made him a 'legitimate' exhibitor.

\textsuperscript{27} Chief Secretary's Dept Theatres & Public Halls Lists for 1959 and 1964 in possession of writer. These were infrequent publications.

\textsuperscript{28} Personal observations of the writer 5.4.1994.

\textsuperscript{29} Letter from C G Robertson, MLA to Chief Secretary's Dept 1953. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 17/3330 File 1332 Cookamidgera.

\textsuperscript{30} Parkes Police Report to Chief Secretary's Dept 29.9.1950. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 17/3330 File 1332 Cookamidgera.
FIGURES 46 and 47
(Source: K J Cork)
Part of the application\textsuperscript{31} by the hall committee for the endorsement provided statistics that related to the village. According to the 1947 census, the population was 184.\textsuperscript{32} The nearest theatre was at Parkes but no public transport was available for travel to that town. The application also stated that the hall had been let to Ashcroft to screen 16mm films (fortnightly in winter and weekly in summer). The hall was licensed to seat 450. The licence was endorsed in October 1953\textsuperscript{33} with the provision that exhibitors had to obtain approval for their equipment. To meet this requirement, part of the exhibitor's screen had to be submitted for fire-resistance testing. This proved to be the difficult part as correspondence between the Chief Secretary's Department and the Hall Secretary testifies. While it was stated that the equipment used by Ashcroft was a Bell and Howell projector and a Brakellite Flame Proof screen (dated 5 February 1953)\textsuperscript{34}, a sample of the screen was not forthcoming from the exhibitor. As the hall secretary pointed out, "He says it's impossible to give you a piece of screening as it is a collapsible type."\textsuperscript{35} In another letter, a piece of film was forwarded to see if it was fireproof. Eventually, the secretary wrote, "I am requested by the committee to drop the whole idea..."\textsuperscript{36} In 1956, having failed to sort out the screen situation, the

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{31} Chief Secretary's Dept Report 28.9.1953. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 17/3330 File 1332 Cookamidgera.

\textsuperscript{32} The application stated that 36 adults and 19 children lived in the village and 40 adults and 25 children living within a 5 mile radius.

\textsuperscript{33} NSW Government Gazette No 179, 9.10.1953.

\textsuperscript{34} Letter from Hall Secretary to Chief Secretary's Dept 26.10.1953. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 17/3330 File 1332 Cookamidgera.

\textsuperscript{35} Letter from Hall Secretary, R J Wholohan to Chief Secretary's Dept 24.7.1954. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 17/3330 File 1332 Cookamidgera.

\textsuperscript{36} Letter from Hall Secretary to Chief Secretary's Dept 6.6.1954. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 17/3330 File 1332 Cookamidgera.
\end{quote}
committee sought approval to have the hall revert to its previous status. This was granted and the hall has remained in use as a social centre rather than a cinema.

With the arrival of CinemaScope in Australia in 1954, Western Cinemas moved quickly to capitalise on the new phenomenon. The Parkes Century was equipped with new screen, relevant projection and sound equipment and opened on 29 September 1955 with "Three Coins In The Fountain", the opening being broadcast over radio station 2PK by local presenter, John Mahon. Among those present were Hon L S Snider MLC (head of Snider and Dean Theatres, owner of Western Cinemas Ltd) and the Mayor of Parkes, Ald A C Moon. A parade, which included the Parkes Town Band and district marching girls, added to the occasion. (See Figures 48 and 49.) The theatre was specially illuminated for the event.

In the early 1950s, Western Cinemas Pty Ltd embarked on a modernisation programme for many of its theatres. This was similar to what had been happening in Sydney and Newcastle and certain country centres. The war years had taken their toll on the theatres (ie restrictions on repairs, equipment shortages) and when materials became available, theatre companies endeavoured to maintain their progressive images by providing modern, pleasant theatres. Parkes Century was already completed in 1951 and the Palace was considered only of secondary importance. In Forbes, the Studio (for a long time the town's main theatre) was supplanted by the older Strand after its remodelling in 1955. However, the Studio was given a minor facelift (see Figure 33) that

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37 Letter from Hall Secretary to Chief Secretary's Dept 10.5.1956. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 17/3330 File 1332 Cookamidgera.

38 Film Weekly, Thurs. 13.10.1955, Sydney, pp. 7-8.

39 Chief Secretary's Report to Board of Fire Commissioners 27.6.1955. NSW State Archives - Board of Fire Commissioners: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 20/14937 File 135
Opening of CinemaScope at Century Theatre, Parkes - 29 September 1955.
Top: FIGURE 48. Exterior Scene.
Lower: FIGURE 49. Marching Girls Guard of Honour on Stairs to Dress Circle.
(Source: Mrs J Townsend)
included painting and a new screen (installed in May 1953).\[^{40}\] This screen was again replaced in February 1960\[^{41}\].

From 1953, the introduction of CinemaScope to theatres throughout Australia necessitated alterations to many proscenia in order to fit the new, wide screens. At the Parkes Century this was unnecessary as the existing proscenium was wide enough. In the case of the Forbes Strand it was not. Because of the narrowness of its stage opening and the age of the building, Western Cinemas decided to remodel the theatre, at the same time widening the proscenium to allow installation of a wide screen. Work went on around normal screenings and workmen toiled long and hard to complete the work. (See Figure 50.) The theatre closed on Saturday, 1 October 1955 for final fitting-out and was reopened by the Mayor of Forbes, Ald Woods, on Thursday, 6 October with "Three Coins In The Fountain" on its new Vistavision screen. To commemorate the occasion, the Strand was renamed the Century.\[^{42}\]

The local newspaper reported the opening in lavish terms, paying particular attention to the new projection equipment and wide screen. It stated that the operating company saw the reopening as having great significance for Forbes and that was why such a large number of official invitations had been issued. Besides that,

...modern retiring rooms for ladies and gentlemen...latest box office features...attractive

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\[^{42}\] Forbes Advocate, Tues. 4.10.1955, Forbes, p. 8.
(Source: Film Weekly, 13.10.1955, Sydney, p. 8)
(Source: Film Weekly, 20.10.1955, Sydney, p. 9)

Scaffolding still surrounds the Century Theatre, Forbes, which opened with CinemaScope on Friday, October 7, with 20th Century-Fox's "Three Coins in the Fountain".

Exterior of Western Cinemas' new Century Theatre, Forbes. Formerly the Strand, the theatre was given a complete facelift under the supervision of managing director Doug Watt, and is now one of the showplaces in NSW country districts.
furnishings... a 32ft neon sign... The Century, surrounded by brilliantly lit adornments, will provide the people of Forbes with a theatre of which they have every reason to be proud. Ald. Woods said the people of Forbes felt highly honoured by the attention given to the Forbes theatre by Western Cinemas Ltd. It was very gratifying to see private enterprise spending money like it did, especially when there was no competition... It made him almost feel sad... to be asked to re-name the Strand Theatre to the Century, because it had been a familiar name to the many who had spent most of their lives here... Such a decision indicated the march of time, and he felt sure that Western Cinemas would give them something better in return... Ald. Woods than declared the Century officially opened and said great things would be expected of it in the years to come...

The Century's rebuilt facade emulated Western Cinemas 'house style' in design and was little more than a showy facade on a brick box. It could have been featured more advantageously if buildings had been built on either side of it thereby hiding the bland side walls of the theatre. However, it did provide an attractive and prominent feature to Spring Street. The colour scheme of deep pink, green and white, together with the filigree patterned material utilised, forewarned potential patrons what they might expect on the inside. (See Figure 51.)

Besides the few publicity photographs of the opening night (see Figures 52 and 53), no internal architectural photographs from that time have been discovered. During the course of the research, 

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This was part of Western Cinemas programme of remodelling and refurbishing and has been discussed earlier.

Forbes Advocate, Tues. 11.10.1955, Forbes, p. 3.

Personal observations of the writer 19.5.1968.
FIGURES 52 and 53
(Source: Mrs J Townsend)
it was discovered that a set of photographs of the theatre were taken some years after its closure (and clearly showing the handiwork of vandals). They reveal some interesting points. The theatre was not completely remodelled as had been suggested in contemporary newspaper reports. The foyer was given a new ceiling and new ticket boxes, along with new interior display cases with ornamental plaster surrounds. Oyster style ceiling lights were installed and these were surrounded with decorative plasterwork. Stalls entry doors were provided with a wide, vertical stripe in green. Colour scheme of the foyer was green with an off-white ceiling of patterned plaster. The auditorium retained its 1927 metal ceiling and dress circle balcony front. The pilasters which pierced the side walls were retained but with the addition of oyster style light fittings set against decorative plasterwork. New, ornamental plaster grilles were installed over the auditorium side windows and new plaster 'EXIT' signs were installed. The proscenium was completely remodelled with the splay walls being constructed of vertical, close-ribbed material. The front of the stage was of the same material. (The proscenium of Western Cinemas' Coronet Theatre in Orange was given a similar treatment around the same time.) Colour scheme of the auditorium was green walls with mid-brown dado (to a height of about eight feet) in the stalls, deep pink proscenium and projection box rear circle wall, pale blue front of stage, and an off-white ceiling. The exit doors were given

46 Photographs of the theatre taken by L Tod, Blacktown c1982.

47 This late 1940s/early 1950s style of decoration was developed in USA as "Skouras-Style", being named after Charles P. Skouras of Fox West Coast Theatres. In order to revamp older theatres after World War II, Skouras devised the idea of using sweeping scrollwork decoration, adding plaster filigree pieces as decorative ornaments to enhance plain surfaces, installing deep-hanging festoon drapes and multi-coloured neon-lit coves, and generously using gold leaf. (Refer to: P.J. Kaufman, Skouras-ized for Showmanship, Theatre Historical Society of America Annual No. 14, San Francisco: Theatre Historical Society of America, 1987.) While Australia never took to this style in its fullest sense, it did develop a 'poor man's Skouras-Style' which did give a 'lift' to older theatres. Hoyts Theatres Ltd utilised the style in the early 1950s when its Sydney suburban chain of cinemas was refurbished. (Refer to: Hoyts Corporation Pty Ltd - file: "Melba Theatre, Strathfield". This file included costs of renovating the theatre in the late 1940s. Photographs in the possession of the writer reveal the 'semi-Skouras-izing'.)
the same green, vertical stripe treatment as the foyer doors. Unfortunately, it is not possible to ascertain the type of lighting fixed to the auditorium ceiling as the vandals had destroyed most of that part of the theatre when the photographs were taken. Theatre chairs were recovered in standard Western Cinemas striped fabric. The refurbishment gave Forbes a pleasant-looking and aesthetically-pleasing theatre. After the opening, a special supper was held at the Studio Theatre for invited guests. (See Figure 5442.) Screenings returned to Monday to Saturday and seating was listed as 570 stalls and 266 gallery.49 At the Studio Theatre, screenings were reduced to twice weekly.

At Bogan Gate, there was the possibility of pictures being screened in that village once again. Allan Tom had ceased to visit during the war, owing to petrol restrictions and a decline in patronage. With Priestley's Hall having been destroyed in a storm, the village was without a suitable hall, and the old galvanised Picture Hall was far too old and unsuitable. A new 490-seat Memorial Hall was erected at the corner of Hutton and Lachlan Streets. Its licence, endorsed for screening pictures, was dated from 27 March 1953.50 In 1952 an application to construct the hall was approved and the licence was to be granted, according to the Chief Secretary's Department, provided that the hall was "...used wholly or mainly for the purpose of exhibiting cinematograph films". Referred to as "Proposed Picture Theatre (Memorial Hall)" in correspondence, it was stated in the licence

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42 This particular photograph, from Film Weekly, 13.10.1955, Sydney, p. 9 is the only known photograph of the interior of the Studio Theatre.


50 Chief Secretary's Dept Theatres & Public Halls Lists for 1959 and 1964 in possession of writer. These were infrequent publications.
FIGURE 54
A supper was organised at the Studio Theatre for official guests who had attended the opening of the "new" Century Theatre. This is the only known interior view of the Studio Theatre.
(Source: Film Weekly, 13.10.1955, Sydney, p. 9)
application that Reg Ashcroft of Parkes would exhibit fortnightly. In February, 1953 the Hall Secretary wrote to the Chief Secretary's Department informing that,

The original arrangements made for the exhibition of 16mm cinematographic film in the above hall has been cancelled and unless services are offered by a travelling exhibitor it is no longer intended that films be exhibited in the above Hall.

The hall was financed through local support that included donations, guaranteeing a bank loan and fund-raising activities. Whilst under construction, it has been stated that the hall collapsed and extra strengthening had to be added to the walls in order to correct this. Ashcroft did exhibit pictures in the hall on alternate Saturdays, commencing in early 1956. This lasted until September. During that same year, discussion took place about the possibility of constructing a proper projection box. Film Weekly Motion Picture Directories list Mrs D M Coomber of Bogan Gate

51 Application for Endorsement of Licence 21.10.1952. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 17/3409 File 2561 Bogan Gate War Memorial Hall. Of interest in the application was the following detail about the village. It was stated that the population according to the 1947 Census was 416. The electoral roll showed that there were 93 in the town itself and 300 within a 7 mile radius.

52 Letter from R Edwards, Hon Secretary to the Chief Secretary's Dept 16.2.1953. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 17/3409 File 2561 Bogan Gate War Memorial Hall.

53 Correspondence from L Kearney, "Belara", Bogan Gate 2.2.1994.

54 Bogan Gate Police Report to Chief Secretary's Dept 21.2.1956. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 17/3409 File 2561 Bogan Gate War Memorial Hall. The report stated that Reg Ashcroft had been exhibiting pictures there on alternate Saturdays for past two months.

55 Letter from P Buchanan (Secretary) to Chief Secretary's Dept, 29.10.1956. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 17/3409 File 2561 Bogan Gate War Memorial Hall. Letter stated that Ashcroft had ceased screenings in September.

56 Chief Secretary's Dept Inspection Report 6.8.1956. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 17/3409 File 2561 Bogan Gate War
as the exhibitor at the hall from c1955 to c1958. According to existing records, and recollections of local people, this was not the case and it is believed to be incorrect information. In the 1960s, the hall was extensively rebuilt. (See Figure 55.)

In 1957, E Simmons, the exhibitor at the Trundle Weston Star, died. Ill health had already brought about the closure of the theatre during January and part of February 1957 and the local newspaper mentioned in January that Simmons, who had not been well, had travelled to Sydney, (probably for medical treatment). He returned to Trundle and the theatre reopened on Friday, 22

Memorial Hall. The report stated: "Plans submitted by Mr Ashcroft of Parkes for installation of biograph box."


58 Chief Secretary's Dept Annual Inspection Reports. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 17/3409 File 2561 Bogan Gate War Memorial Hall. Reports after 1956 state that no pictures were shown in the hall from 1956. (The writer held several telephone interviews with local people and it was revealed that Mr and Mrs Coomber owned the local service station and had a generator which supplied electricity to parts of the village in the 1950s. It was thought that perhaps the hall was supplied with electricity by the Coombes that Mrs Coomber's name became connected with the hall. She was not the Secretary of the Hall during those years.)

59 Report by E Smith, Architect, Dept of Public Works 19.10.1964. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 17/3409 File 2561 Bogan Gate War Memorial Hall. In the early 1960s, the hall suffered movement in the footings and had to be extensively rebuilt. Its brick side walls were replaced with steel stanchions and timber frame construction, galvanised metal sheeting exterior and Gyprock internal lining. A small vestibule leads into the flat-floored auditorium that has an off-centre stage. The stage (originally a platform) was enlarged at the time. All that remains of the 1953 building is a modest, stepped-brick facade that gives the impression of solidity, but is little more than a cardboard-cutout type of facade. In the early 1970s a supper room was constructed on the southern side of the building.

60 Trundle Star, Fri. 28.12.1956. Trundle, p. 4: Advertisement - then none appear until Friday, 22.2.1957 p. 4. As this had no precedent, it could be assumed that the theatre had closed owing to ill health of the owner.

FIGURE 55
Memorial Hall, Bogan Gate - 1994.
(Source: K J Cork)
February\textsuperscript{62} and operated until Saturday, 30 March. On 2 April he left for Sydney to seek medical treatment\textsuperscript{63} but it is probable that it was not successful. He passed away on Friday, 19 April.\textsuperscript{64} The theatre did not advertise in the local newspaper for some time and may have been closed. One advertisement did appear for a screening in July.\textsuperscript{65} Regular advertising recommenced in January 1958\textsuperscript{66} although there was a special free children's matinee held on 14 December, organised by the local returned servicemen's club.\textsuperscript{67} (This practice had been going on for a number of years and continued to go on for some years to come.)

In early May it was announced that, "Mr. E. J. Pett has taken over the 'Weston Star' Theatre. He will commence duties on Friday next."\textsuperscript{68} E J and I G Pett's lease commenced on 1 May 1958\textsuperscript{69} and they were assisted by A and P Pike. The theatre continued Simmons' twice weekly screening policy.\textsuperscript{70} In a farewell notice to past patrons, Mrs Simmons informed the people of Trundle that

\textsuperscript{62} Trundle Star, Fri. 22.2.1957, Trundle, p. 4.

\textsuperscript{63} Trundle Star, Fri. 5.4.1957, Trundle, p. 1.

\textsuperscript{64} Trundle Star, Fri. 26.4.1957, Trundle, p. 1: The notice stated that Mr Simmons had been a lifelong resident of Trundle and that he had passed away suddenly.

\textsuperscript{65} Trundle Star, Fri. 12.7.1957, Trundle, p. 4: The film was "Tigers in the Sky", starring Alan Ladd. No details were given in the advertisement about its screening dates.

\textsuperscript{66} Trundle Star, Fri. 1.1.1958, Trundle, p. 4.

\textsuperscript{67} Trundle Star, Fri. 29.11.1957, Trundle, p. 4.

\textsuperscript{68} Trundle Star, Fri. 2.5.1958, Trundle, p. 1.

\textsuperscript{69} Letter from Executors of the Estate of the late E J Simmons to Chief Secretary's Dept 23.4.1958. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 10/53174 File T3596 Trundle Weston Star. The letter stated that Mr and Mrs Pett had acquired the business from 1.5.1958 but were only leasing the building.

\textsuperscript{70} Reports throughout the 1950s - 12.6.1952, 15.7.1953, 7.7.1954, 16.6.1955, 17.7.1956, 6.7.1957, 15.6.1958, 4.7.1959. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 10/53174 File T3596 Trundle Weston Star. According to the following reports,
the operation of the theatre had been transferred and concluded with, "Thanking you for your patronage and trust you will extend the courtesy to my successors." The new exhibitors worked hard to continue providing quality entertainment for the town. The building remained in the ownership of W L Simmons, L H Simmons and M P Simmons.

In 1960, an application to screen films in the Tichborne Public Hall was made by L P Kinkead. The neat-looking, but plain, Tichborne Hall is set back from the main road and in the middle of a paddock. Kinkead's application was not successful. While no reasons have been found, it is probable that Western Cinemas Ltd would have strenuously opposed any such application from a settlement situated between Parkes and Forbes in which towns it controlled the theatres.


71 Trundle Star, Fri. 9.5.1958, Trundle, p. 5.

72 Certificate of Title Volume 4538 Folio 33 lists Walter Llewellyn Simmons, Farmer of Trundle, Leonard Harmer Simmons, Picture Show Proprietor of Werries Creek, Maud Pearl Simmons, Widow of Trundle as registered proprietors - entered 2.5.1939. This raises the question of E J Simmons’ ownership of the theatre at the time of his death in 1957. No reason has been forthcoming as to why these three people acquired ownership of the property in 1939 and as all of the principals are deceased, the answer may never be found. However, they retained ownership until 1977 when the property was sold.

73 The official opening of the hall had been performed on Wednesday, 2 December 1925 by J Burch because the Mayor of Parkes had to return early to Parkes for another engagement - the opening of the new Broadway Theatre. "The fine hall just erected at Tichborne was officially opened last night, the occasion being marked by a very successful ball, for which the music was supplied by Neohouse's Jazz Orchestra." (Western Champion, Thurs. 3.12.1925, Parkes, p. 10) A more detailed account of this hall's history is in the Appendices.

74 Application made in 1960 by Leslie Patrick Kinkead, c/o the School Residence, Tichborne to show films in the Tichborne Public Hall. Seating 200. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 17/3343 File 1530 Tichborne.
broadcasts until the early 1960s. The cinemas, until then, were still looked upon as a mass medium. As the number of cinemas in Sydney and Newcastle rapidly declined from c1958, one can almost imagine country exhibitors watching the scene with disbelief, knowing that the businesses that they had built up over the years were going to be liabilities in the very near future. The year 1962 brought television to the subject area. In 1961, pictures were being screened in five cinemas - two theatres in Parkes, two theatres in Forbes and one theatre in Trundle. The days of the travelling shows and the small village hall cinemas had gone. More people had cars now and travelled into the main towns for shopping and entertainment. The villages that had provided essential services (eg shop, post office, banking facilities, a hall, a school) were watching their days running out as the locals climbed into their cars and sped off to Parkes, Forbes or Trundle to do their weekly shopping and to go to the pictures, or the school bus took their children into the main centres because the little village schools were unable to sustain their numbers and were being closed.75

In Parkes, the local RSL club helped to bring about the demise of the Palace as a dance hall76 and it was dealt a final blow as a cinema with the coming of television in early 1962. Western Cinemas closed the theatre after the screening on Saturday, 28 April 1962. Final films were "The Farmer Takes A Wife" and "Surrender Hell".77 The licence was retained until 1966 when it was not

75 J.P. Watts and C.F. Wright, The Story of Trundle, A Town and Its People, Trundle: I Berry & J Curr, 1987, p. 317. An example for school closures can be found in the Trundle District where, out of thirteen schools operating in 1939, seven closed during the 1940s, one each in the 1950s and 1960s and three in the 1970s.


renewed. By 1968 the building was in use as a motor vehicle spare parts store. Finally, in February 1970, the building was delicensed. Since that time it has seen use as a furniture shop and flea markets. It was taken over in 1994 for a secondhand furniture shop. Much of its interior is intact, including the proscenium and side walls. Unfortunately for the facade, its fine brickwork was painted a most unbecoming blue many years ago. (Figures 56, 57, 58, 59.) If it were restored to its original condition, it would add much more to the streetscape in which it stands and once more give an air of respectability to that part of the town.

In Forbes, the last programme screened at the Studio was on Saturday, 16 June 1962. Closing films were "The Full Treatment" and "The Young and the Guilty". The newspaper reported Western Cinemas' local representative who stated that the theatre might re-open in the warmer weather when the novelty of television had worn off. "Mr. Yeates said that the novelty of television was not expected to take as long to wear off in the country as it had in the city....We don't expect it to take more than one or two years in the country districts...." The news item went on to state that attendances at both the Century and the Studio had "dropped during the

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78 Letter from Western Cinemas Ltd to Chief Secretary's Dept 17.10.1966. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 10/53071 File T1222 Parkes Picture Palace.

79 NSW Govt Gazette No 30, 27.2.1970. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 10/53071 File T1222 Parkes Picture Palace. This Gazette shows that the Palace and a number of other halls and theatres were delicensed as from 11.2.1970.

80 Certificate of Title Volume 4485 Folio 153 shows that a lease was granted to Waltons Stores Ltd on 23.7.1971 and another lease was granted to John Meagher and Co (Parkes) Pty Ltd (department store) on 20.10.1981. The property is still owned by Western Cinemas Pty Ltd.

81 Forbes Advocate, Fri. 15.6.1962, Forbes, p. 24.

82 Forbes Advocate, Fri. 22.6.1962, Forbes, p. 1. At that time, Bill Yeates was the manager of both the Century and the Studio theatres.
FIGURES 56 and 57
(Source: K J Cork)
FIGURES 58 and 59
(Source: K J Cork)
winter, when people preferred to stay at home by the fire. With the coming of television they had added inducement to stay at home for their entertainment." The report continued: "The theatres are not the only businesses that have been hit by the arrival of television..." The local hotels' patronage had "dropped sharply" over the past three months because of the introduction of television to the area.

Several publicans have installed television in their public lounges in an endeavour to bring the crowds back. However, many are complaining that, although people come to the hotels, they come to watch the television and do not buy nearly as much liquor as previously.  

It was noted that the Studio was closed and for sale in January 1963. Later that year it ceased to be licensed as a public hall. Western Cinemas was less than optimistic in its response to an inquiry from the Chief Secretary's Department about the situation of several of its theatres.

For your information, the Palace Theatre is temporarily closed owing to the terrific opposition presented these days by television and licensed clubs and same will only be open on various occasions as warranted...Concerning your letter of 22 January with reference to the Studio Theatre, Forbes, we would advise also that this theatre has been closed under the same circumstances as the Palace Theatre, Parkes.  

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83 While there is no similar article in the Parkes' newspaper, it would be most unlikely that the same thing had not occurred in that town.

84 Letter from the Board of Fire Commissioners to the Chief Secretary's Dept 4.1.1963. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 10/53062 File T574 Forbes Studio Theatre.

85 Letter from Western Cinemas Pty Ltd to the Chief Secretary's Dept 30.1.1963. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 10/53062 File T574 Forbes Studio Theatre. (Also see footnote 77.) By the early 1960s, Forbes' RSL Club had become
Western Cinemas Pty Ltd maintained the licence of the Studio in order to keep out any potential opposition and in the event that something might happen to its Century Theatre. A police report stated in June 1963 that the theatre was "Only to be used in cases of emergency." It remained for sale. In 1964 it was used twice for musical shows and was reported to be in a good condition. Then, on 8 March 1965, the theatre was sold, the licence cancelled and it was converted into Bakes Barton store (farm and rural merchandise). Thus the building that was referred to as "...bringing to our doors a touch of the city..." and "...a structure that adds to the importance of the town..." ceased to fulfil that role and, a little over twenty years later, vanished without trace.

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a major social centre in that town. In 1963, a new Leagues Club opened in Parkes and provided another large auditorium and other amenities.

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89 A lease on the Studio Theatre to Southern Cross Machinery Pty Ltd (farm machinery) was granted from 13 June 1968. According to D Davis, (telephone interview 15.2.1994) who worked for Southern Cross at Forbes from 1969 until its closure, the theatre was not altered internally, retaining its stage and stepped gallery until demolition many years later. Certificate of Title Volume 5165 Folio 82 (Land Titles Office) reveals that change of ownership occurred twice before it was finally sold to the Forbes Services Memorial Club Ltd on 20 September 1987. (Dates of sale to Barton and other vendors and lease to Southern Cross come from the same source.) The site is currently in use as a car park for the club.


91 Forbes Times, Tues. 22.2.1917, Forbes, p. 2.
When television transmission reached the Trundle area in 1962 it resulted in continually dwindling audiences at the Weston Star.\textsuperscript{92} It finally gave up the struggle and closed on Saturday, 30 May 1964 with "The Guns Of Navarone",\textsuperscript{93} the exhibitors using a local newspaper advertisement to thank the people of Trundle for their past patronage in their endeavour to keep the theatre operating. The newspaper printed a eulogistic editorial that proclaimed,

...a black week...[it] is a bigger blow to Trundle than it would be in the case of a larger town, as the picture theatre represented about the only outside form of entertainment that the young people of Trundle had for their week ends...they will visit nearby towns to fill the vacuum...will help form the habit of looking elsewhere but to their own town...the lack of support given to the local theatre was due to the popularity of television which, unlike radio, is still in the novelty stage...Whichever way one looks at it, the loss of the theatre is a bad thing for Trundle - how bad the future alone will tell.\textsuperscript{94}

By mid-1964, two years after television had commenced transmission within the subject area, only two picture theatres were left in operation (one in Forbes and one in Parkes) and their existence was slowly drawing to an end.

[Notes on the post-television years are in APPENDIX J. Photographs are included.]

\textsuperscript{92} Personal interview with Mrs P Pike, exhibitor, 20.1.1994,

\textsuperscript{93} Trundle and Tullamore Star, Wed. 27.5.1964, Trundle, p. 2.

\textsuperscript{94} Trundle and Tullamore Star, Wed. 3.6.1964, Trundle, p. 1.
CHAPTER 5

PERSONALISING THE PICTURE
Twenty-four Miles Around Nelungaloo.
Using the oral histories and the correspondence.
CHAPTER 5
TWENTY-FOUR MILES AROUND NELUNGAложение:
PERSONALISING THE PICTURE!
Using the oral histories and the correspondence.

While the gathering together of the history of the picture venues was challenging, acquiring knowledge from the human beings who had attended or who had worked in them was just as difficult. It is a little over thirty years since television came to the subject area. Many of those who were once regular attendees at the pictures in the 1910s - 40s period have passed away. Those who worked in the picture shows have fared the same. The history of the buildings is, in its own way, an important record. To add the 'human side' to a history gives life to what might otherwise be purely 'clinical'. So, it was decided to undertake a certain amount of qualitative research. First of all it was essential to find people who would be prepared to discuss their experiences of going to the pictures in pre-television days. Secondly, the reminiscences of former theatre employees would present the other side of the occasion. Since the writer believed that going to the pictures was a social outing, it was considered better to interview former patrons in group situations so that the interaction within the group might stimulate their memories. With the theatre employees, it was decided to undertake 'elite' interviews with those who could be found so that lines of inquiry could be explored if and where necessary.

Having decided to use group interviews as part of the qualitative research, a number of texts were consulted\(^1\) for ideas. An interview guide of seven broad questions was devised for the (focus)

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\(^1\) For example:


groups. (See Appendix H.) Because such a guide was not meant to be "a verbal version of a survey questionnaire," it had to be constructed in such a way as to take the participants from more general questions to more specific questions. It also had to be open enough to allow the interviewer to probe responses and introduce new questions as the groups progressed. The general nature of the questions was meant to encourage all members of the groups to respond without being asked immediately for specific details that related to past events. A supplementary list of questions under each general heading was devised so as to suggest to participants the sorts of things that could be discussed should they be reluctant to speak or were unsure of what to say. In practice, once the groups started to become more at ease, the participants became willing to share their memories. The guide was also found to be useful for keeping everyone on task.

Sample selection for the groups depended on the availability and willingness of people in the subject area. Since the interviewees had to have gone to the pictures in pre-television times, senior citizen groups permitted easy access to large numbers. Parkes and Forbes each had two theatres operating concurrently for a time and it was felt that more could be gained by questioning groups in those towns. Parkes' Senior Citizens met monthly, while the Forbes' one met weekly for lunch. Owing to financial constraints on the writer, timing was essential to meet with the two groups in the same week. This was achieved during Easter week (Wednesday in Parkes, Thursday in Forbes). Two groups at both centres were held. The group participants were members of the


respective senior citizens groups who volunteered 'on the day' to be interviewed.  

Rather than rely solely on the groups, another form of supplementary material was sought by publishing 'Letters to the Editor' in the Parkes Champion Post and the Forbes Advocate newspapers. (These newspapers cover the whole of the subject area.) Responses were forthcoming from a number of people, including one lady who had left the area some years before and now resides in Victoria. The letters covered the period in people's memories from the 1920s to the 1960s.

Former theatre managers, their wives and former theatre staff were sought and, in some cases, found. Many had passed away. However, two Forbes' managers provided details of theatre operations and their wives told of what it was like to have a husband 'married' to a theatre. The wife of a former Parkes' manager was found living on the far South Coast of New South Wales and she provided some information and several photographs that included the staff at the Century Theatre, Parkes. Several former theatre staff members gave insights into running theatres and what it meant to them.

It was felt that interviews with Aboriginal people would add an extra dimension. This was prompted by a former theatre manager who told of how he had (because of company policy) refused to sell seats in the Dress Circle to Aboriginal people, telling them that they had to sit downstairs. Aborigines had been part of cinema audiences in the past and it was felt that their memories would be worthwhile including in this study. Despite speaking with the Koori Centre at the University of Sydney (where the idea met with approval), two letters and two telephone calls

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3 The Forbes' groups were not without difficulty as they had to be conducted over lunch.
to the Dubbo Aboriginal Lands Council failed to elicit an acknowledgement. It is disappointing because a part of the population in the subject area is not represented in the findings.

All of the interviews and correspondence were transcribed. The data was read and the information conceptualised. One qualitative research text suggested that it would be "inappropriate to generalize far beyond the members of the focus groups". Hence, the writer tried to avoid doing this. However, six categories emerged from within the data gathered. As this thesis was only ever intended to be an historical one (with the inclusion of a certain amount of reminiscences), the temptation to turn it into a sociological study was avoided by stopping at the point where the data was sorted into the categories. Other aspects of coding (i.e., properties and dimensional ranges) were looked for and established but have not been included in the work as they were considered to be outside the purpose of this thesis. It is an aspect that could be looked into by subsequent research.

The categories that emerged were: Attendance; Audience; Motive; Preparations; Recollections; Perceptions. Sub-categories were established within the categories and, in some cases, sub-headings emerged within the sub-categories. They are presented here solely for the purpose of recording them should they be of use to some future researcher.

1. ATTENDANCE -

Sub-categories: Never or Rarely; Infrequently; Once a Week; Saturdays Only.

2. AUDIENCE -

Sub-categories: Family - Subheadings: Whole Family; Siblings; Spouses Only

Non-Family - Subheadings: Mates/Friends; Boy/Girlfriends. Miscellaneous

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4 D.W. Stewart and P.M. Shamdasani, op. cit., p. 20.
3. MOTIVE -

Sub-categories: Personal - Subheadings: Outing; Entertainment; What’s On

Impersonal - Subheading: Nothing Else To Do

4. PREPARATIONS -

Sub-categories: Personal Appearance - Subheadings: Sunday Best; Other Clothing

Other Arrangements - Subheadings: Transport; Waiting (queues); Bookings (of tickets); No Bookings; Miscellaneous

5. RECOLLECTIONS -

Sub-categories: Objective View - Subheadings: The Buildings; The Staff; At The Show; After The Show

Subjective View

6. PERCEPTIONS -

Sub-categories: Suggestive Atmospheres; So, What Was It All About?

The data gained from the qualitative research is included in this chapter. The first part is what the patrons said and the second is from the theatre employees. Its purpose is to give life to The History in Chapter 4.
Let's Ask the People!

The Patrons.

It was a great pleasure to have dealings with over forty people from within the subject area. The material gathered from their reminiscences and correspondence\(^5\) provides the 'human side' of the buildings' histories. Without the subjective/personal material, the objective histories of the buildings are rather sterile. The individual responses provided insights into part of country life in pre-television days, and thereby add to our knowledge of times past. In another decade it is probable that many of them will have departed from this life. Those who could recall going to the pictures in the pre-'talkie' days of the 1920s (eg the lady at Forbes who played piano for the 'silents', the lady who recalled the Princess in Parkes) have added another dimension to the histories of the buildings. After several readings of the material gathered from the above source, it became apparent that the people were thinking in specific categories: how often they attended; with whom they attended; why they attended; what preparations they had to make in order to attend; and specific recollections about the buildings and the experience of attending. Hence, this section is subdivided into those six areas, each one being dealt with separately.\(^6\)

\(^5\) For the purposes of simplicity, the oral histories and correspondence will be referred to as interviews.

\(^6\) A number of people offered information about going to the pictures in areas outside the subject area. For the most, these have been omitted from this thesis as they do not relate specifically to the subject area. On a few occasions, where it was thought that they amplified a point, they have been included. The last comment of all, although outside the subject area, is a good summary of what many of the people thought.
i. ATTENDANCE:

Despite the high attendances recorded elsewhere, some people did not go to the pictures. For people who live in the city, it may be difficult to believe that two interviewees stated that they never went to the pictures because they had too much to do on the farm. "Didn't get off the farm" and "Didn't get off the farm that much". A third said that he was twenty-five before he went to the pictures such were the demands placed on him by the farm. One lady who lived on a farm claimed that she and her husband took their children to the pictures only at Christmas time as a special treat because of their economic circumstances. While each of those interviewed now resides in the towns (three in Parkes, three in Forbes), their comments reflect what the writer's father-in-law (now aged 82) said when being interviewed about the hall at Alectown. As a child and a young man, he was expected to help on the family farm in the pre-mechanisation days of the 1920s-30s and, as he recalled, money was never freely available. Living nineteen miles out of Parkes at West Alectown, attending the pictures and other entertainments was severely limited.

Some people said that they were only able to go to the pictures on certain occasions. One lady said that she only went if her mother was going. Another said that they went during the war years only when her brother, who was in the Air Force, was home and paid for their tickets because her mother could not afford the expense. One lady said that she went only during her courting days while another said that she only went when she was young. Another claimed that there were "too many other things to do".

The majority of the people interviewed claimed that they attended the pictures (before television)
at least once a week. One person's response was that they "would go to whatever was on". One sprightly lady from Forbes said that she used to play the piano at the open-air Strand Theatre for a few years until she reached the age of nineteen and then gave it away. She said that she preferred "to sit up the back" with boyfriends. Those who said that they attended only on Saturdays showed an enthusiasm in their responses. "Went every Saturday afternoon"; "Why, Saturday!"; "Sat'dee outing"; "Saturday treat"; "...went religiously to the matinee"; "we would always attend the Saturday Matinees"; "...packed Saturday matinees and nights".

ii. AUDIENCE:

About half of the interviewees indicated that they attended with their families (either as children or as adults). A number of responses simply used the word "we". From the context of the word, "we" could be understood to mean 'the family'. For example, "We lived out in the country - Dad would take us in...".

Young people living out in the country had to rely on adults to drive them into town whenever a trip was needed. This included going to the pictures. If one lady's parents were unable to drive the family into Trundle, the children relied on a neighbour. (Perhaps this indicates a close bond between country people.) Another family used to come into town in a sulky but eventually their father bought a Buick car. Coming into town at Christmas to do late night shopping "...stayed in with the kids and went to the pictures, and lucky we could do it once a year." Mum sitting upstairs

7 This response was not followed-up but the writer is inclined to take the meaning to be that the person attended the pictures on a regular basis regardless of what films were being screened.
at the Broadway theatre and the children sitting downstairs was mentioned by two people. Even as one girl grew older and moved into the realm of boyfriends, Mum still sat upstairs although the girl and her boyfriend/s sat downstairs. Midnight movies were not unknown in the country and for one lad, mother always came to keep an eye on him. "Wouldn't allow my boy to go unless I went with him." Sitting in the front stalls was cheaper for a family. Referring to the Parkes Palace, one person said that "We mostly sat down the front because the view was better down there. It was cheaper as well." The pictures were described by one person as a "family type of entertainment". Another said, "But we all went." A quick evening meal then off into town to the pictures (although "father never went") was how another lady recalled. An elderly correspondent remarked that in the silent picture days at Bogan Gate, the novelty of going to the pictures was in no way lessened because one accompanied one's parents. Another interviewee reminisced that after the pictures in Parkes, her father would walk down to the old pie cart and the family would eat hot pies on the way home. One lady said that before her father died in the 1950s, he "would always come to the show with us", especially liking it when Bob Hope and Bing Crosby were in the picture. A Trundle interviewee recalled people in wheelchairs attending the pictures at the Weston Star theatre (Trundle), so presumably family members would have brought them.

An inquiry was made to several correspondents about child-minding facilities in an attempt to ascertain if parents preferred to attend the pictures by themselves. Three replies were received. In one reply, a Parkes' lady (the one whose father liked Bob Hope and Bing Crosby) explained that she was only eleven when her father died and, prior to that "Wherever one [family member] went we all went. I can remember our trips to the pictures...My mum would wheel the pram and dad the stroller with my 2 year old brother - we would spread out up the long road to town..."
In another reply, relating to Trundle, the correspondent suggested that what she was writing was "...probably pretty representative of other places." She wrote that sometimes a grandparent or a neighbour might be relied upon to mind a child. More often, children accompanied their parents. Babies were nursed inside the theatre and were taken out if they became noisy. Small children also accompanied their parents. It was not unusual for children to be left asleep in the cars parked outside the theatre. "Sometimes police would interrupt the film to say a child was crying in a car and give the registration number and the parents would go out to attend to the child. But usually they slept through the both films during the evening." She recalled a specific example of this when her brother's number plate was called because one of his sons was crying in the car outside the theatre.8

The last reply mentioned that "No-one ever paid for child-minding, which was done by a relative or family friend and if people had young children they usually stayed at home." The same lady went on to recall "...many people took the whole family to the movies - even babies in prams were a common sight. Parents watched their own children and this worked very well - little children would arrive in pyjamas and dressing gowns & older children would sit up the front stalls. Any disturbance would be quickly dealt with by the owner of the cinema....I'm sure that my memories are similar to most other people of that era, having discussed my ideas with others and they agreed."

Mrs Townsend, wife of the long-serving Parkes theatres' manager, mentioned that she could recall

8 This was corroborated by Mrs J Townsend whose husband managed the Parkes Broadway/Century Theatre. In the case of Parkes, the parents left a message with theatre staff and, if a parent was required to attend to a child who was in one of the cars outside, a slide was put onto the screen during the picture.
parents telling her husband that their children were asleep in the cars. He noted their seat numbers and fetched them when it was necessary.

Besides attending with one's family, some of the interviewees stated that they attended with only part of their families. Five interviewees mentioned that they went to the pictures with siblings (brothers or sisters). For one Parkes' family, so tight were the finances that as a girl, one lady eagerly awaited the arrival of her brother. "...my brother was in the Air Force and he'd come home and shout us to the pictures and, er, because Mum couldn't afford to give us too much money..." Another Parkes' lady recalled that "We had some boy neighbours who went religiously to the matinee." Another response said that she, her three brothers and two sisters "...would go into the pictures - we always walked the three miles of rough dirt road" in order to go to the pictures in Parkes. Three interviewees said that they attended with their spouses. The two ladies went with their husbands, both having gone with boyfriends previously. The one man said, "I went to the theatre with my wife when we were first married at least, er, once a week." Since those three people had already said that, as children, they had attended the pictures with family members, it was worthwhile to include this seeming progression of attending the pictures from childhood to marriage.

It was not unusual for people to attend the pictures with friends (or 'mates', as the boys called them), according to eighteen interviewees. At Trundle, one lady said that "Young people tended to go (to the pictures) on Friday night then go to the two bob hop...on Saturday night." Perhaps the most interesting of the responses was from a lady who said, "When we were young we would leave our home about three miles away and on Saturday morning we would call at various friends and we would all go to the matinee." (One can imagine the group growing as it moved
into town.) Other comments included "...being young louts, (we) went with mates"; "...with your friends". Others stated that, as the development from childhood to adulthood took place, so 'friends' gave way to boy and girl friends. ". . . had boyfriends - developed on from that"; "As you got older, you went with boyfriends"; "A crowd of us always went together. When you were going out with your boyfriends you sat upstairs"; "Courting days"; "Girls with boyfriends liked sitting up the back". And, of course there was the lady from Forbes who, at 19, gave up accompanying the 'silent pictures' so that she could sit at the pictures with her boyfriends.

Judging by the interviewees' responses, the audience that attended the pictures in pre-television days was comprised of groupings - family or non-family. While there is always the possibility that someone attended by him/herself, not one response indicated this. Hence, it could be deduced that the interviewees looked upon going to the pictures in pre-television days as a social event, an event that required company.9 This aspect of attendance could only enhance the experience.

iii. MOTIVE:

If a lot of people attended on a regular basis, and if people attended with others (as part of a social bonding), the question remains 'Why did they go?'

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9 This may not be the case after the introduction of television and could be further investigated. If television is an entertainment that can be enjoyed on one's own, has this affected the way people attend the cinema?
For a number of people, it was quite simply an outing\textsuperscript{10} with social overtones. "At Christmas - late night Saturday shopping - stayed in with the kids and went to the pictures"; "Sat'dee outing"; "We enjoyed the outing"; "A night out with your friends". And, for a Trundle person, "A meeting place for friends. Most people went on the same night each week and would meet up with much the same families."

For others, the whole experience was for the entertainment. If one accepts that the word 'entertainment' refers to a diversion, recreation, amusement (ie a special occasion), then the whole activity of going to the pictures (including the preparations, the participation and the aftertime) is part of the sense of occasion. Thirteen people mentioned the word 'entertainment', or had the spirit of the word in their responses, and did not mention going to see particular films. They spoke/wrote in general terms that captured the essence of the experience. "Rare treat - Saturday treat"; "Went with friends - entertainment"; "Something you always looked forward to"; "Only type of main entertainment in those days"; "Yes, you'd look forward all week"; "Highlight of the week was the Sat'day afternoon pictures"; "It was like TV. There was a magic about it." On a more specific note was one correspondent from Bogan Gate who wrote that the reason for attending the pictures was, "In silent picture days, possibly the novelty of it all." [My underlining.] He also wrote that "We had genuine bell ringers who would walk around the town calling 'Roll up! Roll up...A good programme.'" There can be little doubt that although the names of the pictures were unknown, unless someone happened to see a poster, the good folk of Bogan Gate attended their little galvanized iron Picture Hall for the sense of occasion that offered them both a chance to get together and to be entertained. One Trundle correspondent wrote, "In the winter that sixteen mile

\textsuperscript{10}The thesaurus gives 'expedition' and 'excursion' as words of similar meaning to 'outing'.
trip to town and back was a freezing experience - perhaps this indicates how important 'the pictures' were." Perhaps the best responses were those that made a comment upon the moral tone of the films screened. It was a "family type of entertainment", said one. A Trundle correspondent, recalled, "There seemed to be no problem allowing children to watch what was on the screen."

To a much lesser degree than 'outing' and 'entertainment', some interviewees said that they went to the pictures to see specific types of films. However, problems arise with these responses as some appear to have a degree of ambiguity about them. For example, "Flash Gordon, cowboy ones, cartoons" seems to indicate serials, a particular genre and animated pictures. All cowboy films? Even the bad ones? Another response exclaimed, "Loved them!" Everything? Another person claimed that she liked the newsreels. It would seem unlikely for her to have attended solely for newsreels. One participant remarked on the split week screenings (the only person to do so) and he was able to see different pictures twice a week. Another said she "had to follow the serials", while two others commented that they liked the serials and/or the cartoons. One correspondent wrote that she especially liked the musicals, and films that showed other countries. Only four people actually stated that they went especially for the programme: 'Went especially to see a

11 The term 'bad' is used here purely to make the reader think. The degree of 'bad-ness' will differ from person to person.

12 This meant that the theatre screened a programme for three nights then changed the programme for the next three nights (usually Sat-Mon-Tues; Wed-Thurs-Fri). This could mean that a patron was able to see a different programme on Friday and Saturday nights. The practice had been going on since the early years of film exhibition. According to a List of Exhibitors in New South Wales (showing usual programme changes, etc), compiled by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, dated 9th June 1954, held by the writer, the Forbes Studio Theatre was screening Sat-Mon-Tues, Wed-Thurs-Fri in 1954 and the Parkes Century was screening Fri-Sat-Mon, Tues-Wed-Thurs. No reasons for the two different programming policies have been discovered.
good picture", "went to see the pictures", "If I liked a movie, I'd go and see it", "If you liked the programme you'd go." One Forbes' person said that he preferred neither the Studio nor Strand. It depended on what was showing.

There were a number of people who said that there was little else to do. One person stated that "There was virtually nothing else for the young children to do." Others simply said: "Nowhere else to go", "Only place allowed to go", "No other entertainment", "There was nothing else really", "Nothing else to do besides some dances". With the New South Wales' hotels not open after 6pm (from during World War I until the referendum in 1954), night time must have been a relatively quiet time in some country areas. "Night time - no place else to go except pictures." A perusal of Parkes, Forbes and, to a lesser extent, Trundle newspapers show that balls, dances, social evenings, card parties, annual shows, church bazaars, and a range of sporting events including race meetings were also available on an irregular basis for entertainment. (It is outside the scope of this thesis to delve into the social nature of these.) On the other hand, the pictures were a regular thing from the years before World War I to the 1960s and, to a lesser extent afterwards. Two interviewees who had spent some time in Sydney commented that there was more choice of activities there than in the country. What must be remembered about the people who said that there was nothing else to do is that they did have a choice - to go or not to go. Although this paragraph contains responses that may indicate a perceived, limited choice of social activities in the subject area in pre-television days, those who made these responses said that they chose to attend the pictures. If there was so little else to do (or so little choice), was it the desire for a social occasion that brought them together with others at the pictures? Was it basically a desire to mix in a social activity with other human beings?
iv. ARRANGEMENTS:

It has been shown that people in the subject area attended the pictures with others, that many attended on a regular basis and that they attended mainly because it was an outing or it would be an entertaining experience. The interviewees were asked what, if any, preparations had to be made before setting out for the pictures. The first area of concern was personal appearance. From what was told, today's standards fall far short of yesterday's. Only one lady, who lived on a farm with her family and she and her husband only took the children to the pictures at Christmas time as a special treat, claimed that she went in "ordinary clothes". This would not deny her having to make special preparations in order to spend the time in town. For the others who mentioned personal appearance, it was "Best clothes", "Best clobber", "got dressed up", "Gloves, not hat", "Special occasion - get dressed up", "Oh yes. Sunday best", Always tried to wear a suit", "Dressed up to go to the pictures in Forbes - slacks, tie. Was expected." One man commented, "In the 1960s, got into a suit - [went] to a city [Sydney] theatre. Everyone was wearing jeans." Another, longer response gave an insight into the past and reminds us of the sense of occasion. "It was a chance for all to dress up, to be special, somewhere to go with your friend or boyfriend...One always dressed up and felt good." One lady described herself, after getting dressed up, as a "Flash lookin' tart!" after making the special effort to dress up. Another commented that, in those days, girls did not wear trousers, jeans and "that sort of thing". Perhaps the whole can be summed up by a comment from the ex-piano player from Forbes who said, "People dressed up when they went to

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13 It was also mentioned that people 'dressed-up' in order to go into town to shop, to go to church, and for other occasions. However, since the topic is about going to the pictures, this activity was not necessarily always associated with those other activities that required 'dressing-up'. The writer can well-remember his own parents and grandmother when they went to the pictures. They always 'dressed-up' and this occurred as much for the local suburban cinema as it did for the special trips to Sydney to shop and attend the pictures.
the pictures. "If the sense of occasion demanded it, and going to the pictures seemed to do so, it would seem that personal appearance was an important part of the preparations for the occasion.

People's responses revealed that they made other preparations as well. These included transport, waiting in queues, booking tickets, and two miscellaneous responses. Six people mentioned transport - from walking to travelling many miles by horse or mechanical means. Because the subject area is in the country, people from the farms had to make special arrangements to get to town. Distance seemed not to worry them as a lady from Trundle pointed out when she wrote that the "sixteen miles by car to Trundle on a Friday night for the pictures" was the norm. Another family relied on their father or a neighbour. A horse-drawn sulky was used by one family until a car was purchased.  

Comments such as those and the following indicate that distance was not seen as a barrier to going to the pictures. "People from miles around usually came"; "We walked the three miles of rough dirt road [to Parkes]." There was a valuable form of transport assistance in the picture buses that ran around the outskirts of Parkes and Forbes, bringing people to the pictures on Friday and Saturday nights. One response commented on this. "When we lived up the top of the hill [in Parkes], there used to be a bus service." As there were no other regular bus services in either town, this inducement to attend the pictures was provided by respective theatre

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15 Mr GH Simpson, a former exhibitor, remembers when he opened at Mt Druitt in 1946. People came from miles around - by car, by horse, on foot. Those on foot carried hurricane lamps and the sight on these lamps appearing out of the blackness of the night as the people approached the Vogue Theatre (an ostentatious name for the local hall) was something he still clearly remembered even in 1994.
managements.\footnote{16}

Two people recalled the lengthy queues while waiting to purchase tickets. "Big queue across the foyer to get in." and "Queued up out onto the footpath." Those of us who remember those days have no problem remembering the queues that stretched across the vestibule and out into the street. The queue at the writer's local cinema on a Saturday afternoon stretched past five shops to the next street corner and was continually replenished as those having purchased tickets moved inside and others joined the queue.

For Forbes and Parkes people, if one were prepared and had telephoned or gone in earlier, then booking one's tickets could be arranged. Several people mentioned this aspect of going to the pictures. Two participants from Forbes recalled that they never booked. One said that "All you did was you walked in, got your ticket...", while the other said, "Can't ever remember booking seats.

Nothing about booking seats was recalled in relation to the smaller venues in the subject area.

Besides the above preparations, two people mentioned other things that they had to do in order to go to the pictures. The first, from Forbes: "Used to save up bottles, etc to get money to go in."

The second, from Parkes:

\begin{quote}
We never had a lot of money so as we grew older - we'd all go picking up cordial bottles from around the town - we'd collect old wool from dead sheep and sell it to the wool-buyer, or gather old newspapers from the neighbours and sell them to the butcher or the chip and fish shops.
\end{quote}

\footnote{Picture buses were not unusual in pre-television days in the outer suburbs of Sydney and certain country towns.}
v. RECOLLECTIONS:

While recalling places past, it is possible to stand back and view them in a detached manner something akin to the Dreamer at the beginning of du Maurier's Rebecca. Although having experienced those places, we look back on them as though looking through a photograph album. We are 'detached' from them as we gaze at them in our minds, but we are still 'attached' at the same time through our experiences/memories. This idea is not new. David Canter commented on the work recorded in 1951 by biophysical chemist, J Butler. "Butler expressed strongly the belief that the formulation of organised accounts of experience, making coherent pictures, was a deep necessity for human beings." How much do we recall? How much do we not remember because of our lack of observance in the past? Our 'detachment' can range from 'aware to unaware'.

Buildings that have stood in our communities for decades are accepted as being there and it is only when they have gone or have been altered that we apply the test of how aware we were of them. Some of the people who provided responses were quite aware of the picture theatre buildings because they meant a lot to them. For others, it was a matter of patronising them but not memorising much about them. For some, they could remember specifically detailed items (eg the white stage curtains at the Forbes Strand in the 1920s). For others, it was as much as they could do to remember vague things. Yet, when one considers that the writer was asking people to take their memories back at the very least thirty-two years (to when television commenced in the area), it was surprising how many objective details could be recalled of earlier times.

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Since the buildings were well-known by many simply from their location in town, it was gratifying that many people could recall details about their physical appearance. It was especially delightful to discover a few people who could recall details about the earlier theatres. Of the Parkes Princess Theatre before it closed in 1925, they recalled: "the back part was cut off and they had seats there", "ticket box in the middle", "used to open the back doors in summer time to let fresh air in", "pretty rough inside - cream or white outside and same inside", long benches that "were padded", "used to take the back out now and again when it was very hot and we had open air."

When one compares these thoughts from the early 1920s with the information in The Histories chapter, one finds that the Princess was, in fact, semi-open air. Another participant remembered the first Parkes Picture Palace - "very rough board floor...seats were all removable because they used to hold balls there". The coloured lights at the Broadway "made it look nice". Someone commented that there were no carpets on the floor at the Palace. The Century at Parkes was remembered for "a large standing area in the front" (ie the vestibule). In Forbes, someone had attended the open air Strand before it closed in the late 1920s and another had played piano there. Another remembered that the Strand (enclosed) theatre had white curtains for a while. The same theatre was remarked upon as having "in early days - comfortable chairs". Trundle's Weston Star Theatre was remembered after its 1938 refurbishment, the correspondent giving some details of its interior and mentioning how "grand" the place looked now that it had "new curtains covering the screen". A Forbes resident mentioned that the "scenery" was different in Sydney city cinemas to that of the country ones. Despite asking him, he could not elaborate any further, although he

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18 Exploring this with the participant revealed that the lights referred to were the ones installed around the proscenium in the 1930 renovations.

19 This might have been the time when Australasian Films Ltd (part of Union Theatres) operated it and white canvas curtains were part of Union Theatres' trade mark.
said that he knew what he was trying to say. (The "scenery" probably meant interior decoration.) Only one commented in a seemingly negative way. "Wasn't so much the buildings, I think. It was the movies they put on" that was memorable about going to the pictures. (Perhaps this person had not thought about attending from the social activity perspective.)

When it came to remembering Theatre Staff, eleven responses were forthcoming from the interviewees. One participant recalled the days when the ushers showed people to their seats. Other comments included, "Someone playing the piano", "Manager - suit", "No lolly boys in Parkes had them in Forbes." (This latter one was confirmed by a correspondent.) One interesting memory was that "Several theatres had orchestras. The band used to play outside the theatre from about 7.30 to 8 o'clock - that was at the Princess." A point of dispute arose when uniforms at the Parkes Century were mentioned. One claimed that only the manager wore anything that resembled a uniform (ie a suit, or an open neck shirt in summer) while another claimed that the manager always dressed up. "...suit and bow tie - a black bow tie, dark suit." A later discovery in the form of two photographs of the staff of the Century proved once and for all that the entire front-of-house staff wore uniforms. The lady who supplied the photographs (Mrs Townsend, the manager's wife) had designed the ushering staff's uniforms. One comment referred to the way at least one theatre was conducted. "Nothing was allowed in the theatre - [the staff] were very strict." The expression may not have been the best, but the message that the staff kept control during screenings comes across clearly. The question of theatre work being seen as a prestige job in town received the reply, "I think so. I'm sure so. No idea why though."

Memories of what it was like being inside the theatre were many and varied. Besides "If a really good movie [was] on, queued up out onto the footpath", "big queue across the foyer to get in",
there were the humorous ones. "Always noisy the ones that sat downstairs"; "Mum still sat upstairs and we sat downstairs"; "Some people preferred to sit upstairs to be away from the kids"; "I remember friends from the farms - rich in those days - would sit upstairs"; "those upstairs thought they were better". In reference to sitting upstairs at Parkes, one person wrote, "It cost more to go there but everything was plush - even the run around the outedge - about 3' 6" - 4' high of plush velvet. We would lean over this and see the people below. Mostly lollies or papers were thrown down - I can't remember if I did this." Two correspondents wrote of the food eaten: "...lollies, mainly jaffas or fantales, etc or 6d worth of mixed lollies, of all sorts shapes and sizes."; "I always bought a packet of licorice cigarettes." Travelling a long way and bringing "rugs, etc" to combat the winter's cold inside the Trundle theatre was a vivid memory for one correspondent. As already mentioned above, babies and young children were taken inside the Trundle theatre, but it was not uncommon for children to sleep in their parents' cars that were parked outside the theatre and for the police or theatre manager fetch them when necessary. "I think this is a great commentary on society during those times - how things have changed - no one would dream of that now!" Another letter described the usual matinee with its mix of "the Queen", newsreel, "Craven A ads! - I can still sing the jingle; it makes my 3 sons laugh, cartoons, tense serials such as 'the Shadow' (usually before interval) and then after Interval the main feature..." One past theatre manager stated that while he was at Forbes in the early 1950s, on Mondays the 'A' grade feature was run first so that people off the land who had a long way to travel could go at interval. Normal practice was to run the 'B' grade feature before interval. One

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20 After this comment was made, one man who had spent time at Cootamundra NSW piped-in with "Just like Cootamundra!" No research was made into class distinctions in the subject area.

21 This "outedge" was the low wall at the front of the dress circle, the top of which was padded and covered with fabric.
Forbes person remembered that Lachlan Street (the main street) had cars parked along its centre on Saturday nights with, presumably, the occupants inside one of the two theatres in town.

Once the show had finished, people did not always go straight home. Some stayed in order to extend the 'treat' side of the evening. "Always ended up in the refreshment rooms after the pictures for a drink, banana split."; "[We went] to the cafe [after the show]."; "We would have a cup of tea and sandwich and a good talk... made a lovely night out." A fourth person mentioned that they used to buy hot chips afterwards for the walk home. For another, the trip to and from Trundle pictures during winter was described as "a freezing experience".

Some of the reminiscences went beyond the basic descriptions of objects or events. They were comments involving feelings about particular aspects of going to the pictures. One person said that she liked the glass showcases at the front of the theatre with their "black and white papers" (ie photographs/lobby cards) that foretold of coming attractions and enthused her to attend. Another "liked the music" when they had it (being presumably the live music of silent picture days). The lights were "lovely", the seating "comfortable". The Broadway was "very nice" before its 1949/50 rebuild. Its back stalls seats were presumably quite comfortable - "very good - better than front seats". As a child, one person sat close to the front at the pictures because it was the "in place" to be with one's friends. The importance of interval was commented on by a Trundle person who said that it "...gave people a chance to talk - in groups. No air-conditioning so went outside."

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22 Twelve within the subject area plus four outside it.

23 A subsequent interview in nearby Wellington NSW revealed that Interval was seen by some as a very important part of the evening at the pictures. "We'd all get out and see each other at half time, too. You'd meet the others at the film that you hadn't sort of - you'd gone in and you'd sat in the dark, but then at half time there'd be probably someone from the place out of
How did people behave, besides the noisy ones who sat downstairs? "You didn't go there just to make a nuisance of yourself," said one Parkes participant. The Forbes' staff were "well-respected" commented another. Perhaps this paragraph could be concluded by one correspondent who wrote that "For me also, the Century theatre [Parkes] and pictures, are wonderful memories."

The following paragraphs are from three letters, the first about Bogan Gate, the second about Bedgerebong and the third about Trundle. The past importance of the pictures to these three places is evident. Mr Lawrence Kearney was born at Bogan Gate in 1919 and has lived there for most of his life. His recollections of the village go back to 1925. In a letter dated 2 February 1994, he wrote:

In 1925 we had the silent movies with the caption printed underneath the picture on the screen. A girl, the local police sergeant's daughter, used to play music (piano) during the programme. We had the genuine bell ringers who would walk around the town calling 'Roll up! Roll up! Nick Spelson's Pictures to-night. A good programme.' And then announce the name of picture...The hall served for Balls...After the silent pictures we had the skating rink and I learned to skate there...After the demise of the skating rink, Mr Tom's travelling pictures came to the Tolhurst Hall. He called his show 'the Amus Talkies'...

Why did we go? In silent picture days, possibly the novelty of it all and one accompanying one's parents, among other things to see 'Felix the Cat', the Biblical story 'The King of Kings', and one which has had an impression on me all my life 'The Volga town that side that you hadn't seen."
In a letter to the Central Western Daily in 1983, Dr W J Peasely (then residing in Western Australia) wrote a tribute to Allan Tom and his touring shows. He related how, as a boy, he had lived in Warroo near Bedgerebong and saw his first film in 1933. The family drove to Bedgerebong to the marquee that had been erected opposite the general store.

_It was always a great sight for us to see your van parked in front of the hall as we came home from school on the big day. We would rush home, and the chores that were usually performed with reluctance were cheerfully and quickly carried out on 'picture night' so that we could have an early meal and get to the hall as soon as possible, lest we might miss something._

_As children, we sat up front on long wooden forms, whilst the adults sat in a little more comfort on folding chairs...Mr Tom, may I express my gratitude to you for all the joy and excitement that you brought to the kids and adults of the bush during the grim years of the depression and post-depression years. Your visits allowed the people to escape from their problems for a short time._

In a letter dated 27 January 1994, Miss Marie Crowley, a former Trundle district resident, recalled

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24 KINQ, Dec. 1992, No. 42, Australian Theatre Historical Society Inc, Sydney, p. 6. Dr Peasely also mentioned that, after the war, a local school teacher commenced screenings in the local school but this was poor quality compared with Mr Tom's shows. Annual Inspection Reports dating from 21.11.1950 to 6.11.1967. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 10/53102 File T1701 pt 2 Bedgerebong. The Chief Secretary's Dept inspection report of the hall, dated 21.11.1950, stated that no pictures were being shown so perhaps Mr Tom had finished by then and the school was being used.
some of the less memorable things about going to the pictures in the period from the late 1940s into the 1950s.

The theatre itself was very uncomfortable by today's standards. Seats were uncomfortable and it was freezing in winter. The first three rows on each side up the front were of a lesser quality and the kids sat there. Sometimes they got noisy and at least once each week Mr. Simmons—who was very tall...would walk up the aisle while the picture was on and say 'Be quiet, children'. I think the actual projectors broke down about once each night—at least once! We were allowed to take any kinds of food into the theatre—lollies, sweets, drinks—nothing was sold inside the theatre...The pictures were extremely important in the social life of the community. It was a source of entertainment in the largely rural area...

vi. PERCEPTIONS:

Going to the pictures in pre-television days was not exclusive of the building in which the patron sat. A sense of place was established in the minds of many people in regards to the picture venues, and the descriptions of such vary from person to person. For some, the descriptions depend on particular patterns of behaviour associated with the places. David Canter\textsuperscript{25} reminds us of this when he wrote, "...some places may be more specifically described than others. If we think, for a moment, in terms of the behaviour we would expect in a place...then some places...have relatively specific behaviour patterns associated with them." Picture theatre venues established particular

\textsuperscript{25} D. Canter, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 35.
expectations in their patrons regarding dress (refer to Preparations section above) and behaviour. "Environments...are not and cannot be passively observed; they provide the arena for action." The environments created by architects, decorators and exhibitors attempted to suggest that being at the pictures was somewhere special. They were, in fact, 'Suggestive Atmospheres'. It was said above that the staff in Parkes never allowed anyone to be troublesome. This suggests that the behaviour of patrons was monitored, thereby enhancing the enjoyment of the entertainment.

Interviewees commented on the ambience of certain picture theatres. For example, the reopening of the former Broadway at Parkes after extensive remodelling to become the Century in 1951 brought forth this response: "When the new one opened up and was glamorous, we all went there." The word 'glamorous' suggests so much - alluring, attractive, dazzling, enchanting, irresistible, fascinating, stimulating, thrilling. A correspondent wrote "It was wonderful...Those days were wonderful and life seemed so carefree. I too am sad that our Century Theatre will have to be demolished." What is suggested here is that the theatre building was responsible for many of those memories. Other responses included, "Excitement", "My memories of the Parkes picture theatre was one of class [referring to the Century]"; "There were so many exciting points about the theatre."

Sense of place was clear in one response that commented on the site of the Parkes Broadway Theatre. "Broadway Theatre - up near the Broadway Hotel. That was 'The Broadway' up that way." Add to this the sense of occasion created in the mind of someone else. "It was a chance for

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27 'The Broadway' is the name given to the western end of the main street, Clarinda Street.
all to dress up, to be special, somewhere to go with your friend or boyfriend...One always
dressed up and felt good." Another wrote, "My life as a young girl was set around the picture
theatre [at Parkes]."

When inspecting the Trundle picture theatre in early 1994, the writer chanced on two ladies who
willingly shared their thoughts about it. The Weston Star was "the social hub of the town for
evening entertainment". They dressed up and looked forward to meeting others at the theatre,
regardless of what was being screened. Going to the pictures for them (and many others in and
around Trundle, they said) was of major importance in those pre-television days.28

For some, the 'Suggestive Atmosphere' was tinged with a comparison with Sydney theatres from
among the interviewees. "Very austere in the country" was one comment. "It was just lovely,
that's all I can remember - it was just nice", said one lady as she recalled the Sydney State
Theatre. Another remembered the Chatswood Arcadia and said, "The atmosphere was special...it
just had a feeling about it." Albury Regent received mention by a correspondent who had visited
there when in her 'teens many years before. "It was unreal. So beautiful and everything plush
velvet. At interval we went out a door into paradise...a large waterfall coming out of thick
vegetation with fairy lights everywhere...Even now I can still picture that site(sic)."29

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28 Chance interview 20.1.1994 with two ladies parked outside the theatre, eating ice-
creams. They said that they were both in their late forties and they willingly shared their memories.

29 The Albury Regent had, and still has, a magnificence about it. The roof garden, the
'paradise' referred to, was situated above the front section of the building and was popular on hot
nights during interval. Although the cinema is still in operation, there are only a few remnants of
the roof garden visible. The Hoyts Theatre at Albury also had a roof garden.
In the minds of the interviewees of the subject area, their picture theatres are still alive. Perhaps a 55-year old resident of Parkes summed it up when she wrote,

> It was a chance for all to dress up, to be special, somewhere to go with your friend or boyfriend. I only experienced that towards the end - actually I sat in front of this boy I'd met once before - I was with a good friend and this person behind kept leaning over the seat to talk to me and the Usher - a man or woman with a torch - would shine the torch at us. This man is now my darling husband of nearly 34 years.30

The final comments in this section give the people of the present the opportunity to have a 'final say' about going to the pictures in the past. The nine comments are capable of standing alone.

Parkes: "It was a sort of meeting place for everybody - your friends who went there - if you didn't go with them, you'd meet them there - you'd nearly always sit in the same row."

Parkes: "Everybody seemed to go there."

Trundle: "The theatre building is still standing...sad, as it holds memories of a bygone era."

Trundle: "The pictures were extremely important in the social life of the community. It was a source of entertainment in the largely rural area..."

Trundle: "Going to the pictures in Trundle was a big social event."

Trundle: "I'd say that the local pictures nurtured a love of movies and for many years I was an inveterate moviegoer."

Forbes: "[The] theatre was the focal point of the town."

Forbes: "Sort of hub in town...Seen as an occasion. Perhaps came to town, shopped, had dinner then went to the pictures."

Bogan Gate: "It was an escape from reality when Mr Tom, Manildra, brought his talkies."

The following comment comes from a 70+ year old Wellington lady: While her experience relates to going to the pictures just outside the actual subject area, its poignancy captures the spirit of the whole cinema event.

I can always remember the wonderful feeling of excitement that I've never ever got again as you go in that door and up those stairs with the carpet. It's unforgettable. There was an aura and to me the only other time I ever got a feeling of an aura like that was in a wonderful cathedral. It had an aura about it, y'know. There was the soft music and, as I say, the glamorous person downstairs. Everyone all dressed up. It was an exciting period to go to the pictures.

Perhaps it was this "aura" to which Elwyn Spratt, thirty-two years ago, was referring when he wrote,

The old Rex, Odeon, Rialto, Royal or Jewel have closed their doors now the magic of their era has drained away.

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31 The theatre referred to was the Macquarie Theatre at Wellington, built in 1938. It was the first and only theatre in that town to have a dress circle (an upstairs). The "glamorous person downstairs" was either, the manageress Mrs Gertrude Warton, in her evening gown, or one of the smartly-attired usherettes. The speaker of the quoted lines was part of a group of Wellington senior citizens who were interviewed by the writer in mid-1994 in order to test the findings of the qualitative research undertaken within the subject area. (Appendix I) A number of those interviewed at Wellington mentioned that they preferred to sit upstairs because of the better seats, the warmth in winter and the greater sense of occasion. Nothing was mentioned about feeling more superior to those in the Stalls!

b. THE OTHER SIDE OF THE FENCE!

Those Involved With The Theatres.

There are many facets to operating a picture theatre. "The sole purpose of theatre operation is to make money." No-one would doubt this statement and the same would apply to any business. Ricketson went on to explain that the success of a theatre depended on the following: Attractions; Policy; Operation and Personnel; Advertising; Constructive Stimulation; Corporate and Physical Structures. Each was a fundamental, he claimed. Without going into detail, it is worth briefly explaining each. The first refers to the film product. Next is how the product is to be presented in order to gain the best financial returns. Thirdly, the entire operation of presenting the product must be thought through and the personnel involved (ie all members of staff) are an important element in the overall scheme of things. Advertising is what sells the pictures and should reflect the character of the theatre and its personnel. Constructive stimulation is "the character of the house" or, as Ricketson explained, "a crutch for operations". Lastly, corporate and physical structure involves the legal side of the business. What Ricketson wrote about America applied equally to Australia where the picture show men and women of the past had to face each of the above elements. The travelling showmen had to combat travel arrangements and difficulties associated with renting halls. Business managers or representatives usually travelled ahead to set up the halls and advertising. Purpose-built cinemas had to contend with the six elements and, in the case of the open air theatres, had to combat unpredictable weather. It did not change and has not changed up to the present.

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The *Film Weekly* reminded theatre managers of their responsibilities in 1966 (well after the advent of television) when it reported part of a speech given by John Davis at a film trade function.

*A theatre is only a structure, a shell. It is what you do with it which counts... Your theatre has a definite image in the eyes of your patrons. That image is formed by everything they see and hear both on and off the premises. It is a reflection of what they think about your front-of-house displays, your promotions, and tie-ups, your standards of tidiness and good housekeeping - or the lack of them - the attitude of your staff.*

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Each state in Australia had its own building regulations, health, fire and safety regulations. Each of these had to be faced by picture theatre operators. As the development of these buildings took place, so did the number of regulations. In New South Wales, while architects were employed to design and execute buildings, the Chief Secretary's Department kept a watchful eye on design and construction through its own officers and the government architect. Regulations regarding the width of stairways and aisles and the number of exits were established in relation to the number of seats. The number of seats could not be varied at an exhibitor's whim. In most cases, annual inspections were carried out by the Board of Fire Commissioners (copies forwarded to the Chief Secretary's Department) and later on by the Chief Secretary's Department. Where this was not practical, a local police report was done. Part of the inspection was to ensure that fire prevention measures and public safety matters in theatres and public halls were being monitored. Screens and maskings, drapes and curtains all had to be sprayed annually with fire retardant. Projection boxes had to be built according to certain regulations in order to stop the spread into the auditorium of a fire. The number of fire buckets was stipulated. Standard gauge fire hydrants and pre-determined

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lengths of hose had to be installed and were to be tested annually. Staff had to be trained in fire-prevention and fire-fighting. In the event of a fire or even a fire alarm, the exhibitor had to inform the Chief Secretary. Certain types of locking devices were not permitted on doors. Extra seating placed in aisles (rather than turn people away) incurred the wrath of the Chief Secretary and threats of criminal proceedings were hinted at. Appropriate lighting in 'Exit' signs had to be maintained. All parts of the building had to be kept clean, including above the rafters. Sanitary arrangements were checked. Ventilation was monitored and air flow tests were carried out.

"General practice today, however, is to work on 30 cubic feet per minute per seat; the machinery capable of being adjusted in the wintertime." Every day that a theatre was open to the public, it was supposed to be treated with a pulicide.

...all floors, seats and exposed ground surfaces shall be sprayed with either an emulsion containing at least 4% kerosene, or one part to 40 of water of phenol, cresol, or eucalyptus oil. The whole interior of such buildings shall be disinfected at least once a month.35

Operating a picture theatre in a country town (or a city) was not a glamorous job that simply entailed standing around in a dinner suit and greeting patrons. Sometimes staff were called upon

35 It was not uncommon up until the 1950s for some theatres and public halls to have kerosene lamps in the exit boxes. The glass in these had to be cleaned regularly, the wicks trimmed and the kerosene topped-up. It was illegal to have an audience in the building and not to light the exit lamps.

36 Film Weekly Motion Picture Directory 1951/52, Sydney, p. 61. "Fire and Health Regulations Governing Australian Theatres". This quotation has been taken from the New South Wales Regulations.

37 A perusal of the Chief Secretary's Department Theatres and Public Halls files at the NSW State Archives will reveal examples of all of these. Film Weekly Motion Picture Directory 1948/49, Sydney, p. 51 gives a list of fire and health requirements for theatres in NSW. In discussion with two past Forbes managers in 1994, both stated that they never sprayed the theatres.
to tackle some back-breaking work. Recalling the days of the 1952 floods in Forbes, David Joel (former circuit manager for Western Cinemas Ltd) stated that staff assisted with taking up the Strand’s stalls seats (fixed to the floor) and storing them in the circle (a nuisance job in itself). The real problems started after the flood waters had subsided. The mud and debris had to be cleared away and floorboards had a tendency to warp as they dried. He also stated that the Strand’s ticket box was washed out of the front vestibule (there being no front doors on the theatre until 1955) and was never found. Until 1955, when the theatre was remodelled, the watermark left by the floods could be seen halfway up the vestibule walls.  

Perhaps for individual exhibitors, the task of maintaining their theatre was more onerous than for those theatre managers whose theatres were part of a circuit because, at least, a circuit was responsible for maintaining its theatres rather than the resident manager. Why did they all persist?

"The sole purpose of theatre operation is to make money." But, in 1962, those purpose-built picture theatres in the subject area that were operating were suddenly transformed into large, white elephants. Within a short span of time, their histories were lost, exhibitors died, companies ceased to function, records were destroyed or discarded. Theatre staff members have, in many cases passed away. Those still alive are elderly. This section is an attempt to record a little about some of those people. Only a small amount has been found about individual staff members of the distant past. Names of new managers and owners are sometimes mentioned in newspapers and magazines but little has been recorded about the many men and women who worked in the theatres. The following pieces are offered simply to ensure that these few pieces will not be lost. They are little

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38 Telephone interview with David Joel, Bellevue Hill 14.1.1994, former Circuit Manager for Western Cinemas Pty Ltd. His job included overseeing the operation of all theatres under that company's control. He later became General Manager of Snider and Dean which owned Western Cinemas Ltd.
more than representative of the many who worked in the picture theatres within the subject area over the years.

During the course of the research, an old screen news magazine from Parkes was discovered, two past managers from Forbes and their wives, Mrs Jean Townsend (wife of Parkes theatres' manager Frank Townsend) were found along with two past staff members. These all help to paint the picture of the 'other side of the fence'.

A 1933 issue of the Parkes Broadway Theatre Screen News gave a brief report about members of its staff. (Included in it is a reminder that 'talkies' put a lot of musicians out of work.

On the staff of the Broadway Theatre are members who were prominent during the days of silent pictures at the various Theatres in Parkes. Foremost among them is Mr. Frank Townsend, Mr. Bisley's first lieutenant, who started as an assistant operator at the old Star Theatre and was later appointed Chief Operator of the old Princess Theatre at the age of 18 years.

Many changes have taken place since then, and, long before the Talkies were introduced to Parkes, Mr. Townsend had studied 'Sound' diligently, so that when the new form of

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What makes this a special issue is that it is the only known issue to exist. The original is in the possession of Mrs J Townsend and a copy is in the possession of the writer.

D. Collins, Hollywood Down Under: Australians at the Movies: 1896 to the Present Day. Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1987, p. 96. "When the first talkies arrived in Australia in 1928 a whole musical culture was all but decimated: 2000 picture-show musicians were unemployed by December 1929; in Melbourne 64 theatres had abandoned their orchestras; in Sydney the figure was around 100; every cinema in Adelaide had dispersed with orchestral entertainment." There are no known figures for the cinemas within the subject area but they would undoubtedly have followed the pattern in other areas of Australia.
entertainment was introduced Mr. Bisley found in his lieutenant an expert in Talkie machines unsurpassed by any operator in the country.

In Mr. Arthur Wiggins we find an old showman who commenced also at the old Star Theatre as billposter and orchestra leader (they played many parts in those days). Mr. Wiggins served right through the silent days as orchestra leader, and with the coming of the Talkies and the consequent scrapping of orchestras, Mr. Wiggins was appointed Captain of the Circle at the Broadway and 'Sound Monitor'.

His wife is also identified with the present show as cashier, a post she has held for many years.\textsuperscript{41}

In the case of Parkes, finding people who were former permanent staff members and who knew how the business operated was near-impossible. As Mrs S Budd (the last permanent cashier at the Century) wrote in a letter dated 7 April 1994, "I have been in touch with a few people but most of the old one's(sic) have passed on..." The main person who could have told so much about the operation of the Century and Palace theatres was Frank Townsend but he passed away in 1969. He had worked in the cinemas at Parkes since the time of World War I.\textsuperscript{42} His widow, Mrs Jean Townsend, now living on the far south coast of NSW, did write and told a little about being the wife of a theatre manager. From the letter comes the following:

\textit{The 33 years of my marriage were very fulfilling years but sadly as the wife of a very}

\textsuperscript{41} Broadway Theatre Screen News, Special Anniversary and Jubilee Week Edition (1933). No pagination. Original in possession of Mrs J Townsend.

\textsuperscript{42} ibid.
dedicated and conscientious manager our social life together was almost non-existent.

During the winter months, a family outing to a football match on a Sunday, was our main entertainment and on occasions we would attend the local balls when Frank closed up at 11 p.m. Once our three girls were of school age I became very involved with school clubs & activities, also Guiding. I worked in a voluntary capacity with the Physically Handicapped & Mentally Retarded people of Parkes, was a member of the Quota Club and also of the Tennis & Golf Clubs. On occasions I was called upon to travel to other towns on the circuit to collect film which had been misdirected, would not arrive in time for the night’s showing also used to fill in for an absent cashier. Frank died suddenly in June 1969...

Perhaps the fact that the Townsend family had stayed in Parkes was the reason that Mrs Townsend was able to become more involved in a variety of activities, unlike the situation in Forbes where the theatre managers changed regularly.

Ever ready to be involved in community projects, the management of the Century arranged free passes for Legacy wards to attend Saturday afternoon matinees during the 1950s. District property owners housed the children who came from Sydney to experience a country holiday.

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43 Letter dated 20 April 1994 from Mrs J Townsend, Tathra.

44 In a telephone conversation with Mrs J Townsend (25.8.1994), the family remained in Parkes because they preferred to stay, although Western Cinemas Pty Ltd did offer Mr Townsend at least one move.

One person who was found was Ida Babic, the usherette employed in 1951 at the Parkes Century and who could speak several foreign languages. Babic, a Yugoslavian migrant, arrived with her family in Australia in September 1949 as a refugee. The former air navigation training school on the eastern side of Parkes (where the airport is now located) was converted into the Parkes Migrant Centre and people from various parts of Europe were quartered there. While they had freedom to travel to Parkes, etc (a bus providing the necessary transport service), many of the older people found things difficult because of language difficulties. Babic, aged 14 in 1949, managed to board with the Townsend family from 1949 until 1955 and worked at the Century as an usherette in the evenings and at Fosseys (a local store) during the day. By 1950, approximately 2000 people were accommodated at the migrant centre and this was increased by another 600 later that year. When speaking with her on 21 August 1994, she said that having several languages allowed her to help those migrants whose English was not good and this helped to create a certain amount of goodwill between the theatre and the immigrants.

With Forbes, it was possible to locate two former theatre managers and their wives, and a former theatre cashier. Information gleaned from the interviews with them is presented below.

Interview with Vic and Norma Storey on 26 January 1994:

Vic and Norma Storey moved to Forbes in 1953. Norm had started in the picture business as an assistant projectionist at the Rex Theatre, Sydenham. He worked his way up to the position of Relieving Manager in the Sydney Odeon circuit (Greater Union) prior to taking on a new position with Snider and Dean's Western Cinemas Pty Ltd as manager of both the Strand and Studio

\footnote{ibid., p. 42.}

\footnote{ibid., p. 55.}
The theatres at Forbes. A house in Prince Street was provided by the company, but it was not rent-free. One of the first things Norm can remember about the Strand was being shown the water mark on a wall in the vestibule from the 1952 flood - half way up the stairs to the dress circle! As with Greater Union, all control was centred in Sydney while Vic, as manager, was merely the 'man on the spot'. The circuit was supervised by a circuit manager and a maintenance engineer who was responsible for the circuit's technical side. Prior to Vic's arrival, Arthur Clark (cleaner and part-time usher) had been in-charge while the company sought a new Forbes' manager.

The Storeys said that they had no real social life and, because they did not have a car, they were forced to rely on walking everywhere. At about 9.30am Monday to Saturday, Vic walked to the Strand. Besides normal office work, local business contacts were made for promotional purposes when necessary. Attention had to be given to the theatre building itself, with minor maintenance being done as and when required. In 1953, staff at the Strand included Arthur Clark (cleaner/handyman), Ray Manahan (projectionist), Bill Dean (assistant projectionist), Betty Rogan (cashier/office duties), and three or four casual ushering staff. The late afternoon saw the Strand office closed and Vic return home for a meal prior to returning to the theatre for the evening screening. During the time that the office was closed, the theatre telephone was switched to Vic's home and bookings would be taken even during mealtime.

Vic was responsible for the smooth operation of the two theatres in town. Betty Rogan would go around to the Studio theatre to collect the takings from the cashier there and return to the Strand with it where it would be counted. When Vic was free at the Strand during the evening, he would walk the two blocks to the Studio to check that everything was all right. At the Studio were a projectionist, assistant projectionist, cashier, and several part time ushers.
Norma recalled that she liked the quietness of Forbes. It was "a nice town to live in." While she missed other family members, they had three small children (a fourth was born during their sojourn in Forbes) and she was kept busy. On occasions, when she wanted to see a particular film, she arranged for a babysitter to mind the children. But, this was not often. Other than that and the telephone being switched over, she had no direct dealings with the theatres.

In 1955, the Strand was remodelled to become the new Century. This revitalised the older Strand and Vic and Norma can still recall the excitement of the opening night when local dignitaries and many other people packed the theatre. Afterwards, the supper at the Studio was well-attended.48 Vic recalled that, in general, attendances were good and that Saturday matinees and nights were usually packed. He never had any major problems with audience members. The operation was "quite a viable proposition." (But one must remember that Western Cinemas Pty Ltd owned the two shows in town.)

In 1957 Vic resigned his position and the family moved to Parkes where Vic took over as manager at the local Malvern Star Store (bikes and electrical goods). He said that, by then, he had had enough of day and night work. Eventually, because of Norma's health, the family moved back to Sydney.

With Vic's leaving, the position of manager at Forbes was filled by Bill Farthing.

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48 When shown a photograph of the 'after-the-opening' proceedings at the Studio theatre, Norma was delighted to see herself sitting in the front row. She had never seen the photograph.
Interview with Bill and Peg Farthing on 21 January 1994:

Bill had gained his cinema experience while working for the Kings circuit in Sydney. In February 1957, Bill was supposed to go to Forbes but, owing to a new baby being due in the family, his departure was deferred until July. His wife and family followed Bill to Forbes about six weeks later and moved into the company-provided house. Peg recalled the first social outing with the theatres' staff - a picnic by the river. While 'fooling around' the assistant projectionist, Ken O'Brien, managed to push her into the river.

Fulfilling his role as manager, Bill spent from about 10am to 12noon and evenings from about 6pm each Monday to Saturday at the Century. Betty Rogan, the Century's cashier, arrived at about 10am to handle bookings and undertake other office work. A cashier or the projectionist opened the Studio on the evenings that it was open (Friday and Saturday). About 8 o'clock each night, Bill walked around to the Studio to see how things were going. When a film programme ended its run, the films were taken to the railway station and from there they were returned to Sydney by train. New programmes arrived from Sydney by train.

The picture theatres were seen as focal points in the town, according to Bill. "It didn't matter what film, basically. Always had a full house." Peg added that they were the "sort of hub in town". The Century's staff at the time included two projectionists, manager, cashier, possibly two ushers upstairs (depending on what night of the week it was). At the Studio, Reg Barter was the projectionist. Property owners tended to book "owing to the distance to be travelled" and, when the Century's office was closed, the telephone was switched through to the Farthing's home. Bill recalled Billy and Ada Green (local identities) who had permanent seats on Saturday nights at the Studio. "The older people liked it." "It had a feeling about it." These were two comments that Bill
made about the Studio (which he described as being lined with particle board, as having no back stage area, the vestibule having a refreshment counter at the back and a freestanding ticket box in the middle.)

Peg mentioned that it was wonderful the way that "the managers and staff looked after their patrons in those days." Young people, if left by their parents, would be minded by theatre staff until the family arrived to collect them. Parents were given no cause for worry. While people tended to dress up for the pictures, especially Friday and Saturday nights, there seemed to be no distinction between those who sat upstairs at the Century and those who sat downstairs, according to Peg. There was a certain amount of status attached to working in a cinema and being the theatre manager. Respect was shown to the manager and the staff and the manager was "virtually known to everyone in town."

Being a manager's wife was not easy for Peg. They had no private means of transport and she quite often had little contact with Bill. As she put it, "days of the weeks just rolled by." What was the wife's role? As Peg explained it: "To ensure that the Manager was well-presented." With many hours of the day spent "being the manager", he had to look the part. Because of the hours that Bill worked, pressure was placed on their marriage and this needed careful handling. Having three small children made things difficult. When their eldest boy (5 years old) suddenly took ill, went into a coma and died, Bill was away relieving in one of the theatres at Orange. The local Forbes doctor had underestimated the child's condition.

Bill returned in 1966 to manage the Century and stayed until 1972.
When asked for an anecdote, Bill told the story of the teenager who, because of extremely bad behaviour towards one of the ushers, was banned for life. (In pre-television days, this was a severe punishment.) About ten months later, the lad approached Bill and pleaded with him to be allowed back in, especially since there was a certain film that was coming and he wanted to see it. He had to apologise to the usher to whom he had originally been rude and then he was let in on probation. The first night back in, Bill and the usher caught him with his feet on the seat and a cigarette in his mouth. When asked to leave, as Bill put it, "he went without a murmur" and was banned for life.

Interview with Betty Rogan, former cashier at Forbes, on 21 January 1994:

For about fifteen years, Betty Rogan was cashier at the Strand/Century. Her duties were to act as cashier (sell tickets), take phone bookings, prepare wages sheets, order posters and publicity material, and attend to the mail, banking, petty cash. Wages sheets were sent to Snider and Dean/Western Cinemas Pty Ltd in Sydney and a cheque was returned that had to be cashed prior to the wages being prepared. She saw her job as basically a public relations' one. Starting at 10am she worked until about 11.30 or 12noon. Back at 6.30pm, she stayed until the work was complete, which did not necessarily mean the end of the second feature. After one of the managers showed her how to do the advertising blocks, she prepared these for the local newspaper.

She loved her work and has a lot of happy memories about the people and the staff. Both of the Forbes theatres were "well-run" and the theatre staff "were well-respected". It was especially good to break 'house records' (ie break attendance records) and one manager, Mr Bill Kennedy⁴⁰, had a wall chart showing highs and lows. Betty was involved with organising special school matinees of certain films and the occasional private screenings for nuns from the local convent who were

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⁴⁰ Bill Kennedy was the manager before Vic Storey arrived in 1953.
not allowed to attend the pictures at normal times. At 'full house' sessions, the seats in the two dress
circle boxes were sold and extra chairs were placed in the aisles. "So long as there was a
passageway down the middle, everything was fine," said Betty. (The Chief Secretary's Department
and the Board of Fire Commissioners would not have agreed.)

A comment in the local newspaper by a theatre employee was rare. Only one was found and that
was pertained to the destruction by fire of the Forbes Century on 6 December 1984. One resident
who had formerly worked as projectionist and cleaner at the theatre, Mr Bill Dean, told a reporter
that he could remember many things from the theatre's heyday and that seeing it in flames
saddened him.50 It was quite possible that Mr Dean spoke for many locals.

Despite inquiries, no other former members of Forbes theatres' staffs have been found. Arthur
Clark, Bill Dean, Reg Barter are deceased and two other projectionists ignored letters sent to them.
Mrs M Barter replied to a letter and stated that her late husband had "commenced as operator
about 1942". But, she explained that "I am sorry that I cannot furnish you with any technical
details, but so many of those involved have passed away." However, the letter included the
following items of interest.

About 1935 or 36 another theatre was built. It was called the Studio, and my husband
commenced work there51. At that time he worked Friday and Saturday evenings and
occasionally on public holidays - maybe matinees. As a matter of interest Friday &
Saturday evenings netted £1-0-9. Reg was an engineer by trade, but still continued to

50 Forbes Advocate, Tues. 11.12.1984, Forbes, p. 27.

51 This would have been in 1942, although the way the letter is structured, it appears to be
from the time the Studio opened.
work at the theatre until well into the 60's.

Only the more recent exhibitors are still alive in Trundle and they date from the theatre's declining days. Mrs Pauline Pike who, with her husband and Mr E J and Mrs I G Pett, operated the Weston Star from 1 May 1958\(^{52}\) until May 1964. In an interview on 20 January 1994, she stated that she and her husband had always been interested in pictures and that they took over the theatre as part of a community service, as well as for its business-side.\(^{53}\) In a letter dated 29 March 1994, Mr Pett wrote that he had "disposed" of all materials relating to the theatre. Mrs P Pike, who was associated with the theatre in its later years, stated in an interview in January 1994 that 'the pictures' was a big social event and audiences comprised people of all ages. "It was a family affair", she said. "Saturdays always saw full houses while Fridays' houses were always good." With the arrival of television, twice weekly screenings were threatened, audiences fell away and "that was when things changed for the worst." Trundle was no different to many towns throughout Australia where going to the pictures had ceased to be an important part of daily life.\(^{54}\)

Reg Ashcroft (travelling showman in the 1950s to Cookamidgera, Bogan Gate and Alectown) was interviewed on 20 January 1994. While he can recall certain details of those picture show days, he offered little information about the actual operational aspects at the venues and had trouble putting it into a time sequence. He did recall that, about 1936/37, he purchased a hand-wind type

\(^{52}\) Letter from Executors of the Estate of the late E J Simmons to Chief Secretary's Dept 23.4.1958. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 10/53174 File T3596 Trundle Weston Star. The letter stated that Mr and Mrs Pett had acquired the business from 1.5.1958 but were only leasing the building.

\(^{53}\) The Pett and Pike families are long time residents of Trundle.

\(^{54}\) Interview with Mrs Pauline Pike and Mrs L Hawkins (current owner) 20.1.1994.
of projector and a number of old, silent films. These were shown in a Parkes church hall, in the late 1930s, a silver coin donation being taken. Veteran exhibitor, Alan Tom of Manildra, was interviewed by the writer about his touring circuit⁵⁵ and this material has been incorporated, where appropriate, into Chapter 4.

When one considers the number of people who would have worked in the theatres within the subject area over the years, it is a sad situation that so few are still available to be interviewed (represented above) and that so many have taken their knowledge with them to their graves prior to the research for this thesis being undertaken.

⁵⁵Interview with the writer on 5 April 1994. The writer has recently heard that a biography of A Tom is being compiled. It will make a fine contribution to the Centenary of the Cinema.
CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION
"An Accidental Duality of Purpose."
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Every week in a calendar year seems to be set aside for celebrating or remembering something whether it be healthy hearts, heritage, or the like. But centenaries are rather special. People tend to take more notice because the publicity machine moves into action and for twelve or so months, promoters attempt to channel people's attention onto one thing. The year 1995 sees the centenary of the exhibition of motion pictures as a mass medium. For Australia, the centenary will fall in 1996. Until now, little has been written about going to the pictures in Australia (especially in rural areas), although one can envisage a 'plethora of tomes' over the next two years on the subject when Australians will have the Centenary of Cinema thrust at them by national and state committees.¹

The libraries and historical societies' museums within the thesis' subject area have little in the way of material or artefacts relating to cinema exhibition. Some local publications have made slight reference to picture exhibition, albeit scanty and sometimes incorrect. (This has been discussed in Chapter 1.) For the architectural researcher, the following buildings are extant: the Osborne Hall and Town Hall in Forbes (the latter was used in a minor capacity for moving pictures, while the former's role is yet to be satisfactorily determined); the Weston Star at Trundle (disused, neglected and, with no plans for renovation or reuse, it is liable to be demolished through neglect and lack of interest); Bogan Gate Memorial Hall (very short use as a cinema) and the Picture Hall (a true

¹ The writer recently learned of a book underway, based on Western Australian experiences. Another book, one that attempts to encompass many facets of Australian cinema, is at present being finalised under the auspices of the Australian Film Institute (in Victoria) and is due for release early in 1995.
relic from the past); in Parkes, the former West's Hall (virtually unrecognisable) and the Palace theatre (filled with secondhand furniture and really only ever a dance hall). In the light of the material offered in Chapter 4 which traced the histories of the venues, it is painfully obvious that the extant physical remains and documentary records for those buildings, that for many years fulfilled the needs of their rural communities, leave much to be desired. A piece of correspondence from the wife of an Australian theatre architect of the 1930s - 1950 succinctly expressed the situation. "What a pity that humans, collectively, have not been endowed with more foresight than hindsight! There'd be more pride in the preservation of our heritage in all fields of endeavour."

Chapter 2 of the thesis revealed that Australians strongly supported picture shows in pre-television days and there were many buildings given over either solely or partly to the exhibition of films. The histories of those buildings have not been dealt with in a kindly fashion and this has been discussed in earlier chapters. What has been dealt a more devastating blow has been the social aspect of going to the pictures. Little has been done to record this part of cinema history and the sense of occasion associated with the event. As times have changed and the buildings themselves have all

2 The halls in the little villages seem to have fared better. (See Chapter 4.) Yet, they were not built purposely for pictures.

3 The writer, having failed to encourage the Parkes Shire Council (by means of correspondence) to think about potential reuse of the former Century Theatre, asked the writer's uncle-in-law (a member of the local historical society) to attempt to photograph the demolition of the theatre and, if possible, retrieve any interesting artefacts (eg plaster exit box signs). It is believed that a few photographs were taken and a few pieces of plaster retrieved. When it was suggested that a display be arranged in the local museum for the Centenary of Cinema using the retrieved objects and the writer supplying photographs and information, the offer was declined as there was not enough room in the museum and could the writer collect the pieces as soon as possible from the back room.

4 Letter from Mrs L Furse, wife of Bruce W Furse (of the partnership Crick and Furse, well-known Sydney theatre architects of the 1930s), 18.12.1994, to the writer.
but disappeared, it is impossible to recreate it. It may have been fortuitous that the qualitative
research participants of Chapter 5 have had their memories of going to the pictures recorded. The
people who are still able to supply memories of that period are, at present, over the age of fifty.
As they pass away, it will become increasingly difficult to come to an appreciation of the place that
the picture theatre had in our social history in pre-television days. No-one can expect Time to stand
still, but we owe it to posterity to record our history. As one writer expressed it, "The shape of a
city is not static and the needs of the future have to be met as much as the past respected." It is
this respect for the past that should concern us. The picture theatre venue allowed us to experience
a sense of occasion not offered by any other building as we moved through its "plethora of
thresholds". It provided a social experience (and all that that entailed), and a socialising
experience (we were taught how to behave - the occasion demanded a certain behaviour from us).
It gave us entertainment - visits to places and situations far-removed from our own lives. The
writer makes no apologies for not having ascertained what influences the films themselves had on
the lives of people. This was never the aim of the thesis but might provide a useful extension
should someone care to tackle it.

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6 This can even apply to the lowly country hall. The patron moved from the exterior with
its outside-facing ticket window, into an entrance area, then into the auditorium awash with electric
lights and filled with people.

7 This is borne out in L. Halliwell, Seats in All Parts. London: Granada Publishing Ltd.,
1985, p. 2 when the author, as a toddler, was taken to the pictures for the second time; the first
time both he and his mother retreated quickly when, overcome by the crowds, the darkness and
the noise, he started to scream. "...she lectured me firmly on how I was to behave in the pictures,
urging me that if I should be frightened or otherwise upset I was to inform her in the smallest of
whispers, so that we could take our leave without disturbing other people." Other buildings have
Woven into the memories of those interviewed (patrons and theatre staff) is the place of the picture theatre in the local community in pre-television times, and it was an important place. The exhibitors' main purpose might have been to make money, but the desire of those entrepreneurs to make that money happily brought about the situation where people came for the entertainment but also, and more importantly, for the social experience associated with the whole event. Thus, the accidental duality of purpose (the exhibitors' and the patrons') was admirably served by the picture venues within the subject area. One might venture to propose that it was the same for all country areas of Australia. A future study of city and suburban picture-going habits may reveal similar results.

Upon reflection, perhaps the most exciting piece of cinema that was discovered during the research for this thesis was the former Picture Hall at Bogan Gate. It has sat there almost undisturbed for the past 68 years - a piece of history from the days of the 'silents'. In the early 1990s it was successfully adapted into a small cabinet-making concern and appears to have been little altered since the time of its construction in 1926. It still retains its original projection box, although the wooden flooring in that part has been removed. Of the few 'silent' cinema buildings in existence in New South Wales, not one is as intact as that at Bogan Gate and it deserves to be protected for future generations by means of a heritage listing. Those that still survive have not retained a great deal of their cinematic features. For example, the former Concord Pictures in Parramatta Road, Concord, built of brick with a galvanised iron roof, retains its sloping stalls floor, stage and dressing room. It is currently in use as a factory. The facade, entry area and projection box were

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8 A focus group was conducted by the writer at Wellington, NSW on 28.6.1994 in order to 'test' the subject area findings. (See Appendix I) The conclusion reached was that the people of Wellington had similar thoughts to those from the subject area.

9 Personal observations of the writer 20.1.1994.
demolished about 40 years ago when Parramatta Road was widened. The Alhambra at Mudgee is currently in use as a secondhand furniture store and, apart from the facade and former entry area (with its Wunderlich metal ceiling), there is little else to suggest that it was ever a cinema. At Rylstone there is a building that served as a motor garage during the day and a cinema several nights each week during the 1920s. With the exception of the painted centre aisle markings, a loft area that once served as a projection box and the facade, there are no other cinematic features left. The few other examples available are not anywhere as intact as Bogan Gate. It is this 'intactness' that should ensure that the Bogan Gate Picture Hall be protected so that people in the future can see at first hand what a small rural 'silent' cinema was like. (Figures 60 and 61.) Some may argue that, in the light of what happened in the 1980s to Sydney's Regent Theatre and other important cinemas whose heritage-worth hinged on official hearings, there may be little hope for a galvanised iron shed in the back blocks of the state. What occurred to the Regent et al was a decade ago and the writer firmly believes that Australians are slowly becoming more heritage-minded. What better way to acknowledge the Centenary of Cinema in the subject area and to celebrate the place of the picture theatre in our society than by 'listing' the Bogan Gate Picture Hall? Let us consider for a

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10 A Permanent Conservation Order was placed on the Regent in c1983. After an appeal from the owners, the order was revoked. Protests followed from interested groups and a Commission of Enquiry was held in 1986 under the terms of the NSW Heritage Act. This turned out to be the longest ever held in this state and resulted in the finding that the government be urged to protect the theatre with a Permanent Conservation Order. At the time, the facade was covered by a Permanent Order and the auditorium was covered by a temporary one. Despite the theatre being listed on the Register of the National Estate by the Commonwealth Government, the State Government took no action. When the new Liberal Government came into office in early 1988, some three weeks after the election, the new Minister for Planning and Environment (Mr David Hay) revoked the orders on the theatre without warning or discussion. In the months that followed, the theatre was stripped and demolition by stealth took place inside the auditorium. By January 1989, the front half of the auditorium had been gutted. After that it was just a matter of time before the rest of the building followed suit. By September, it was gone. (A full account of this matter was published in KINO, Journal of Australian Theatre Historical Society Inc, No. 30 Dec. 1989, pp. 9-10.) Other battles during the early 1980s for theatres, such as the Rose Bay Wintergarden (designed by Henry White) and the Manly Embassy/Odeon, resulted in defeat.
FIGURES 60 and 61

Bogan Gate Picture Hall - 1994.

Careful observation of the top view will reveal the projection portholes. The lower view looks towards the stage.

(Source: K J Cork)
moment that such a listing were possible.

At a national level, in order that a site might be considered an important part of Australia's natural or cultural environment, the Australian Heritage Commission produced a set of eight criteria in 1990. A brief look at seven of the criteria and their relevant subsections will dispell any doubts about the Picture Hall's potential heritage value.

Criterion A: Its importance in the course, or pattern, of Australia's natural or cultural history.

A.4 Importance for association with events, developments or cultural phases which have had a significant role in the human occupation and evolution of the nation, State, region or community.

The hall was built in 1926 when silent films were a well-established medium in Australia and, by being able to claim that it possessed its own picture venue, the status of the village may have risen. (See footnote 19.) The hall brought together the local community not only on picture nights but for other social activities for the short period from its construction until the early 1930s when it closed.

Criterion B: Its possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of Australia's natural or cultural history.

B.2 Importance in demonstrating a distinctive way of life, custom, process, land-use, function or design no longer practised, in danger of being lost, or of exceptional interest.

There can be no doubt that the Picture Hall is an "endangered species" since so few purpose-built
silent picture theatres remain that have not been extensively altered. It was part of a way-of-life that brought country people together. Its design (being unlined and of galvanised iron and timber construction, with primitive projection and stage facilities) has not been practised in cinema building for the past sixty or so years. Should the current occupier leave or decide to not make repairs to the building, it would be in danger of being lost. The building, while appearing to be reasonably sound at present\(^{12}\), has received little attention over its lifetime.

*Criterion C: Its potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Australia's natural or cultural history.*

*C2. Importance for information contributing to a wider understanding of the history of human occupation of Australia.*

Country life has changed since World War II and it is extremely difficult for present day people to appreciate the rural life style of past years. That is why some rural communities have erected so-called Pioneer Villages, but not one has a picture theatre. People living in large towns or cities could never imagine going to the pictures or attending a dance in a primitive, galvanised iron shed. Yet, this was a social centre for the village. Our understanding of rural society can be broadened by seeing the Picture Hall, both by itself and within the context of the village (what remains of it) and trying to empathise with those who once attended it.

*Criterion D: Its importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of: (i) a class of Australia's natural or cultural places; or (ii) a class of Australia's natural or cultural environments.*

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\(^{12}\) Perhaps this is a commendation for its builder and the materials used.
D.2. Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of the range of human activities in the Australian environment (including way of life, custom, process, land-use, function, design or technique).

The Picture Hall, with its range of functions (ie cinema, dance hall, meeting place, skating rink) witnessed a range of human activities and was part of a now-lost way of life. Besides the auditorium, the projection box is extant as is the lean-to weather 'shed' (?) at the side. The building's design is uniquely Australian right down to the two projection portholes being cut out with what may have been a pair of tin-snips. The rough, unlined interior cannot be claimed as unique to this country but it is certainly part of our architectural heritage from the 1920s and before. Its current use by a cabinet-maker shows that such a building can be successfully re-used.13

Criterion E: Its importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics valued by a community or cultural group.

E.1 Importance for a community for aesthetic characteristics held in high esteem or otherwise valued by the community.

Not all cultural buildings are in the same league as the Sydney Opera House. However, the Picture Hall, because of its rustically simplistic construction, is aesthetically important because it was once typical of the many halls in rural communities in the first few decades of this century. While there are many buildings extant in country districts that used this type of construction, there is no other Picture Hall. A number of buildings in the Forbes Pioneer Village and the Wilberforce Pioneer Village are of similar construction. What makes this building unique is that it was built as a picture theatre and not solely as a public hall.

13 Another such building was the Majestic Hall at Portland, NSW which was dismantled in the 1960s, re-erected on a property further afield and used as a woolshed.
Criterion F: Its importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period.

F.1 Importance for its technical, creative, designs or artistic excellence, innovation or achievement.

Although constructed in 1926, the building continued an architectural tradition long-associated with rural areas of Australia. While palatial picture palaces (such as the Prince Edward, 1924) were being built in Sydney, country people in small places such as Bogan Gate had to make do with primitive, non-decorated functional buildings. A proper study of the Picture Hall’s construction should be undertaken.

Criterion G: Its strong or special associations with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons.

G.1 Important as a place highly valued by a community for reasons of religious, spiritual, symbolic, cultural, educational, or social associations.

The Picture Hall’s history has been forgotten by many in the village. It is more than sixty years since it has been used by its community. However, in its day, it was valued as a symbol; it provided a place for cultural activities (films, dances, meetings, skating), it was used for at least one educational film (by the Sunshine Harvester company in 1929) and certainly provided the local community with a place for social interaction (a very important part of country life).

While the above criteria relate to the National Estate, they do not have any binding effect, in general, on state governments (see footnote 12). New South Wales has its own Heritage Act.

\[14\] See Chapter 4 - 1921-1948, footnote 38.
(1977, amended 1979) that was implemented in order to "integrate heritage conservation into the environmental planning process and to actively share responsibility for the conservation and management of the State's heritage between State and Local government."\textsuperscript{15} As a consequence, a certain amount of environmental heritage protection has been placed, appropriately, in the hands of local government authorities. In 1985 the Minister for Local Government and Planning directed that future local council environmental plans had to make provision for the conservation of heritage items within their boundaries. While local government bodies may be concerned with those items that relate to their own area, it is important for all to remember that items may have regional, State or national significance. Thus it is essential to 'educate' local government authorities who, in some cases, have little understanding or appreciation of the 'place' of the buildings under their care in relation to the wider environment.

Utilising the range of heritage values offered within the Heritage Assessment Guidelines (for NSW), the Bogan Gate Picture Hall can be investigated and assessed under five of the "range of values" listed. (In some ways these are similar to those criteria discussed above.) The "values" are: Historic; Cultural; Social; Archaeological; Architectural. The Hall is, in historic terms, "physical evidence" of a period from our past. The Guidelines state that a heritage item "can demonstrate the state of society either at the time of origin of the item or continuously through its life..."\textsuperscript{16} Because it is almost intact, on visiting it, one can experience the sense of place that it exudes from therein. It demonstrates "past value systems" of a social nature and "items which clearly


\textsuperscript{16} \textit{ibid.}, p. 3.
demonstrate these values...are especially important.\textsuperscript{17} The Hall, because it was built as a picture hall, shows the esteem in which the residents of Bogan Gate held the idea of having a cinema.\textsuperscript{18} This cultural aspect is not unrealistic as Chapter 4 recalled the construction of numerous picture theatres within the subject area and mentioned comments by prominent people who attended various openings. The Guidelines remind us that "These items evoke strong feelings of association."\textsuperscript{19} Most of us have been to the pictures at some time in our lives (probably to buildings constructed in post-television times) and we have lost sight of the origins of those places. From an archaeological viewpoint, the Picture Hall may expand upon existing knowledge of aspects of construction in rural areas. The Guidelines state that "Often the fabric of the item itself, rather than its associated historical documentation, provides the necessary evidence..." to "...expand upon our knowledge of earlier human occupation..."\textsuperscript{20} With its wooden floor, it may even be that there are small relics to be found underneath from the time when it was in use by the community. Its architectural significance represents a particular style previously stated above. The

\textsuperscript{17} ibid., p. 3

\textsuperscript{18} While the following is from 1949 and concerns an outer Sydney suburb, the sentiments expressed may have been the same in Bogan Gate in 1926. Transcription of proceedings at Court of Appeal - Rowland & Ors Vs Payne & Ors - at Parramatta District Court, 5.5.1949. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 17/3498 File 3498 Seven Hills Memorial Hall. The Hall Committee and a prospective exhibitor (G Rowland) had tried twice to have the hall licence suitably endorsed for the screening of motion pictures. Both times (1947 and 1948) the application had been refused because of opposition from exhibitors in nearby areas. In 1949, they appealed. In the course of the proceedings, Mr Asprey (legal representative for the Committee) stated on their behalf: "We see the other districts around us going ahead, and having a picture theatre and so on, and we thought it was only right that we should try and keep pace with them and, now that the time has arrived, to have our own pictures." In his judgement, His Honour, Judge Shortland supported a picture show at Seven Hills, and by the end of the year, it had opened for business.

\textsuperscript{19} Anon., 	extit{Heritage Assessment Guidelines}. Sydney: Dept of Planning, 1990, p. 5.

\textsuperscript{20} ibid., p. 6.
building is "notable, rare and representational".\textsuperscript{21} It is "an early example of a particular architectural development" - the picture theatre that doubled for other social events.\textsuperscript{22}

Reviewing the above, it would seem that a case exists for, at the very least, a thorough investigation for potential heritage listing of the Picture Hall. As things stand, the building is in use although it is being maintained only at a basic level. "Somnolent decay"\textsuperscript{23} best describes the situation and it is probably a lack of general interest from the small Bogan Gate community (who, for the most are unaware of its history) that may allow the building eventually to pass into oblivion. It is the writer's intention to inform the local community\textsuperscript{24}, the local history group and the shire council of the hall's existence and its history (as discovered so far), and suggest that it be considered for permanent preservation.

It is important that a building such as the Picture Hall be further investigated.

\textit{One thing is certain, a heritage item destroyed cannot be recreated. It is too late for}

\textsuperscript{21} ibid., p. 7.

\textsuperscript{22} This was not an unusual thing in country areas. Many picture theatres were built in the 1920s and 1930s in rural New South Wales that had flat stalls' floors so that seats could be removed for dances, etc. (The Weston Star Theatre at Trundle was an example from the 1920s. Two examples from the 1930s were The Western Monarch at Gilgandra (1934) and the Regal at Dunedoo (1937).) It was not until CinemaScope (with its large screen that had to be permanently fixed on the stage and the large stereo speakers that were placed behind it) arrived in the mid-1950s that cinemas such as the Western Monarch ceased to be used for dances.


\textsuperscript{24} When first inspected in January 1994, the owners of the property had no idea of its history. They had moved to the area from Sydney some years before and had taken over the running of the general store. During 1994, the writer gave a short history of the hall to them and it is kept in the general store, which is adjacent to the Picture Hall, for anyone to peruse.
regrets when further research discovers the pivotal importance of a building demolished because it was previously thought to be of 'only local' significance.²⁵

Perhaps the above criteria should be applied to the other ex-picture venues in the subject area before too much longer with a view to, at the very least, identifying and ranking them from a heritage perspective. But then, what about the remainder of the state?

The twenty-four miles around Nelungaloo is really only a small part of New South Wales. There is a lot of land mass still available in Australia for future cinema researchers to tackle. And, when that is covered, there are many places overseas that, as far as inquiries have shown, have made little or no attempt to investigate the phenomenon of the picture theatre and the relevance that going to the pictures had for the local populace.²⁶ It would appear that only in the United Kingdom and United States of America have people begun to research this aspect of their social history. Australia is sorely lacking in this field of study.

Pre-television times in rural New South Wales owe a lot to the picture venues and to the people who were involved with them. Some may simply wish to express their thoughts by recalling the opening words of a song crooned by Bob Hope in a film from about a half century ago, and say, "Thanks For The Memory". While the writer concurs with the sentiments expressed, it would be reprehensible simply to leave the matter at that. We are only just beginning to realise and acknowledge the intrinsic social worth of the picture theatre in pre-television times, especially in


²⁶ South Africa, for example, did not introduce television until the 1970s and it would be interesting to discover if the wholesale discarding of cinema company files and photographic records has been the same as it was in Australia a decade or so before.
rural communities. However, much more needs to be done, including the assessment of potential heritage value of picture theatres and informing communities who have forgotten the history of those buildings, before they are all swept away by developers in search of the "quick buck".

Communities come to value places which are the settings for important events, or which become symbols of identity and aspiration. Many churches and public buildings are important in this way. They are not just neutral venues for social events, they are important as the symbols and reminders of the events. 27

27 P. Marquis-Kyle and M. Walker, The Illustrated Burra Charter. Sydney: ICOMOS Inc, 1992, p. 11. It is interesting to note that "churches" are mentioned separately to "public buildings". It is worth conjecturing that the picture theatres during their lifetimes probably had more people pass through them and played a more prominent part in our social lives during that same period of time than did the churches.
FIGURE 62
All that remains - the stage house.
(Source: D Unger, Parkes)
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BIBLIOGRAPHY

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10/53162 T3028 Parkes Orange (Wests) Hall
10/53174 T3596 Trundle Weston Star Theatre
17/3300 835 Forbes Town Hall
17/3327 1250 Alectown Soldiers Memorial Hall
17/3330 1332 Cookamidgera Mechanics Institute Hall
17/3343 1530 Tichborne Public Hall
17/3382 2142 Trundle War Memorial Hall
17/3404 2504 Parkes Century Theatre
17/3409 2561 Bogan Gate District War Memorial Hall
17/3449 3067 Parkes RSL Hall
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17/3503 3525 Bedgerebong War Memorial Hall
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17/3619 Parkes Proposed Twin Drive-In.

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Haberfield N.S.W. Haberfield Theatre 24 August 1925.
Hurstville N.S.W. Savoy Theatre 4 August 1937.
Leichhardt N.S.W. New Strand 9 May 1921.
Lindfield N.S.W. Lindfield Theatre 21 May 1926.
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7. THESSES


APPENDICES

A. THEATRES AND PUBLIC HALLS LICENSED FOR FILM SCREENINGS IN NSW.

B. 35 mm PICTURE THEATRES IN OPERATION
   - NSW FIGURES / AUSTRALIAN FIGURES (excl Drive-in Theatres)

C. SEATING IN 35mm PICTURE THEATRES
   - NSW COUNTRY cf NSW STATE TOTAL

D. FIGURES FOR TAXABLE ADMISSIONS AT ENTERTAINMENTS IN THE STATE OF NEW SOUTH WALES - 1921 to 1953

E. PART OF AFC SURVEY. Why cinemas are losing their place. 1985

F. SPECIAL NOTE re FORBES OSBORNE HALL and PARKES NEWSPAPERS

G. VILLAGE HALLS WITHIN THE SUBJECT AREA NOT KNOWN TO HAVE BEEN USED FOR SCREENING OF MOTION PICTURES
   Alectown Soldiers' Memorial Hall
   Bindogundra Public Hall
   Mandagery Public Hall
   Nelungaloo Public Hall
   Tichborne Public Hall

H. GUIDELINES FOR FOCUS GROUPS

I. WELLINGTON FOCUS GROUP 28.6.1994 - RESULTS BY CATEGORIES

J. THE POST-TELEVISION YEARS - BRINGING THE CINEMA HISTORY OF THE SUBJECT AREA UP TO DATE
## APPENDIX A

### THEATRES AND PUBLIC HALLS LICENSED FOR FILM SCREENINGS IN NSW.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>TOTAL THEATRES</th>
<th>TOTAL SEATING</th>
<th>YEAR BOOK &amp; PAGE REPS</th>
<th>NSW POPULATION</th>
<th>YEAR BOOK &amp; PAGE REPS</th>
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<td>1171</td>
<td>564500</td>
<td>1913 p607</td>
<td>1830444 E</td>
<td>1914 p87</td>
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<td>1917 - 1918</td>
<td>1788</td>
<td>c800000</td>
<td>1918 p652</td>
<td>1926162 E</td>
<td>1919 p43</td>
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<td>1920 - 1921</td>
<td>1856</td>
<td>851000</td>
<td>1921 p499</td>
<td>2099763 C</td>
<td>1921 p107</td>
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<td>1922 - 1923</td>
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<td>937000</td>
<td>1923 p694</td>
<td>2172932 E</td>
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<td>1924 - 1925</td>
<td>2359</td>
<td>1061700</td>
<td>1925/6 p418</td>
<td>2254450 E</td>
<td>1925/26 p128</td>
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<td>1926 - 1927</td>
<td>2462</td>
<td>1112000</td>
<td>1927/8 p168</td>
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<td>1188850</td>
<td>1934/35 p334</td>
<td>2601104 C</td>
<td>1932/33 p453</td>
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<td>1935 - 1936</td>
<td>2721</td>
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<td>1936/37 p220</td>
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<td>1934/35 p641</td>
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<td>1938 - 1939</td>
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<td>1939 - 1940</td>
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<td>2789123 E</td>
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<td>1953 - 1954</td>
<td>610*</td>
<td>484506</td>
<td>1954 p598</td>
<td>3423887 C</td>
<td>1955 p216</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: The Official Year Book of New South Wales, Sydney: N.S.W. Government Printer.

Explanation:

* - These years were stated as 35mm picture theatres. The words "public halls" do not appear and most probably the Year Book statistics did not include them.
E - Estimate; C - Census

All population figures exclude Aboriginal people, as was customary.
The NSW figures do not include the Australian Capital Territory.

"There was a marked increase in taxable admissions to picture shows in 1929/30, as a result of the introduction of sound equipment, and there was a decrease in respect of nearly all other classes of entertainments, especially theatres."

The Official Year Book of New South Wales 1930/31, Sydney: NSW Govt Printer, p. 404.
APPENDIX B

35 mm PICTURE THEATRES IN OPERATION
- NSW FIGURES / AUSTRALIAN FIGURES (excl Drive-in Theatres)
- Information from The Film Weekly Motion Picture Directories 1937 - 1971.

<table>
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<th>Suburban</th>
<th>Country</th>
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<th>No of Towns</th>
<th>Touring Shows</th>
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<td>21/67</td>
<td>146/373</td>
<td>200/750</td>
<td>367/1190</td>
<td>280/826</td>
<td>19/62</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945/46</td>
<td>26/67</td>
<td>524 /</td>
<td>/ 1515</td>
<td>550/1602</td>
<td>418/1204</td>
<td>6/37</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946/47</td>
<td>26/87</td>
<td>546 /</td>
<td>/ 1513</td>
<td>572/1600</td>
<td>430/1193</td>
<td>10/46</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947/48</td>
<td>26/84</td>
<td>166/473</td>
<td>391/1081</td>
<td>583/1638</td>
<td>434/1215</td>
<td>11/54</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948/49</td>
<td>26/85</td>
<td>169/470</td>
<td>390/1119</td>
<td>585/1674</td>
<td>444/1262</td>
<td>11/50</td>
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<tr>
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<td>157/522</td>
<td>228/744</td>
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<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>21/81</td>
<td>52/127</td>
<td>172/528</td>
<td>245/736</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>0/2</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = Combined suburban and country total given.  
# = Possible error. Perhaps meant to be 338.  
@ = Combined suburban and country total.

The Film Weekly Motion Picture Directory commenced in 1936/37 and concluded in 1971.
APPENDIX C
SEATING IN 35mm PICTURE THEATRES
- NSW COUNTRY cf NSW STATE TOTAL

Information from The Film Weekly Motion Picture Directories.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Directory Year</th>
<th>NSW Country Seating</th>
<th>NSW State Seating</th>
<th>Population of NSW #</th>
<th>Seats per 1000. NSW/Australia</th>
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<td>251,629</td>
<td>490,967</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>487,386</td>
<td>3,383,797</td>
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<tr>
<td>1953/54</td>
<td>248,625</td>
<td>481,492</td>
<td>3,972,294</td>
<td>121.2/ @</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954/55</td>
<td>248,625*</td>
<td>481,492*</td>
<td>3,972,294*</td>
<td>121.2/ @</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955/56</td>
<td>252,776</td>
<td>484,506</td>
<td>3,493,646</td>
<td>138.7/ @</td>
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<tr>
<td>1956/57</td>
<td>245,868</td>
<td>475,448</td>
<td>3,544,135</td>
<td>134.2/ @</td>
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<td>1957/58</td>
<td>245,847</td>
<td>478,356</td>
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<tr>
<td>1960/61</td>
<td>218,708</td>
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<td>337,343</td>
<td>3,895,304</td>
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<tr>
<td>1962/63</td>
<td>189,855</td>
<td>314,604</td>
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<tr>
<td>1964/65</td>
<td>171,118</td>
<td>280,784</td>
<td>4,243,612</td>
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<tr>
<td>1965/66</td>
<td>131,711</td>
<td>228,603</td>
<td>4,325,329</td>
<td>52.9/ @</td>
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<tr>
<td>1968/69</td>
<td>107,555</td>
<td>184,181</td>
<td>4,547,490</td>
<td>40.5/ @</td>
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<tr>
<td>1969/70</td>
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<td>172,603</td>
<td>4,574,600</td>
<td>37.7/ @</td>
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<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>111,515</td>
<td>188,543</td>
<td>4,763,700</td>
<td>39.6/ @</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Explanations:
# = includes ACT and Jervis Bay. Excludes Aboriginal people.
@ = national figure not supplied.
* = figures for that particular were not available so the directory published previous year's figures.

The following directories were not available: 1958/59, 1959/60, 1963/64, 1966/67, 1967/68. The last directory published was 1971. Prior to 1950/51, the information printed above was not published in the directories. The 1971 figures, while not stated as such, may have included drive-in theatres (seating being represented as car spaces). No other reason can be offered for the increase in seating capacities for that year.
FIGURES FOR TAXABLE ADMISSIONS AT ENTERTAINMENTS IN THE STATE OF NEW SOUTH WALES. [Also, see notes below.]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>RACING</th>
<th>THEATRICALS</th>
<th>PICTURE SHOWS</th>
<th>DANCING &amp; SKATING</th>
<th>CONCERTS</th>
<th>MISCELL.</th>
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<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>3275812</td>
<td>4545802</td>
<td>21138931</td>
<td>1495090</td>
<td>352198</td>
<td>3613330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924</td>
<td>1663000</td>
<td>7744000</td>
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<td>20046000</td>
<td>1360000</td>
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<td>7700000</td>
<td>71726000</td>
<td>21430000</td>
<td>1157000</td>
<td>8339000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926</td>
<td>1395000</td>
<td>6401000</td>
<td>27538000 (1)</td>
<td>9687000</td>
<td>783000</td>
<td>4930000</td>
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<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>275231</td>
<td>1263601</td>
<td>11388188</td>
<td>920513</td>
<td>figures no</td>
<td>975903</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>173830</td>
<td>1027900 (2)</td>
<td>7931410 (3)</td>
<td>816623</td>
<td>longer given</td>
<td>748563</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>163103</td>
<td>955621</td>
<td>6731163</td>
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<td>842767</td>
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<td>1041199</td>
<td>11254910</td>
<td>1057812</td>
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<td>1881000</td>
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<td>6150500</td>
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<td>5528700</td>
<td>3555000</td>
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<td>3771000</td>
<td></td>
<td>1019000</td>
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<td>4990000</td>
<td>1478000</td>
<td>59461000</td>
<td>3419000</td>
<td></td>
<td>1027000</td>
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<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>4723000</td>
<td>1306000</td>
<td>58204000</td>
<td>3282000</td>
<td></td>
<td>764000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From 1 December 1919, to 1 October 1922, a Commonwealth Government Entertainment Tax at the rate of ½d (halfpenny) for each 6d (sixpence) or fraction thereof was applied to all entertainment admissions within Australia. Tax was not charged, however, on payments exceeding
5d (fivepence) for admission of children under 16 years to places of continuous entertainment (ie those places open for more than four hours on three or more days of each week, or for admission to entertainment intended solely for children if the charge was under 6d (sixpence). As from 2 October 1922, payments lower than 1s (one shilling) were exempted from the tax, and from 15 October 1925, the tax was not payable where the price of admission was less than 2s 6d (two shillings and sixpence). [(1) This explains the apparent large decrease in attendances at picture shows in that year. The numbers did not go down. It was only the taxable admissions.]

The State Government imposed a separate tax on entertainments as from 1 January 1930 on admissions that exceeded 1s 6d (one shilling and sixpence). In order to make collection easier, the Commonwealth Taxation Commissioner collected all entertainment taxes.

State Entertainment Tax ceased from 1 October 1942. A uniform tax was imposed across Australia by the Commonwealth Government. This latter tax was discontinued as from 1 October 1953.

Explanations of numbers in brackets in table above:
(1) See several paragraphs above.
(2) Live theatre attendances dropped when 'talkie' feature films were introduced. In Sydney, live theatres went over to pictures in the hope of staying viable.
(3) Although 'talkies' brought people to the pictures, the Depression had taken hold by this year and, while many probably ceased attending, others probably bought cheaper (non-taxable) seats.
(4) The War years brought an incredible boom in picture theatre business and post-war years saw this remain.

[Source for the above figures:
The Official Year Book of New South Wales, Sydney: N.S.W. Government - various years.]

Only one Year Book had a break-down of figures that related to city, suburbs and country. That was for 1921 (page 497):
Racing  City -; Suburbs 2455720; Country 820092
Theatricals City 2714962; Suburbs 1031729; Country 799111
Picture Shows City 7822110; Suburbs 11571082; Country 8785739
Dancing & Skating City 253446; Suburbs 703664; Country 537980
Concerts City 146485; Suburbs 54486; Country 151227
Miscellaneous City 768209; Suburbs 1338422; Country 1506699

Total = 41,461,163 taxable admissions to entertainments in New South Wales for the year 1921.
APPENDIX E

"AFC Survey. Why cinemas are losing their place."  

This was a survey undertaken on behalf of the Australian Film Commission that asked 700 people in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane (by telephone) why they watched what they watched at the cinema. The responses were recorded in age groupings and seventeen standardised replies emerged. What is of interest is that there was a response "Social event/accompany spouse" that received the following replies: 18-24: 5%; 25-34: 5%; 35-44: 6%; 45-54: 9%; 55+: 3%.

Although these may seem rather low figures, when the other responses are considered (those in particular that related to seeing a particular film), then it is encouraging to see that the social aspect still rated among cinema patrons in the mid-1980s.

Also mentioned (in the article in which the survey results appeared) was that, "The word 'movie', in itself, is strongly associated with the cinema and the act of 'going to the movies'. The cinema is regarded generally as the 'gold standard' of movie-going mediums." The respondents considered the "overall atmosphere is better than elsewhere".
APPENDIX F
Note re FORBES OSBORNE HALL

Forbes:
A search of available newspapers (at the State Library of NSW) does not indicate when the first moving pictures were screened.
Local tradition, which is unsubstantiated, has it that the Osborne Hall in Forbes was used as the venue for the first moving pictures to be screened in the town and one of the films in the programme was supposed to have been "A Trip To The Moon". Situated in Cross Street, the hall was built in 1878 as a dance hall attached to the Osborne Hotel. Prior to the erection of the Forbes Town Hall, the Osborne Hall was used for social and recreational activities, including being used as a showroom for travelling salesmen for the display of their wares. The hall's licence was revoked from 9 August 1915. A substantial, two-storey, brick building, it has survived to the present and is currently in use as the local museum. When viewed today, the building exudes its age with its eaves-less roof, its first storey windows close to the top of the walls, the plain facade with its three long windows and the arch at ground level through which audiences entered.

Parkes:
There are no newspapers (at the State Library of NSW) for 1896 or 1897.

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1 Forbes Advocate, August 1978, "Fabulous Forbes", Forbes, p. 8. Copy in Forbes Library. [Georges Melies, a renowned French stage magician, made "A Trip To The Moon" in 1902. A 30 minute film that incorporated a number of stage illusions - early 'special effects'. Ref: R. Fry and P. Fourzon. 1977. The Saga Of Special Effects. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.] No references have been found in the town's newspapers to indicate that it was used for pictures.


APPENDIX G

OTHER VILLAGE HALLS

This Appendix has been created so that halls from within the subject area that were not used as picture venues could be recorded for the sake of posterity and for the communities in which they were built. There are five:

- Alectown Soldiers' Memorial Hall;
- Bindogundra Public Hall;
- Mandagery Public Hall;
- Nelungaloo Public Hall;
- Tichborne Public Hall (*).

(*) Tichborne - an application to screen films was rejected in 1960.
ALECTOWN Soldiers' Memorial Hall

The next hall in Alectown was constructed in Goobang Street (the Newell Highway) on the site of the former Miners Exchange Hotel which had been destroyed by fire in 1915. The Soldiers' Memorial Hall, with accommodation for 333, was licensed from 3 August 1934, having been built at a cost of £600. Local donations were said to have largely paid for it. It was of concrete walls, buttressed along the sides (18 inches square, according to the plans) and contained a stage 15 feet deep by 2 feet high. At the rear of the stage on both sides were small dressing rooms 7 feet by 7 feet each. The overall dimensions of the building were 65 feet by 30 feet. Toilet facilities were provided at the back of the block.

In 1957 additions were undertaken that included the construction of a building on the eastern side of the hall. It contained a small entrance vestibule, with ticket box and cloakroom, two supper rooms, a kitchen. Two new dressing rooms were built at the rear of the auditorium and new toilet facilities were added at the side of the auditorium. Cost of the work was approximately five and a half thousand pounds, raised largely by public donations. It was reported that all work was


5 Chief Secretary's Dept Theatres & Public Halls Lists for 1959 and 1964 in the possession of the writer. These publications were infrequent.

6 Letter and sketch plan from W Whitlock (Hall Secretary) to Chief Secretary's Dept 22.6.1934. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 17/3327 File 1250 Alectown Soldiers' Memorial Hall.

7 Letter from T Klein to J Mason, MLA. Undated but is situated in the file between other documents dated 1965. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 17/3327 File 1250 Alectown Soldiers' Memorial Hall. The letter refers to the hall being used for dances at which the hirers admitted a rowdy element and Klein was inquiring if the hall committee could refuse to hire out a public hall.
completed by June 1958. The façade was reconstructed in cement to incorporate the addition. (See Figure 63.) The hall has been used for dances and other social activities over the years and is still in use to this day.

One verbal source stated that the hall was used for screening 16mm films in the 1950s on occasions. This has not been verified and the licence has never been endorsed to screen films.

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\textsuperscript{a} Parkes Police Report to Commissioner of Police, Sydney, 15.10.1957. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 17/3327 File 1250 Alectown Soldiers' Memorial Hall.

\textsuperscript{b}Reg Ashcroft of Parkes (20.1.1994) stated that he screened for a short time at Alectown in the 1950s, using Bell and Howell 16mm equipment.
FIGURE 63
Soldiers' Memorial Hall, Alectown - 1989.
(Source: K J Cork)
The tiny settlement of Bindogundra (known until late 1928 as Bindogandri), off the road which goes into Parkes from Orange, possessed a small Public Hall which was licensed from 4 May 1924.\textsuperscript{10} In late 1923, an architect's report\textsuperscript{11} stated that it was to have a timber frame and galvanised iron roof and walls. Overall size was 40 feet by 25 feet, walls were to be 11 feet high, and seating accommodation was being provided for 220 people. There was no provision for a stage or dressing rooms. The supper room, shown on the plan, had not been constructed at that time. Its life was relatively short and the licence was revoked in February 1932.\textsuperscript{12} A Parkes Police Report in January 1931 stated that it was in use as a Subsidised School.\textsuperscript{13} This was a type of school which, from 1903 to 1989 operated in various parts of New South Wales where there were not enough children to have a publicly funded school. The government provided a subsidy for each pupil but it was the responsibility of the parents to provide accommodation and a teacher. They were not considered to be government schools as such.\textsuperscript{14}

In 1933 it was relicensed as a public hall\textsuperscript{15}, although it was reported that the school was using it

\textsuperscript{10} Chief Secretary's Dept list of licensing dates in possession of L.R. Tod, Blacktown.

\textsuperscript{11} Report from Supervising Architect 13.12.1923. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - 10/53090 T1506 Bindogundra Public Hall.

\textsuperscript{12} NSW Government Gazette No. 21, 19.2.1932.

\textsuperscript{13} Parkes Police Report to Chief Secretary's Dept 11.1.1931. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - 10/53090 T1506 Bindogundra Public Hall.

\textsuperscript{14} Government Schools of N.S.W. 1848 to 1993, Sydney: N.S.W. Dept. of School Education, 1993, p. 32 gives details on Subsidised Schools and mentions that Bindogandry changed its name to Bindogundra after November 1928.

\textsuperscript{15} NSW Government Gazette No. 149, 22.9.1933.
on weekdays.\textsuperscript{16} The licence was not renewed after 1963\textsuperscript{17}. By 1965, it was not being used for any public functions and was in use as a dressing and tea room for members of the Bindogundra Tennis Club.\textsuperscript{18} There is no evidence to suggest that films were ever screened at this venue, but a travelling showman may have stopped once or twice and this may have been forgotten.

[Unfortunately no photographs of the hall have been found.]

\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{16} Annual Inspection Report 16.8.1933. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - 10/53090 T1506 Bindogundra Public Hall.

\textsuperscript{17} An inspection report 3.8.1955 stated that the hall contained no drapes, curtains or scenery and that it was not being used for screening motion pictures. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - 10/53090 T1506 Bindogundra Public Hall.

\textsuperscript{18} Parkes Police Report to Chief Secretary's Dept 17.5.1965. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - 10/53090 T1506 Bindogundra Public Hall.
MANDAGERY Public Hall

It is not hard to find the Public Hall at Mandagery as it is the only building on that part of the dirt road near the Mandagery level crossing on the railway line between Manildra and Parkes. Gazetted in 1949, with seating accommodation for 333, the hall's licence was never endorsed for screening motion pictures.

The hall was constructed for the Progress Association on a block of land donated for the purpose by H Bennett. In a 1949 report about the proposed hall, it was stated that the hall was to be framed with timber, would be unlined, should measure 50 feet by 30 feet, and would seat 333. The architect was A S O Anderson of Roseville NSW. A site plan, dated 1949, showed a large block of land, 429 feet long by 165 feet wide, with a small hall and two toilet sheds marked on it. The hall was to be set back from the road a distance of 40 feet. The building plan showed three

19 NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 17/3524 File 4057 Mandagery Public Hall. The official address of the hall is Portion 123 Parish of Bunbury, County of Ashburnham, Shire of Goobang.

20 Proclaimed in the NSW Govt Gazette on 6.5.1949, although the site had been gazetted on 17.9.1948. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 17/3524 File 4057 Mandagery Public Hall.

21 Chief Secretary's Dept Theatres & Public Halls Licensing Lists of 1959 and 1964 in the possession of the writer. These were infrequent publications.

22 Progress Association mentioned as being responsible for the construction. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 17/3524 File 4057 Mandagery Public Hall.

23 Interview 19.1.1994 with a local farmer while waiting for his flock of sheep to pass along the road to Mandagery.

24 Chief Secretary's Dept Architect Report 5.4.1949. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 17/3524 File 4057 Mandagery Public Hall.
windows and an exit on both side walls (the walls being 12 feet high), a plain back wall, a front wall with a main door and a small awning above, and a raised platform inside the hall that could serve as a stage. Permission was sought (and granted) for the windows to be Masonite louvres rather than the more expensive glass.

The plans were passed and work commenced although not everything went smoothly. In a letter dated 3 October 1950, one difficulty with the construction was expressed: "...owing to recent heavy rains we are unable to get timber out of the bush...". By 1952 the hall was still incomplete. In a police report of March 1952, "...work on the hall had ceased temporarily as the committee was unable to obtain the services of a builder. The Frame of the building had been completed...".

To the imagined relief of the local people, the hall was completed and received its licence dated from 2 September 1953. At the time, an inquiry to the Chief Secretary's Department was made by the Hall Secretary about exhibiting motion pictures there. The following reply was received: "Any application in that connection would need to be referred to the Theatres & Films Commission for consideration...it would be illegal to exhibit cinematograph films in the hall."

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25 Letter from E Goodchild (Hon Secretary) to the Chief Secretary's Dept 3.10.1950. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 17/3524 File 4057 Mandagery Public Hall.


27 NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 17/3524 File 4057 Mandagery Public Hall. Stated as such on licensing document in the file.

28 Letter from P Beddie, Hon Secretary, "Bryngola", Mandagery to the Chief Secretary's Dept 29.10.1953. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box
Nothing more is known to have been done about the matter.

The hall (see Figure 64) is neat in appearance and the observer can see an architect's influence on the design. The windows have been placed at headheight to allow for a functional airflow and more use of the interior wall space. An attempt has been made at creating symmetry in relation to the façade, as the head of the door is on the same level as the sills of the windows that flank it. The exterior walls are of galvanised iron, as is the roof that provides ample eaves.39

Electricity did not come to the hall until 195930. Then, in 1969, it was decided not to renew the hall's licence31. However, the hall still stands and appears to be maintained. According to one local, it is seldom used except for an occasional ball and the annual Christmas party. Dances, he said, were "a thing of the past" and, as for pictures, they never made it to Mandagery.32

17/3524 File 4057 Mandagery Public Hall.

30 An undated memo from 1959 mentioned that the hall was being wired for electricity at that time. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 17/3524 File 4057 Mandagery Public Hall.

31 Memorandum re renewal of licence - stated that it was not desired. Licence stamped as such and dated 11.12.1969. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 17/3524 File 4057 Mandagery Public Hall.

32 Interview 19.1.1994 with a local farmer while waiting for his flock of sheep to pass along the road near Mandagery.
FIGURE 64
(Source: K J Cork)
NELUNGAŁOO Public Hall

Nelungaloo Siding is situated about seventeen miles from Parkes on the main western railway line between Parkes and Bogan Gate. Part of its history is tied to the wheat silos that are next to the railway. The village was never large. At its peak, there were only a post office-cum-shop, several houses, a small school, a small platform and the Public Hall. The hall, situated in a two-acre paddock adjoining the tennis courts, had no other buildings around it. It was licensed from 10 July 1936. Constructed of galvanised iron on a wooden frame, its dimensions were 50 feet by 24 feet overall, with an internal height of 13 feet 6 inches. Seating capacity was 200. In 1937 a kitchenette was constructed beside the hall and this was followed in 1938 by a supper room. This area was formed by extending, raising and partly enclosing the verandah attached to the hall. The completed supper room was capable of holding ninety people and measured 11 feet 3 inches by 40 feet. There is no evidence that the hall was ever used for screening pictures. It was an

33 Telephone interview with Mrs M Freeman, Parkes on 7.3.1994. Mrs Freeman moved to Parkes after living for fifty years at Nelungaloo.

34 Chief Secretary's Dept Architect Report 23.7.1935. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 17/3555 File No 4233 Nelungaloo. Sketch plans attached to report. (When hall was seen by the writer in April 1994, the tennis courts had long since vanished and the hall is reached by a winding track from the village's main street and is situated in total isolation amongst long grass.)


36 Chief Secretary's Dept Theatres & Public Halls Licensing Lists for 1959 and 1964, in the possession of the writer. These were infrequent publications. In the original plans (see footnote no 2), seating capacity was given as 229.


38 Letter from J Hourigan, Hall Secretary, to Chief Secretary's Dept 4.4.1938. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 17/3555 File No 4233
important social centre for the village and surrounding area with many dances held there.\textsuperscript{40} The hall still stands. (See Figures 65 and 66.)

\textsuperscript{39} Parkes Police Report to Chief Secretary's Dept 28.11.1945. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 17/3555 File No 4233 Nelungaloo. The report stated that no pictures were being shown. Mrs M Freeman (see footnote no 1) said that no pictures were shown in Nelungaloo.

\textsuperscript{40} One example - \textbf{Forbes Advocate}, Fri. 22.6.1962, Forbes, p. 5. Advertisement for the Annual Hall Ball on Friday 29.6.1962.
FIGURES 65 and 66
(Source: K J Cork)
TICHBORNE Public Hall

When one is travelling from Parkes to Forbes, the village of Tichborne is noted by a signpost and little else. The Public Hall is set back from the main road in the middle of a paddock, surrounded by grass tussocks and sheep droppings. A private road, accessible via a gate in the fence at the side of the main road, winds through the paddock and delivers the traveller at a neat-looking, but plain, Tichborne Hall (the lettering on the facade proclaims). 41

The official opening of the hall was performed on Wednesday, 2 December 1925 by J Burch because the Mayor of Parkes had to return to town for another engagement - the opening of the new Broadway Theatre. "The fine hall just erected at Tichborne was officially opened last night, the occasion being marked by a very successful hall, for which the music was supplied by Neowhouse's Jazz Orchestra." 42

The hall was issued with a temporary licence from 19 November and a full licence was issued from 8 January 1926. 43 Seating accommodation was given as 200. 44 The Supervising Architect's Report in October 1925 gave the hall's dimensions as 48 feet by 24 feet, with a small stage 8 feet


42 Western Champion, Thurs. 3.12.1925, Parkes, p. 10.

43 Memorandum regarding licence - 1925. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 17/3343 File 1530 Tichborne. Temporary licence issued for three months from 19.11.1925. When the hall was completed, the full licence was issued. This licence, however, excluded the screening of motion pictures.

44 Chief Secretary's Dept Theatres & Public Halls Licensing Lists of 1959 and 1964 in possession of the writer. These were infrequent publications.
deep. Stuart Tomkins was the Honorary Secretary of the Hall Committee. Six months later, the Board of Fire Commissioners' inspection provided additional information. Walls and roof were of galvanised iron, the floor was of wood, the stage measured 10 feet by 24 feet and there was no provision for dressing rooms. Seating was for 120, there was no projection box, and the hall was used for concerts, dancing and other similar activities.

In 1935, a 48 feet by 12 feet, lean-to supper-room was added to the Parkes-side of the hall. This space was capable of seating 120 people. The extension used horizontal iron cladding, a relatively cheap and easy material to use.

Reports from 1944 to 1960 reveal that pictures were not shown in the hall. The proximity to Forbes and its two theatres may have precluded Tichborne's hall from being ever used as a cinema.

In 1956, alterations were made to the hall and supper room to increase the hall's capacity to 300. These were completed by October 1956. While the precise alterations are unknown, it is possible that they included an extension to the front and a new facade of cement bricks. A central doorway

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45 Supervising Architect's Report to Chief Secretary's Dept 12.10.1925. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 17/3343 File 1530 Tichborne.

46 Board of Fire Commissioners Inspection Report 14.4.1926. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 17/3343 File 1530 Tichborne.


48 Chief Secretary's Dept Reports (annual) from 1944 to 7.11.1955, 8.11.1957, 12.11.1959, 14.11.1960 stated that pictures were not shown. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 17/3343 File 1530 Tichborne.
remained into the hall but a small ticket window replaced the door into the supper-room. The facade could be considered a meaningless exercise as it made no attempt to hide the fact that it was of the 'cardboard cut out' variety tacked onto the front of the building.

In 1960, an application to screen films was made by L P Kinkead. The application was not successful. While no reasons have been found, it is probable that Western Cinemas (who controlled the Parkes and Forbes theatres) would have strenuously opposed any such application.

Over the years, the community of Tichborne has come to rely more on its larger neighbour, Forbes for its social entertainment. The hall has seen little use for many years. It is currently used by a couple of local youth organisations who have attempted to keep it neat and tidy. (See Figures 67 and 68.)

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49 NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 17/3343 File 1530 Tichborne. A sketch plan of the hall dated 4.3.1935 clearly shows the central door to the hall and a door in the facade to the supper-room. The facade itself is shown with a gable and a lean-to addition. On inspecting the hall 21.1.1994, it could be seen on the side of the building how a later, forward section had been built onto the supper-room and hall, as well as a new facade with its centrally stepped parapet. The forward extension is not of the same cladding material as the 1935 addition.

50 Application made in 1960 by Leslie Patrick Kinkead, c/o the School Residence, Tichborne to show films in the Tichborne Public Hall. Seating 200. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 17/3343 File 1530 Tichborne.

51 Interview by writer 21.1.1994 with resident of house in next paddock.
FIGURES 67 and 68
(Source: K J Cork)
APPENDIX H

GUIDELINES FOR FOCUS GROUPS (8 - 10 people)
Ask them to identify themselves by first name on the tape. Write down names.

A. When was the last time that you went to the pictures?
   - what film did you see?
   - where did you see it?
   - with whom did you see it?

B. Can you remember the first time that you went to the pictures?
   - how long ago was it?
   - where did you go?
   - with whom did you go?

C. What was your normal attendance pattern?
   - how often did you go?
   - why did you go?
   - where did you normally attend?
   - any reason why you attended this particular theatre?
   - with whom did you attend?
   - child-minding?

D. People who went regularly (ie once or more each week) -
   - any particular reason for attending so frequently? (specific films? entertainment value?
     social occasion? seeing friends?)
   - reserved seats?

E. Did your pattern of attendance change as you grew older - say teens, twenties, thirties, etc?
   (May need to go make over previous questions to see if there is a difference.)
   - any preference for a particular theatre?
   - what was it about that theatre that you preferred?

F. Going to the pictures: What can you remember about it?
   - eg the staff, their uniforms, what was the service like?

G. Did you ever get the chance to consciously compare theatres
   - eg if came to Sydney for the Royal Easter Show, did you go to the pictures? What differences
     were there?

   [If they only go into the functional aspect (eg went to see the pictures), then may have to ask
    directly about the building - the decor, the feel of the place. Get them to describe as much as
    possible about the building.]
APPENDIX I

WELLINGTON FOCUS GROUP 28.6.1994 - RESULTS BY CATEGORIES.

NOTE:
Because the Wellington focus group was used as a test for the subject area, the pieces of data given by the participants about other country areas in which they lived can be considered relevant.

Category 1: ATTENDANCE

a. NEVER or RARELY
...we seldom came into the pictures. [Only when she came to stay with the old lady in town would she attend more often.] Yes, that was mainly when I came. (Wyn)
Prior to that it would be once in a lifetime [because of living so far out in the bush]. (Reg)
We, we didn't go very often...we went to the Wellington Show that was held once a year. It was one night that Mum and Dad and all us children would go to the pictures...[later Dad went to lodge meetings and] ...I'd go to the pictures. (Dorothy)
[As a child] It might be eighteen months between trips [to the pictures] because you couldn't walk a bush road...I married when I was twenty...Well, I didn't go very often. (Joyce)

b. INFREQUENTLY
Probably once a fortnight or three weeks... (Dorothy)
[As grew older ] More often. (Nell?)
[As grew older ] Bit more often. (Mavis?)
But we used to go to the odd Saturday afternoon. (May)
...but not every Saturday...[late teens ] scooting around the country to various places then and I seldom went to the pictures then. (Mavis)

c. ONCE A WEEK
[re split week screening policy at Macquarie ] Able to go twice a week. (May)
Once a week once I started going. (Reg)
[In Sydney - as an older person] I'd go to three shows in a day. (Reg)
Split week policy at Macquarie, Wellington - did you go twice as often? Often. (May)

d. SATURDAYS
...we gravitated to going Saturday afternoons. (Leo)
Every Saturday... (Mavis - as children)
[As grew older ] ...we'd play tennis on Saturday afternoon and then we'd go to the pictures at night. (May)

e. HOLIDAY TIME
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Category 2: AUDIENCE

a. FAMILY
Wholes -
We lived in the country amongst the hills...And we had to go by horse and sulky when we went to the pictures. (Wyn)
I went with Father and the rest of the family. I had two brothers and a sister. (Joyce)
I sort of got involved more with Saturday afternoon when the children were growing up and I'd take them along. (Joyce)
On the whole, they didn't take us, but I used to take my children. (Mavis???)
When we did go, which was on rare occasions, we'd all go. (Wyn)
Once they [the children] grew up a bit, I'd take them to the pictures...I would take them, not my husband. He stayed home. (Nell?)
We, we didn't go very often...we went to the Wellington Show that was held once a year. It was one night that Mum and Dad and all us children would go to the pictures...[later Dad went to lodge meetings and]...I'd go to the pictures. (Dorothy)

Siblings -
I went with my twin brother...I went with my brothers. I had three brothers and I still went with my brothers in my teens. (Mavis)
Well, I probably went with my brothers at that age. Then we used to go out as a group...a whole thirty of us. (May)
Well, the family from earliest stage. Had a twin brother and two young siblings. Went with twin brother. (Leo)
No, we went to the pictures by ourselves. [ie the children] (Nell)

Spouses Only -
We did. Once a year on our wedding anniversary. (Leo and Joyce)

b. NON FAMILY
Mates/Friends -
I'd probably go with my school friends when I went. (Dorothy)
I went with a a friend, a little old lady used to take me. I used to stay with her for a few days and that was always the treat. (Wyn)
[Latterly] Some friends (Wyn)
Well there were about 25 of us - a sort of a group...We'd play tennis on Saturday afternoon and then we'd go to the pictures at nights. (May)

Boy/Girlfriends -
[When older] There were boyfriends and girlfriends...(May)

Miscellaneous -
We could walk across to Thornleigh...And they used to bring in car loads, lorry loads of people from Dural and West Pennant Hills... (Mavis)
Never went on my own. (Joyce) ***
I never went to the pictures when my children was born...never even tried to. (Nell)
We just didn't go to the pictures when the kids were very small. (----)
I took my eldest girl to the pictures when she was about seven. And she was so excited. (Mavis)
[Aborigine people at Wellington - sat in front seats.] (Reg)
[To Macquarie - as grew older] A lot of women went on a Tuesday night, a lot of men as well, cost of going was lower... (May)
Category 3: MOTIVE

a. PERSONAL

Outing -
It was an adventure. We enjoyed it. (Reg)
That was our social outing. (May)
Able to go twice a week. (May)
Saturday afternoons, if you'd saved up sixpence, you'd go to the pictures. Now we didn't care what was on. (Leo)
[Meeting others at interval in the foyers. Did others do this?] Oh yes. You met them outside in the foyer. (May)
[Meeting others at interval in the foyers. Did others do this?] Just part of a social night out. (Dorothy)
As far as I know it was a social night. And then a lot of women went on a Tuesday night, a lot of men as well, cost of going was lower, and we women were working and getting 9/9 per week. (May)
[Why go to the Macquarie, when there was a choice between it and Mayfair?]
- Well, because we'd never had an upstairs to sit in before and we thought that was a special occasion. (May)
- My husband and I took our family once, not very often, and sat upstairs. (Wyn)
Social stage we all went through...part of the scene through which we lived... (Leo)
We'd all get out and see each other at half time, too. (Mavis or Nell)

Entertainment -
..when I was a teenager and early twenties until I got married it was social...Entertainment. (May)
It was the main entertainment function, apart from the day's tennis. (May)

What's On -
...not every Saturday. We'd go for a special film that we'd want to see. [To Thornleigh] (Mavis)
I think what was on at either was the attraction. (Nell?)

b. IMPERSONAL

Nothing Else To Do -

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Category 4: PREPARATIONS

a. PERSONAL APPEARANCE

Sunday Best -
Best thing about a good TV programme is that you don't have to dress up. (Leo)
People used to get dressed up to go, too. (May)
Some of our better clothing. I think jeans were unheard of. (May)
People really did dress up. (Reg)
[They] would wear a tie, all the boys. We used to wear a good cotton frock or something. (Nell?)

Other -
...to the drive-in...well, we might have tidied up a little bit... (Mavis)

b. OTHER ARRANGEMENTS

Transport -
We had to go by horse and sulky when we went to the pictures. (Wyn)
If the local carrier took the whole village to the neighbouring town which was Coonabarabran. We
did fifteen miles each way on the back of a flat-top truck. (Reg)
We used to walk, it was about a mile and a half... (Mavis)
We had to walk to go to the pictures. (Joyce)

Waiting -
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Bookings -
You always had to book your seats [at the Macquarie]. (May)
[Did any of you book seats?] Always. (---)
To make sure you got in. (May)
You had to book, especially if there was a particularly good movie on... (May)
Had to during the war years. (---)

No Bookings -
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Miscellaneous -
It was sixpence for running messages all the week... (Leo)
Probably go to the best restaurant afterwards for supper - a light supper. (Reg)
Going to the Golden Key or whatever. (Nell?)
[re childminding] We did. Once a year on our wedding anniversary. (Leo and Joyce)
Category 5: RECOLLECTIONS

a. OBJECTIVE VIEW

Buildings -
A.rmidale - It was an old-fashioned theatre...it was almost like an amphitheatre. (Joyce)
[Open air behind Monarch, Wellington] It was open air with a big, high tin fence around it...you walked up steps to sit up near the side like that or up the back. The music was in front of the centre set of steps. [Cost?] About sixpence. (Wyn)
I remember the Monarch Theatre where Charlie Murphy used to play the sound effects and the violinist and also, across the road was the open-air theatre with a big, high tin fence on the footpath and you paid sixpence to go in and you sat up these tiers of seats...Mayfair Theatre...had deck chairs...they used to stack all the deck chairs up the back [for dances, etc]. (May)
The heating in the theatre in the winter time...buckets of fire. [Coonabarabran]. (Reg)
The Hornsby picture show when I went was a galvanised iron shed with a lot of apertures where the wind came through and they rattled. And so did the seats. (Nell)
Drive-ins everywhere. There aren't that many any more. It was good fun. (Leo - re Newcastle)
[Macquarie] The stage was curtained across and they unveiled the screen. (Nell)
[Macquarie] Had up and downstairs.
[Macquarie] Wall to wall carpets.
The Mayfair had deck chairs to sit on and wooden floor.
The Monarch had these seats, running in rows of 6s or 12s fixed together. (Wyn?)
[Macquarie] It had wooden seats in the front and velvet seats in the back. (Nell)
[Flowers at the Macquarie] Always a big arrangement on a pedestal [on stage]. (May)
They had a ticket box either side of the foyer.

Staff -
They had the ushers all dressed gloriously. There'd be a commissionaire chappie out on the footpath and then, now, there'd be a stage show as well as the movie...organists. [City] (Reg)
[Mention made of ice cream and lolly sellers in the theatres.]
Phil Crane always wore a black tie.
[Staff uniforms] Yes they did.
Phil Crane...Wandered around in a dinner suit.
[Ushertettes] White blouses and black skirts, I think. (May) [Discussion re colour.]
[Mrs Warton] Yes. In a long frock.
[Mrs Warton] She used to sell the tickets, didn't she?
[Mrs Warton] She wasn't always in the ticket box. I think she used to stand in the foyer at the entrance to the downstairs section just greeting people as they came. (May)
There were girls upstairs with torches to show you to your seats.

At The Show -
[Why sit upstairs at the Macquarie?] - I think it was warmer, too. (Nell)
- You didn't have the noise, the noisy ones upstairs. ( --- )
- Had a better type of crowd. ( --- )
- [Capitol at Armidale - where did they sit?] Oh, upstairs... (Leo and Joyce)
...actually, an interval too, didn't we. We'd all get out and see each other at half time, too...You'd
meet the others at the film that you hadn't sort of - you'd gone in and you'd sat in the dark, but then at halftime there'd be probably someone from the place out of town that side that you hadn't seen.
(Mavis or Nell)
It was cheap...25 cents, two and six. And you'd have a really big ice cream for sixpence. (Joyce)
[Traveller Moombi] They lifted up the back of the truck and they showed it on the screen. (Joyce)
[At Numulgi - Reg remembered the projector being wound by hand. Also a magic lantern show.]
[Joyce recalled the music at the Prince Edward.]
A good musical stage segment. (Janet)
[Leo recalled the ] Saturday afternoon rush when mostly 8 to 10 years of age kids and little ones, and they were all cat-crowing, whistling and running around and shouting, and sweets running down the sloping floor.
[Mavis recalled the programme format at Thornleigh.]
[Wyn recalled Keith Smith coming to the old Skating Rink at Wellington and commentating on a film about he and Ross Smith.]
We stood for the Queen - er the King. (Wyn?)

After The Show -
Probably go to the best restaurant afterwards for supper - a light supper. (Reg)
Going to the Golden Key or whatever. (Nell?)

b. SUBJECTIVE VIEW
I lived in Trangie at the time and that was a lovely way to spend the evening right out in the open air. (Mavis)
[Macquarie] Very modern compared with what we'd been used to. (May or Nell)
Category 6: PERCEPTIONS

a. SUGGESTIVE ATMOSPHERES -
The part that appealed to me was local musician Charlie Murphy...And that was the part I remember more than anything. (Wyn)
The music was beautiful. (Wyn)
[Mention of the Prince Edward and the music] ...that's lost now. (Joyce)
[Sense of occasion at the Prince Edward?] Yes it was. It just was that. Coming to this magnificent theatre from the little bush picture show. (Joyce)
It was a real event for me going to the Prince Edward. (Joyce)
Very glamorous for me. [City theatres]. (Reg)
The others were so unglamorous. (May)
[Staff in uniforms] Oh yes, it made it more glamorous.
[Staff in uniforms] Really added to it.
[Staff in uniforms] There wasn't much in those - a lot of that was war years and there wasn't much glamour. (May)

b. SO, WHAT WAS IT ALL ABOUT? -
But it's a different era now. (Joyce)
It was a way of life, a social way of life... (May)
It was an adventure. We enjoyed it. (Reg)
Bit of escapism. Take you away from your own lifestyle. (Janet)
It was totally different my episode with the children growing up to when I was growing up. (Joyce)

CONCLUSION:
I can always remember the wonderful feeling of excitement that I've never ever got again as you go in that door and up those stairs with the carpet. It's unforgettable. There was an aura and to me the only other time I ever got a feeling of an aura like that was in a wonderful cathedral. It had an aura about it, y'know. There was the soft music and, as I say, the glamorous person downstairs. Everyone all dressed up. It was an exciting period to go to the pictures. (Joyce)
[Joyce is in her late 'seventies.]
APPENDIX J

TWENTY-FOUR MILES AROUND NELUNGA: THE POST-TELEVISION YEARS - BRINGING THE HISTORY UP TO DATE

Fortunately for Trundle, the Weston Star reopened on Saturday, 23 October 1965 under Allan Tom[52] (also operating theatres at Manildra and Tullamore). The local newspaper applauded:

"It is pleasing to hear that the Trundle Picture Theatre is planning to resume operations...we hear that the theatre at Tullamore is running into difficulties and there is a danger that it will cease operations...Both Trundle and Tullamore theatres have always been well known for very good shows...Both towns have large screens and the latest colour equipment...Both towns show on Saturday night, where it is necessary to provide some entertainment for young people to keep them drifting elsewhere...If Tullamore loses its only theatre by default, it will be a major blow to the village..."[53]

Reopening of the Weston Star was on a trial basis only. The Amusu Theatre in the nearby village of Tullamore screened the film programme a week before Trundle saw it and sessions at Trundle were only on Saturday nights. The local newspaper mentioned the problem of close proximity to Parkes and Condobolin with their entertainment venues and the growing trend of Trundle people not to shop locally. It also pointed out that, "It is apathy and indifference of this kind that is spelling the doom of so many once prosperous towns with populations of 1,000 residents or


less." The editorial concluded that Mr Tom was providing a service for Trundle, the success of which rested solely with the locals.⁵⁴

Unfortunately, the experiment failed. The Weston Star closed on Saturday, 17 June 1967.⁵⁵ The annual children's matinee was held on Saturday, 20 December, still organised by the RSL and Services Club of Trundle.⁵⁶ Apart from that event, the theatre remained dark until Saturday, 22 August 1970 when, with "Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man" and "The Black Castle", it reopened under the direction of Tom Martin.⁵⁷ The licence had been allowed to lapse and an application for reinstatement had to be made. The information appended to the application provided some interesting facts about the town.⁵⁸ For example, the population as at 30 June 1966 was stated as being 618 and, as at 30 June 1969, the population of the whole of Gobang Shire (in which Trundle was situated) was 4860. The theatre seated 480 at the time of the application.

The theatre's licence was reinstated and the theatre was painted inside and outside.⁵⁹ Within a short

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⁵⁵ Trundle and Tullamore Star, Wed. 7.6.1967, Trundle, p. 4. Final films were "Captain Clegg" and "Shenandoah" starring James Stewart.


⁵⁸ Application 17.4.1970. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 10/53174 File T3596 Trundle Weston Star. It was proposed to screen 35mm films intermittently - about once a month. Film Weekly Motion Picture Directory 1969/70 p. 39 - listed as "Trundle Cinema" whereas it had been previously listed as "Weston Star". Perhaps the new exhibitor wanted a new image.

time it was necessary to insert the following line into the theatre's newspaper advertisements.\footnote{Trundle and Tullamore Star, Wed. 28.10.1970, Trundle, p. 4. This was the first time that the line appeared.}

"Please Note. This Theatre now runs under strict supervision." The younger members of the audience, who at that time comprised the bulk of it, probably tended to overstep the mark. This, according to Mrs Pike (former exhibitor), would not have happened in the earlier years because the audience comprised a cross section of the community and the older people tended to keep the younger ones in check.\footnote{Interview with Mrs P Pike, past exhibitor, 20.1.1994 at Trundle.} By March 1971, the theatre was screening fortnightly. Advertisements ceased after the screening of "The Lost Man" and "Three Guns For Texas" on Saturday, 18 September.\footnote{Trundle and Tullamore Star, Wed. 15.9.1971, Trundle, p. 4. This advertisement did include a list of forthcoming attractions for 25.9.1971, 2.10.1971, 9.10.1971 but it is possible that these were only "teaser" advertisements. No further advertisements appeared in the newspaper.} Mr Martin had gone. The free children's matinee took place on 18 December\footnote{Trundle and Tullamore Star, Wed. 9.12.1971, Trundle, p. 4.} but that was the end. The licence was suspended as from 16 June 1972\footnote{Report dated 15.6.1972. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 10/53174 File T3596 Trundle Weston Star. The report also stated that power and lights had been disconnected.} and then cancelled.\footnote{Report stating that licence had been cancelled from 1.3.1973. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 10/53174 File T3596 Trundle Weston Star.}

By 1974, the Chief Secretary's Department reports stated that the theatre was "\textit{no longer used for any form of entertainment whatever}"\footnote{Trundle Police Reports to The Commissioner of Police, Sydney 22.4.1974 and 5.5.1975. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 10/53174 File T3596 Trundle Weston Star.} The theatre was sold in 1977\footnote{Trundle Police Reports to The Commissioner of Police, Sydney 22.4.1974 and 5.5.1975. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 10/53174 File T3596 Trundle Weston Star.} to its present owners. In
more recent years, the auditorium was used for ball games (guide lines were painted on the floor) and for storage. The stage was removed to allow construction of three extra rooms for the flat attached to the rear wall of the building. (See Figures 69 and 70.) In an attempt to thwart vandalism, the lower part of the facade has had a mural painted on it by children from a local primary school. This is not atypical for buildings even in other parts of the world. It would "...suggest an attempt to give a kind of visual lift...This sort of visual treatment is common in this [USA] country in slums and other depressed areas as an attempt at visual enhancement."

When seen by the writer in January, 1994, the theatre appeared to be structurally sound and looked 'at home' among the retail premises in that part of Forbes Street. Typical of this town, timber posts support its awning, as they do many of the other awnings in town. 69 The Wunderlich pressed metal facade is also typical of its neighbours. It does not have any more height than surrounding buildings nor does it stand out in any particular architectural ways that might make it dominate the street. The white facade above the awning "tends to erase particular features of this building, and the decoration as a whole semiotically seems to deny the building a particular function, indeed even a presence". 70 A solitary floodlight on its awning once illuminated the painted "Weston Star" sign.

67 Certificate of Title Volume 4538 Folio 33. Property transferred 15.3.1977 to J and A Asimakopoulos.


69 When one considers the town as a whole, it looks like a relic from the past with its extremely wide streets, ubiquitous peppercorn trees, and wide verandas. Kenneth Slessor's "Country Towns" of the late 1930s is reminiscent of Trundle in 1994.

70 Letter from Marvin Carlson, The City University of New York, to writer 10.3.1994 in which he responded to several photographs of the Trundle Weston Star.
FIGURES 69 and 70
Weston Star Theatre, Trundle - in use as a store-room.
Top: 1992. (Source: L Tod)
Lower: 1994. (Source: K Cork)
Inside the theatre, the plain, fibrous plaster ceiling (currently sagging in places from age), the plain-finished auditorium walls broken by six pilasters on each side with their small, wall bracket light fittings fixed to them, the five feet high dado of stained timber, the projection box and small ticket booth tucked away in the southern corner (also constructed of stained timber to match the dado and exit doors) appear to be in fairly good condition.\(^{71}\) It was never a pretentious building, never trying to emulate its city counterparts. It was a simple, country picture show: a plain picture hall.

In 1964 the Parkes Century continued to maintain Monday to Saturday screenings but this had been reduced to four nights each week, and Saturday matinees by 1966. The year 1967 a reduction to three nights and a matinee.\(^{72}\) Frank Townsend, who had been long associated with the theatre, died in 1969 and Mrs Budd (who had worked there for a time) ran the theatre for Western Cinemas Ltd. Forbes Century, by this time, was also on reduced weekly screenings.

In 1974 an application to the Theatres and Films Commission for the "prescribed endorsement" for the licence of the new Memorial Hall at Bedgerebong was made by the hall authorities. While the application was successful\(^{73}\), from inquiries made of local people, the hall was never used as a cinema.

While drive-in theatres were well-known in and around Sydney, Wollongong and Newcastle by

\(^{71}\) Personal observations of the writer 20.1.1994.


the early 1960s, country areas of New South Wales were slower to get them. In 1971 the Council of the Municipality of Parkes leased, for the sum of one dollar, a large block of land at the corner of Newell Highway and Saleyards Road to Century Theatres (Parkes) Pty Ltd. The company was owned by Snider and Dean Theatres (that also operated the Western Cinemas' chain). The block of land had been selected for a drive-in theatre and was situated between Parkes and Forbes so that it could serve both towns. The entrance to the theatre was to be in Saleyards Road with the property having a frontage to it of 743 feet. To the Newell Highway, the frontage was 730 feet. One slight problem was Theatres and Public Halls Act 1908 Regulation 82A(f) which said that a drive-in theatre could not be built within one mile of a railway level crossing. There was one, 0.95 miles from the site. However, local police were consulted and offered no objections. The licence was granted and gazetted on 6 April 1973. With that work commenced in 1974 on converting the block of scrub into the modern Western Twin Cities Drive-In.⁷⁴

Designed by Robinson and Cranna, architects of Parkes, it contained eight ramps to accommodate 282 cars, and a neat, modern amenities/confectionery/projection building. Application was made and approved in 1974 to built an extra ramp and to increase the size of the first ramp so that in the future accommodation could be increased to 340.⁷⁵ The theatre opened in April 1975.⁷⁶ On occasions, it was the setting for special charity shows. One major fund-raising event (that raised over two thousand dollars for the Parkes Police Citizens Boys Club) was a special screening of

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⁷⁴ NSW Govt Gazette No 5, 6.4.1973. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 17/3619 Western Twin Cities Drive-In, Parkes.

⁷⁵ Plans and relevant documentation relating to the 1974 application to increase car accommodation. Relevant Minister's response. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 17/3619 Western Twin Cities Drive-In, Parkes.

⁷⁶ Australasian Cinema, Thursday, 10 April 1975, p. 3. This magazine stated 350 cars in stage one and a further 100 cars in stage two ("if needed").
"The Spy Who Loved Me". However, by the time it was constructed, the day of the drive-in theatre was already in decline and Sydney was started to close its drive-ins from 1984. Family entertainment was being provided by the television set and the video. For the country people, it was easier to stay at home and watch television than to attend the Century theatres at Parkes or Forbes, or the Western Twin Cities Drive-In. (See Figures 71 and 72.)

In 1976 Western Cinemas Ltd leased the Drive-in and the Century theatres at Parkes and Forbes to Town and Country Theatres. The Forbes Century struggled on until Monday, 1 November 1976 when, with "One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest", it shut its doors. At the time, Neil Syman, local manager for Town and Country Theatres stated that to close the theatre had not been an easy decision. "We have screened the best available films over the last couple of months, but the lack of patronage has resulted in the theatre being an uneconomical operation." He went on to say that Town and Country had spent money on the building in recent months and that many seats had been re-upholstered. No plans had been made to sell the building and the possibility of it reopening at some stage might be looked into in the future. The property was sold in 1980 and again in

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78 There is no mention of these leases on the relevant Certificates of Title. However, Mr David Joel, former General Manager of Snider and Dean Theatres (affiliated with Western Cinemas Pty Ltd) assured the writer on 19.8.1994 that the theatres were "leased". Perhaps the leases were not registered for some reason now lost in the past.

79 *Forbes Advocate*, Tues. 9.11.1976, Forbes, p. 1. The statement about the theatre being uneconomical was not peculiar to Forbes.

80 Certificate of Title Volume 6777 Folio 172. The property was transferred on 13.3.1980 to Raffree Investments Pty Ltd. The adjoining former open-air cinema site was not sold at this time.
Snider and Dean's latest addition to there Western Cinema circuit opens tonight.

The $450,000 venture features the ultimate in equipment and design.

The Western Twin-Cities Drive-in is situated on the highway between Parkes and Forbes, N.S.W., and has the largest screen outside the metropolitan area. The opening programme is "Chinatown".

Designed as a two stage twin stage one has accommodation for 350 cars, while stage two allows for an additional 100 cars if needed.

The projection equipment (Orcon) is the first installed in Australia.

The power supply system is designed for use with all Automation Systems, without requiring any circuit modification.

A full coverage of the opening will be in the next issue.

New feature at Western Twin-Cities Drive-in, the first installed in Australia, is the Park-O-Matic Traffic Directors. These provide exacting control for a free entrance or exit, at parking facility warning the motorist not to enter from the wrong direction. A spotlight emphasises the driveway location of the spikes, and a flush-mounted photoelectric cell actuates sign and spotlight. The Model T-21 has spring steel controlling spikes to insure that traffic will travel "only one direction".
1984 (along with the adjacent block of land on which had been the open-air cinema).\textsuperscript{81}

When the guiding force behind Town and Country Theatres, J Fearon, died suddenly in late July 1978\textsuperscript{82}, the theatres under its control were taken over from 1 September 1978 by Village Theatres.\textsuperscript{83} Although Village implied that things would remain as they were, the Parkes Century (quickly renamed Village Cinema) remained open only until the end of the Christmas holidays that year. Its final programme, "Battlestar Galactica", was shown on Wednesday, 31 January 1979.\textsuperscript{84} With that, the Century started its long sink into oblivion. It was sold in May 1979 to Raffree Investments Pty Ltd, then passed through several other owners before its ultimate demise in 1994.\textsuperscript{85} (Figures 73 and 74.)

The drive-in closed in the early 1980s and was advertised for sale by July 1987.\textsuperscript{86} It reopened under an independent exhibitor (who also had theatres in Orange) in early 1988\textsuperscript{87} but had closed again by July 1988.\textsuperscript{88} The projection equipment was removed to Parkes and the site used by a trucking company.

\textsuperscript{81} Certificates of Title Volume 6777 Folio 172 and Volume 4065 Folios 108 and 109.

\textsuperscript{82} Parkes Champion Post, Fri. 4.8.1978, Parkes, p. 5.

\textsuperscript{83} Parkes Champion Post, Fri. 1.9.1978, Parkes, p. 1.

\textsuperscript{84} Parkes Champion Post, Wed. 31.1.1979, Parkes, p13; Fri. 2.2.1979 p. 8. The Wednesday issue listed the last programme and the Friday issue stated that there was no matinee on Saturday. The Century did not advertise again.

\textsuperscript{85} Certificate of Title Volume 13858 Folio 139. (Source: Land Titles Office.)


\textsuperscript{88} Interview with M Rogan (manager) and B Jones (projectionist) at Golden West Cinema, Parkes, 19.1.1994.
(Source: D Unger, Parkes)
Lower: FIGURE 74. Clarinda Street, Parkes - 1990.  
(Source: K J Cork)
At the Forbes Century, vandalism took its toll. The auditorium ceiling and lights were wrecked, graffiti was sprayed onto walls, light fittings were smashed, the stage set on fire which resulted in the destruction of the screen and curtains. As well, and as if to be a final insult, banks of dress circle chairs were hurled over the balcony into the stalls below.\textsuperscript{89} There was little chance that it would ever reopen as a cinema. By 1984, plans were in hand to convert it into an auction market when, in the early hours of Thursday morning, 6 December, the theatre provided the town with one final piece of entertainment - complete destruction by fire.\textsuperscript{90} (See Figures 75 and 76.) The remnants of the building were demolished as a safety precaution and the site was cleared.

At the Parkes Century, a religious group took over the theatre from 1983\textsuperscript{81} and remained there for a time, holding services in the vestibule. In the auditorium, the group started to gut the building. The stalls flooring was totally removed, as was the front circle. After partially destroying what could have been one of Parkes' most valuable community assets, the group left and the building continued to deteriorate further. A more appropriate term would be "demolition by neglect". (See Figures 77, 78, 79, 80.)

The story of Parkes' cinemas continued, however. The Parkes RSL Club auditorium was completed and opened on 3 September 1960. Designed by H M Robinson, of Parkes, the building

\textsuperscript{89} Photographs of the theatre taken by L Tod, Blacktown c1982.


\textsuperscript{91} Certificate of Title Volume 13858 Folio 139. The Assemblies of God New South Wales received title from 24. 9.1983.
FIGURE 75
(Source: J Meagher, Forbes)
FIGURE 76
Century Theatre, Forbes - the morning after the fire - 6 December 1984.
(Source: J Meagher, Forbes)
FIGURES 77 and 78
Century Theatre, Parkes - 1990. Demolition by neglect - the aftermath of the religious group.
(Source: K J Cork)
FIGURES 79 and 80
Century Theatre, Parkes - 1990. Demolition by neglect - the aftermath of the religious group.
(Source: K J Cork)
is in Short Street. A spacious room, it was equipped with a screen and Reg Ashcroft (of Parkes) said that he showed some 16mm films at the club in the early to mid 1960s. When a new section was added to the club in the 1980s, the old auditorium became redundant. It was converted into the Golden West Cinema, leased to outside interests, and opened on 18 August 1988. Equipped with a single projector that uses a platter system, the 178-seat cinema offers the town the chance to see the latest release films. The walls are curtained, although there is very little fullness in the drapes. Seating is of several colours and styles, the screen is uncovered and the lighting is dim except for the few portalfloods that shine blandly onto the screen. The vestibule is basically red and contains the ticket/confectionery counter (originally used as a bar for the former RSL auditorium). Externally there is little to indicate the cinema's presence except a small showcase and a painted sign fixed on the club's brick wall. One is tended to say that it lacks any real sense of occasion. (see Figures 81, 82, 83, 84.)

In late 1993 the Parkes Century was offered at auction but was passed-in. It was subsequently sold to a developer who also owned the adjoining vacant block. An announcement was made in the local newspaper in February 1994 that the council had approved demolition, pending an

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92 Annual inspection reports. Correspondence re permission to open 3.9.1960. NSW State Archives - Chief Secretary's Dept: Theatres & Public Halls files - Box 17/3449 File 3067 Parkes RSL Hall.

93 Interview with M Rogan (manager) and B Jones (projectionist) at the Golden West Cinema, Parkes, 19.1.1994.

94 Personal observations of the writer.

95 The recent opening of a new gold mine northwest of Parkes has led to an influx of new residents and a slight rise in the cost of house prices. Most, if not all, of the shops in town are occupied. Expectations are that the mine will operate for at least twenty years, bringing with it new prosperity. This may have spurred on the developer who is a resident of Sydney.
FIGURES 81 and 82
(Source: K J Cork)
FIGURES 83 and 84
(Source: K J Cork)
application from the owner. Plans had been drawn for shops and offices/flats to occupy the site. In the photograph that accompanied the demolition news was the statement, "...the grand old theatre, the scene of many great memories for local residents,...is to be demolished shortly." The demolition took place in July/August 1994 and the site was cleared.

On Thursday, 17 February 1994, a 66-seat Satellite Cinema was opened at 4 Lawler Street, Forbes. (See Figures 85 and 86.) Operated by local people, Sue and Tim Acret, in association with Satellite Cinemas of Sydney, it presents its pictures on a large video screen. At present, the video is despatched from Sydney by courier. When there are enough cinemas of this type in operation, the picture will be sent by satellite to the cinema during the early hours of the morning and recorded at the cinema on video tape, ready to play the next day. The existing building was completely refurbished from a car garage and provides a large vestibule and a pleasant auditorium (with room available for a possible second). The main economic benefit of this cinema is that it can be operated without a projectionist. The person who works behind the ticket/confectionery counter can put in the video and push the start button. For the people of Forbes, however, they now have the renewed opportunity of going to the pictures, an experience that has been missing from the town for almost twenty years.

96 Parkes Champion Post, Mon. 7.2.1994, Parkes, no page given.


98 Australian Financial Review, Wed. 16.2.1994, Sydney, no page number. Article about the operating company and mention of the opening of the Forbes video cinema. Of interest was the mention that the NRMA had invested a substantial amount of money in the company. The writer inspected the new cinema in April 1994.

99 In an interview on 15 June 1994, T Ohlsson, Managing Director of Satellite Cinemas, stated that there would need to be approximately one hundred cinemas in operation before the cost of using a satellite could be justified.
FIGURES 85 and 86
(Source: K J Cork)
GLOSSARY
The items below, not marked (*), have been quoted from F.H. Ricketson. The Management of Motion Picture Theatres, New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co. Inc., 1938, pp. 330 - 370. While not all of them appear in the thesis, it was felt that they might be useful terms to have on record.

**box office** (aka ticket box). The office in a theatre where tickets are sold.

**carbon arcs**. A lamp house on a projector whose lighting source comes from a sustained luminous glow formed under certain conditions when a break is made in an electric current. (*) The carbon rods face each other, almost touching and this creates the break in the electric current.

**carbons**. Rods made from a hard chemical compound, of a variety of sizes and used in arc lamps and the lamp house of motion picture projectors.

**CinemaScope** (*). A form of wide screen projection that commenced in Australia in the early 1950s.

**cove lighting**. Indirect lighting where the light source is hidden from view through a concealed concave structural recess.

**drapes or draperies**. A set of heavy cloth wings, borders and back curtain that enclose the stage and prevent the audience from seeing the side or back walls.

**dress circle** (aka gallery) (*). The upstairs seating area. The area closest to the stage was often referred to as the Lounge.

**exhibitor**. A person or persons, partnership or association or corporation engaged in the ownership or operation of theatres for the showing of motion pictures.

**façade**. The front of the theatre showing the architectural style and pretentions.

**film (aka picture)**. A celluloid strip coated with a light-sensitive photographic emulsion.

**foyer** (*). For the purposes of this thesis, the upstairs waiting area or lounge area for dress circle patrons.

**front-of-house staff** (*). Theatre employees who work as usher, cashier, theatre manager.

**front-of-house** (*). That part of a theatre in front of the stage, including auditorium and vestibule/foyer.

**lamp house**. The metal housing of a motion picture projector surrounding the light source and carrying the mount for the condenser lenses.

**lens**. A piece of glass having two opposite regular surfaces... used in the optical system for the projection of motion pictures.

**matinee**. A daytime performance.

**motion picture projector**. Machine consisting of a light source, shutter, mechanical housing containing ball-bearing interments, upper and lower film magazines, lenses, and, since the invention of sound, fitted with suitable electrical or mechanical attachments for reproducing sound in synchronism with pictures.

**nitrate film**. Commercial film with a nitrate base. Highly inflammable.

**projection box** (aka bio box). The booth or fireproof enclosure in which is located the mechanical equipment for presenting the show.

**projectionist** (*). Person whose job is to operate and maintain the projecting equipment.

**proscenium**. The opening between the stage and the auditorium.

**proscenium arch**. The arch that frames the stage opening.

**safety film**. Has a base of acetate which is slow burning and so is less inflammable than nitrate film.

**screen**. The white or silver porous surface behind which are placed the sound system speakers and upon which the picture images are reproduced, creating synchronous lifelike reality to the voice and action of a motion picture.

**sound-on-disk**. A sound picture system in which sound is supplied to the picture from a phonography-type record that is run with the picture on a suitable turntable apparatus.

**sound-on-film**. A sound motion picture system in which sound is synchronously applied to the picture in the form of a sound track photographed alongside the picture frames in definite (or fixed) relation thereto. (sound track. An 0.084-inch width on film with photographic impressions of sound that actuates sound reproduction.)

**stalls** (*). The downstairs seating area of the auditorium, often divided into Back Stalls and Front Stalls.

**usher/usherette**. Attendant... who directs the seating of theatre audiences.

**vestibule** (*). For the purposes of this thesis, the entrance lobby of a theatre, where tickets are sold.
Twenty-four Miles Around Nelungaloo.

The history and importance of cinema exhibition in pre-television times to a country area of central-western New South Wales.

Kevin James Cork

MASTER OF ARTS (HONS) THESIS
UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN SYDNEY
1994
PLEASE NOTE

The greatest amount of care has been taken while scanning this thesis,

and the best possible result has been obtained.
"The exhibitors thought they were doing it to make money, but the patrons came because the more the exhibitors did, the greater was the sense of occasion created and the intrinsic excitement of a social outing."
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

"I can do everything through Him who gives me strength." (Phil. 4:13)

I take the opportunity offered at this point to thank the University of Western Sydney for allowing me to undertake the writing of this thesis, my supervisors Dr Carol Liston and Dr Phillip Kent, the staff at both the NSW Archives Office at Kingswood and the newspapers' section of the State Library of NSW, and the people who I interviewed and with whom I corresponded, viz.

Mrs S Acet, Forbes, NSW; Mr H Armstrong, Richmond, NSW; Mr R Ashcroft, Parkes, NSW; Baroness Gardner of Parkes, London, UK; Mrs S Budd, Parkes, NSW; Prof M Carlson, New York, USA; Mrs J Clarke, Trundle, NSW; Miss M Crowley, Box Hill, Vic; Mr D Davis, Parkes, NSW; Mr W and Mrs P Farthing, Forbes, NSW; Forbes Family History Group Inc, Forbes, NSW; Mrs M Freeman, Parkes, NSW; Mrs L Furse, Mollymook, NSW; Group of Wellington Senior Citizens, Wellington, NSW; Mr J J Hall, Parkes, NSW; Mrs L Hawkins, Trundle, NSW; Mr S Heyden, Manly, NSW; Mr J Jennings, Winston Hills, NSW; Mr D Joel, Bellevue Hill, NSW; Mr B Jones, Parkes, NSW; Mr K Jones, Forbes; Mr P Johnson, Gunningbland, NSW; Mr L Kearney, Bogan Gate, NSW; Mr R Lees, Parkes, NSW; Mrs K Maguire, Parkes, NSW; Mr P Mazoudier, Willoughby, NSW; Mr W J McGlynn, Parkes, NSW; Mrs J McKeown, Bogan Gate, NSW; Members of Forbes Senior Citizens, Forbes, NSW; Members of Parkes Senior Citizens, Parkes, NSW; Mrs R Mill, Parkes, NSW; Mr T Ohiisson, Artarmon, NSW; Dr F Opitz, Newcastle, NSW; Mrs P Pike, Trundle, NSW; Miss B Rogan, Forbes, NSW; Mr M Rogan, Parkes, NSW; Mr G H Simpson, Mt. Druitt, NSW; Mrs G Steventon, Parkes, NSW; Mr V and Mrs N Storey, Fairfield West, NSW; Prof R Thorne, Sydney, NSW; Mr R Threlfall, Sydney, NSW; Mrs G Tibbetts, Forster, NSW; Mr L Tod, Blacktown, NSW; Mr A Tom, Manildra, NSW; Mrs J Townsend, Tathra, NSW; Mr M Trimmer, Bogan Gate, NSW; Mr D Unger, Alectown West, NSW; Mr H Unger, Alectown, NSW; Mr L Unger, Parkes, NSW; Unnamed local farmer at Mandagery, NSW; Mr D L Williams, Sydney, NSW; Mr J Williamson, Bogan Gate, NSW.

To my wife and children, I extend my deepest thanks for their encouragement and tolerance.
CERTIFICATE FROM CANDIDATE


This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university.

This thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except when due reference is made.

[Signature]

Kevin J Cork.
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ABSTRACT

Little research into historical, architectural and social significance of the picture theatre in pre-television rural Australian society has been undertaken. Taking a New South Wales country area (to represent a microcosm), this thesis records the picture venues and qualitative research material from past patrons and theatre staff.

Chapter 1 establishes the environment created by a picture theatre and Chapter 2 shows that New South Wales was typical of Australia in film attendance before the 1960s. Chapter 3 introduces the Central-west subject area ("Twenty-four Miles Around Neliungaloo") and describes how the data was gathered. The area itself is typical of the state with its lack of pertinent records.

Relying heavily on primary sources, Chapter 4 shows the development of the picture venues within the subject area. Besides historical facts, there are comments on architectural details.

The qualitative research material (oral history and certain correspondence) in Chapter 5 gives "life" to the occasion formerly associated with going to the pictures. The results show that going to the pictures was a very important part of pre-television social life, the research supported by numerous quotes testifying to the sense of the occasion.

Chapter 6 suggests that the success of the rural picture shows was a happy co-incidence: the exhibitors' desire to make money and the patrons' desire for a social experience (and entertainment). A recommendation is made that one of the venues discovered during the course of research should be investigated for heritage listing. It is important that we should acknowledge the vital part that going to the pictures once played in pre-television days, especially in rural areas.
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EXPLANATION OF CURRENCY AND MEASUREMENTS as used in text.

In the years prior to 1966, Australian currency was expressed in the form of pounds (£), shillings and pence (sometimes expressed as £- / -/- / -). 

Decimal equivalents of the old currency are as follows:

1 pound (20 shillings) 2 dollars
10 shillings 1 dollar
1 shilling (12 pence) 10 cents
6 pence 5 cents
1 penny 1.2 cents.

Prior to the introduction of metric measurement some years after the introduction of decimal currency, length was expressed in Imperial measurements that included yard (yd.), foot (ft.) and inch (in.). Distance was measured in miles.

Metric equivalents of Imperial measurements are as follows:

1 inch 25.39 millimetres or 2.53 centimetres
1 foot (12 inches) .3048 metre
1 yard (3 feet) .9144 metre
1 mile 1.6 kilometres.