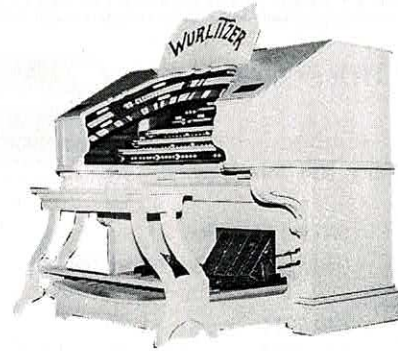
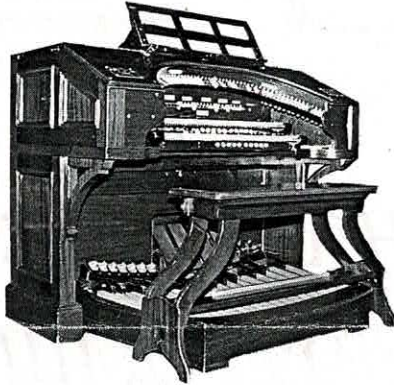


JANUARY, 1994

# TOSA

Marrickville Town Hall



Orion Centre Campsie

# NEWS

# JOHN ATWELL



**SUNDAY, 30th JANUARY**  
**Hear the mighty Warli Tzer Pipe Organ**  
**ORION CENTRE, CAMPSIE**

Volume 33  
Issue 1  
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Price  
\$1.00

# TOSA NEWS

JANUARY, 1994

**THEATRE ORGAN SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA (NSW DIVISION) Inc.**

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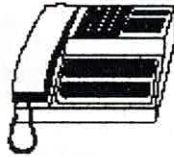
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## COMING EVENTS

# 1994 HAPPY NEW YEAR!!!!

### JANUARY

Monday 10 at 7.30 pm **Committee Meeting**  
Sunday 30 at 2.00pm **JOHN ATWELL  
CONCERT**  
Orion Centre, Campsie

### FEBRUARY

Monday 7 at 7.30 pm **Committee Meeting**  
Sunday 27 at 2.00 pm **CHRIS McPHEE  
CONCERT**  
Orion Centre, Campsie

### MARCH

Monday 7 at 7.30 pm **Committee Meeting**  
Sunday 27 at 2.00 pm **CONCERT**  
(to be confirmed)  
Orion Centre, Campsie

### APRIL

Friday 1 - Monday 4 **NATIONAL CONVENTION  
PERTH, W.A.**  
Monday 11 at 7.30 pm **Committee Meeting**



**REMEMBER TO TUNE IN TO  
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EVERY MONDAY AT 9.00 pm.  
For "Theatre Organ Highlights"  
Presented by Chris Styles

# Editorial

A Happy New Year to all **TOSA News** readers! I'm sure that 1994 will be an interesting year for all **TOSA** members, with lots of great artists playing fabulous concerts for our listening pleasure - starting with the outstanding talents of **John Atwell** on the 30th January at the **Orion Warli Tzer**.

By now most of you will know what a fantastic concert **Tony Fenelon** gave us in December, and that the promised surprise was indeed a first-class one: the introduction to **Sydney** of the charming and talented young man from **Adelaide**, **Chris McPhee**. It is not surprising when you hear him perform that he was chosen last year as the world's top young player in the international competition run each year by the **American Theatre Organ Society**. Everyone felt that, with his bright personality and his outstanding performance ability, he is destined for greatness in the theatre organ world. We look forward to hearing him in his own concert on the 27th February, again at the **Orion Centre**.

**Tony's** concert saw the launch of the **Nicholas Martin** video, filmed during



the **Blackpool Dance Night** and his Sunday concert in the **Orion Centre** in the middle of 1993. What a success story - everyone was enchanted by the video and the tapes sold like hot-cakes, already necessitating a further re-ordering of copies to cope with the demand from our members and from interstate. A couple of copies are still available from our record bar, but others wishing to obtain a copy will have to wait for the second run of tapes.

See you at the **John Atwell** concert at the end of the month.

**Colin Groves**

# From our new President

May I take this opportunity to wish all members a full and happy 1994. As your new President, I am looking forward to a year of progress and achievement.

The **Marrickville** organ to be upgraded; the **Orion** organ to be fine-tuned and regulated; the purchase of our third organ (our first **Christie**); the establishment of a property fund; and a most exciting concert programme. These are some of the projects, either in-hand or planned, for what should be an exciting year.

I would urge all our members to become involved and to "have your say" by attending concerts, club nights and society business meetings. Remember, the more you put into the Society, the more you will get out of it.

I look forward to meeting as many of you as possible in the coming year.

**Cliff Bingham**

*Articles in this journal need not represent the views of the committee or the editor*

**The deadline for each edition of TOSA News is the 12th of the preceding month**



from Neil Palmer

First, the bad news :

I have been advised by the Australian distributor of the "Pro-Arte" theatre organ compact discs (Lyn Larsen, Tom Hazelton, Melissa Ambrose) that they will no longer be handling these lines.

The good news is that still has stocks of these. This could be your only opportunity to purchase these CD's while stocks last, as we may not see them again :

**IT'S A GRAND OLD FLAG - Melissa Ambrose**

*Strike Up the Band, Yankee Doodle Dandy, 76 Trombones, plus more.*

**FILMTRAX - Lyn Larsen**

*Film music from 2001, Fantasia, Wizard of Oz, plus more.*

**RAGTIME'S GREATEST HITS - Tom Hazelton**

*Alexander's Ragtime Band, The Entertainer, Solace, plus more.*

**UP AND AWAY - Lyn Larsen**

*Armed Forces Medley, Under the Double Eagle, plus more.*

**DUELING ORGANS - Lyn Larsen and Carlo Curley**

*March Militaire, Rondo à la Turca, Widor's Toccata, plus more.*

**PIPES OF HOLLYWOOD - Tom Hazelton**

*Swanee, Mame, Somewhere My Love, Birth of the Blues, plus more.*

\*\*\*\*\*

Price : \$22.00 each

Available at TOSA Concerts, or by Mail Order from :

TOSA (NSW Division) Inc.

304 Parramatta Rd

ASHFIELD NSW 2131

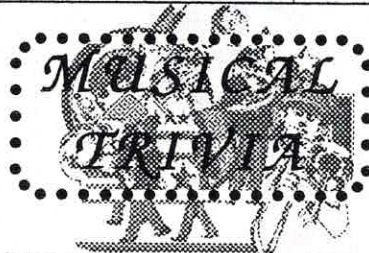
Postage : \$ 2.80

\*\*\*\*\*

**THE MUSIC**  
With Allan Tassaker  
.....

**Allan Tassaker has informed us that he has just bought a nice little farm in the country. The first thing he did was to buy up all the local organs and bury them in his field.**

**Why, you may well ask....?**  
**Well, the answer is simple.**  
**He wanted organic soil !!**



\* The highest price ever offered for a musical instrument was for a **Stradivarius** violin in 1985 - about \$1,500,000.

\* Flutes made from hollow bones were used about 12,000.

\*The first written music came from **Egypt** 4,500 years ago.

\* The largest drum kit has 75 pieces.

\* A drum measuring 3.5 metres in diameter is the largest ever made.

\*The world record for non-stop guitar playing is 300 hours, set in **England** in 1986.

\*The largest bell in the world is in **Moscow** and weighs almost 200 tonnes.

\* The saying "All dressed up and nowhere to go" began life in 1912 in a song by **G. Whiting**.

\*In a similar vein, **Ed Wharton** passed on this story about the composer **Irving Berlin**. Being late for an evening in his honour at the Waldorf Hotel, **Irving Berlin** took a short cut through the kitchen where he knocked over a big bowl of pudding. That night **Berlin** wrote his song, later made famous by **Fred Astaire**, which goes: "Pudding on my top hat, pudding on my white tie and pudding on my tails".



From Heather Finch of Denistone :

20th November, 1993

"I am disturbed by a number of issues leading to the election of the 1994 TOSA committee.

No information was given in TOSA News concerning the identity or even the existence of unopposed nominees. Knowledge of these names is vital if members are to make informed decisions when casting votes for the remaining positions

The October editorial states that, because a number of candidates did not submit resumés, the committee had decided that NONE of those resumés submitted would be published. That does not seem fair to the three unnamed nominees who were able to meet a deadline. (On the same page, the Vice-presidents' <Both of 'em> Report was two full columns of election argument.)

From the lack of information about a nominee for position of President, and from the content of the Vice-Presidents' report, one could be forgiven for thinking that they wished to continue as joint Presidents. It should not be left to the members to gossip, speculate, etc. to receive the correct information. Too much of TOSA's business is not reported and therefore seems secretive, a situation which can leave the membership dissatisfied.

I hope the incoming committee will try to be more communicative, not just during elections, but in general TOSA business. After all that is one of the reasons for having a monthly publication.

Yours sincerely,  
**Heather Finch**"

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## TOWN HALL ORGAN

The **William Hill and Son** organ in **Sydney's Town Hall** celebrated its 100th birthday in 1990 - it was opened on 9th August, 1890, by organist **W.T. Best**.

When it was opened it was heralded not only as the largest organ in the world at that time but also as one of the great technical and musical triumphs of the era. Its splendid tone thrilled thousands of music lovers while its mechanism left organists completely satisfied.

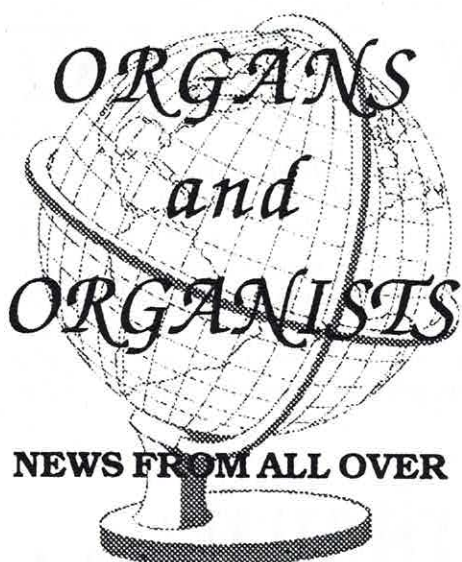
The instrument has 6 keyboards (including pedals), 126 speaking stops, and 9,000 pipes, which range in length from 2.5 centimetres to 19.5 metres. The most unusual feature is a 64ft reed, a **Contra Trombone**, which plays very deep notes and has the same effect in the full organ as a drum in an orchestra.

Between 1972 and 1982 the gigantic organ was restored by the **Sydney** building firm, **Roger H. Pogson Pty Ltd**. The organ was restored, not rebuilt, meaning that every attempt was made to make the instrument sound as its maker intended. The stop list, with the exception of the **Swell Piccolo Ift**, was not altered, nor was the pneumatic key, stop and piston action changed.

The **Town Hall** organ is a unique musical monument, being the largest, essentially unaltered Romantic organ in the world, built by one of the best organ builders of the 19th century. The **Sydney** instrument achieved a splendour and integrity equal to the greatest organs ever built and has the ability to convincingly portray an enormous range of music, sometimes being used in a theatre organ style.

**Robert Ampt**, the current City Organist, is only the 4th person to have that title. The first City Organist was **Auguste Wiegand** (1891 - 1900), followed by **Arthur Mason** (1901 - 1907) and **Ernest Truman** (1909 - 1935). For a period of over 40 years there was no organist appointed, until in 1978 **Robert Ampt** became the 4th Sydney City Organist.

**Robert** was appointed after studying for 4 years with **Anton Heiller** in **Vienna**. International performing has taken him to **Europe, Japan, USA, and New Zealand**, and in **Australia** he has appeared at the **Sydney Opera**



**House**, in the **Organ Festivals of Adelaide and Melbourne**, the **Arts Festivals of Armidale and Goulburn**, the **Newcastle Cathedral Festival** and for the **Sydney Festival**.

The latest recording of the instrument is called **Centenary Plus**, and is subtitled "over 100 years of the Sydney Town Hall Grand Organ". It features a wide range of music, though nothing in the theatre organ vein, which clearly demonstrates the huge range of the instrument, from soft delicate pieces to majestic, full organ passages, including the use of the famous 64' **Contra Trombone**.

The cover notes for the CD, from which most of the above information has been gleaned, are very informative and include the full specifications of the organ and selected photos of the pipes and other behind-the-scenes shots. The music includes pieces by **Bach, Handel** and **Dubois**. Also included is a piece written by **Robert Ampt** himself and the piece written and performed by **W.T. Best** at the opening concert in 1890, *Introduction, Variations and Finale on "God Save the Queen"*.

## CHICAGO STADIUM

The latest news on the old **Chicago Stadium**, outlined in the May, 1993 issue of **TOSA News**, is that it is to be demolished after all, and that the 6/56 **Barton** organ would be destroyed with it, as it would cost \$11 million to remove.

However **ATOS** members have suggested that the owner donate the organ to **ATOS** and let the Society look after the removal and storage of this great old instrument.

## BLACKPOOL TOWER

The world famous **Blackpool Tower**, now known as **Tower World**, will celebrate its 100th year this year. Planned celebrations include a **Centenary Festival**, perhaps painting the tower gold and **Phil Kelsall** will play a **Centenary Concert** on the **Wurlitzer** in the **Tower Ballroom** on Sunday, 24th April.

## ST LOUIS' FOX THEATRE

Some large **American** theatres not only had organs in their auditoriums but also in their foyers to entertain audiences with organ music no matter where they were in the building. It is interesting to know that some are still being used.

During the 6 weeks' run of **Andrew Lloyd Webber's Phantom of the Opera** in the **Fox Theatre, St Louis**, the 3/10 **Wurlitzer** in the lobby of the theatre was played each night before and after the performances. That's entertainment!

The show includes a (pretend) organ on stage, but the theatre's great 4/36 **Wurlitzer** installed in the main auditorium remained firmly tucked away, and was not used during the run of the show.

## GEORGE BLACKMORE

British organist, **George Blackmore**, who had the lower part of his left leg amputated due to an infection and spent 10 months in hospital, is well on the road to recovery. He is planning to return to concert work using special shoe adjustments to enable him to play the pedals.

## LEICESTER SQUARE ODEON

This **Odeon** is still featuring "**The Duchess**", the 5/20 **Compton** with suitable films as well as for Royal Premieres, gala performances and in concerts due to the enthusiastic support of the manager, **William Weir**. The theatre is the flagship of the **Odeon** circuit and has happily escaped subdivision into a multiplex.

# TOSA's NEW CHRISTIE ORGAN

When our Research and Archives Officer, Ian Cameron, learned of the Society's recent purchase of the Gordon Theatre's Christie Unit Organ, he submitted the following article which details the installation of this organ in the St Columb's Church, West Ryde, and which appeared in the "Australian Post Office" magazine, June-July 1961 issue.

Obviously written for general readership

rather than for those interested specifically in theatre pipe organs, it nonetheless provides an interesting insight into the problems and pleasures encountered in moving an instrument to a new location.

Two items which are not mentioned in the article are: Firstly, Ian's part in the extensive recabling of the organ, a new main cable being run between the console and the relays,

and also new cables from the switches to the pipework and the percussions. Secondly, mention must be made of the very high standard achieved in the re-installation at St Columb's. The society is indebted to those concerned in the relocation of the Christie for their fine work which has left the instrument almost completely intact and in an excellent state of preservation.

## Organ Builders

"**K** NOW anyone who wants to buy an organ?" This question, which passed casually between two musician friends, started a train of events which reached a proud conclusion three years later in St. Columb's church at West Ryde, New South Wales. A discarded cinema organ was to be transformed, through the patient work of three men, into an inspiring guide to harmony in church worship.

The question, which was asked by Post Office Technical Instructor Ken Jordan, aroused the immediate curiosity of his companion, Technical Training Principal Tom Raynsford. Tom was interested, and ideas began to shape themselves in his mind as Ken told his story.

The organ, a Christie, was the English equivalent of the American Wurlitzer and had originally been installed in a suburban theatre at Gordon at a cost of nearly £20,000. This was back in the 1920's when organs of this type provided a popular musical background to silent films. With the advent of talking films, however, organs gradually disappeared from theatres and were either stored and forgotten or sold cheaply for their useful parts.

Ken told his friend that this particular organ was going to be sold for scrap-metal and could be obtained for £200. Tom, keenly interested on behalf of the church, arranged for the instrument to be purchased, and from then on, events moved quickly under his capable guidance.

### The Three-Man Team

Having assessed the magnitude of the task that faced them if the organ was to be rebuilt and adapted for church worship, Ken and Tom enlisted the aid of Senior Technician Noel Stokes who has made a hobby of organs and organ construction. The three-man team was complete.

The three men who directed "operation organ" combined the three distinct talents needed for the mammoth project. Tom, the leader, is a competent organiser and planner; Ken is a brilliant organist; and Noel is a precise craftsman with experience of the many mechanical and electrical problems to be encountered in organ building. All perfectionists, they approached their task with a full appreciation of the time and work it would entail.

The common bond uniting these three men, and the many others whose aid they enlisted from time to time, was love of music. The whole project, indeed,

provided a splendid example of the power of music as a unifying influence. Music-lovers of all creeds, attracted by the magnitude and complexity of the job, offered to assist in building the organ for the West Ryde church.

### An Almost Hopeless Task

To people less optimistic and less confident than Tom, Ken and Noel, the task of rebuilding the dilap-



Ken Jordan demonstrates the use of double-touch technique on the organ which he and two friends converted from a theatre to a church instrument. The numerous stops which must be manipulated by the organist can be clearly seen.

idated organ would have seemed hopeless. A mass of wood and metal, with no apparent use beyond the scrap-heap, it was a sorry-looking sight. The three Post Office men saw it as an exhilarating challenge.

After thirty years in storage, every part of the instrument was covered with a heavy layer of dust; many of the perishable parts were useless. It was soon evident, too, that complete rewiring would be needed.

Handling and identifying all parts of the organ called for extreme care. The largest pipes were sixteen feet long and sixteen inches in diameter. Made of a special lead alloy, they were heavy and unwieldy. At the other extreme, the smallest pipes were only half an inch long and could easily be lost. Replacement of these pipes with new ones to give exactly the same pitch presents a difficult, although not insurmountable, problem.

With meticulous care, the three friends took stock of the material available and examined the condition of all parts of the instrument. They made numerous

drawings until they were thoroughly familiar with every detail of construction.

#### Many Problems to be Solved

Once the blue-print stage had been completed and the knowledge of the team had been organised for the long job ahead, new problems arose. One was storage of all the parts at West Ryde while the work was in progress. The material, when collected for removal, filled three furniture-vans.

The long sixteen-foot pipes were too tall to fit under the roof in the space allotted at the rear of the church. Their shape had to be altered before they could be properly accommodated.

Rewiring was another time-consuming and complex task. Fifteen miles of wire were used before it was completed. To keep costs to a minimum, various manufacturers were approached for scrap lots. As a result, the expenditure on materials used in the whole project was kept down to £100.

At the end of the first twelve months, the basic layout of the new organ was completed. The work

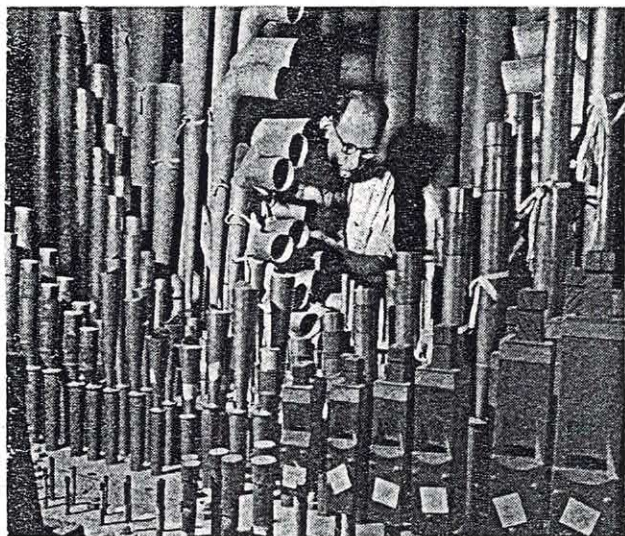
ciency could be made. After moments of suspense, three elated men heard the first notes issue from the reconstructed organ. It worked. They knew then that they would accomplish the job they had set out to do.

There was only one minor relay fault in the construction. Otherwise, the organ was a perfect example of what co-ordinated skill, pride in craftsmanship and endless patience and enthusiasm could produce.

Much still remained to be done. Tuning and adjustment had to be carefully carried out, pitch and mechanical aids had to be corrected, and complete and instantaneous response to touch on the keyboards had to be assured. There was too much air in some bellows, and not enough in others. The ranges of sound intensity between very soft and very loud had to be adjusted, and the air pressure in the pipes had to be regulated to ensure smooth, flowing harmony.

The organ responded to all this gentle and persistent coaxing and, after almost three years, the men who had restored its music were satisfied.

The dismantled piles of wood, steel and lead, covered in a theatre's back-stage dust, were a thing of the past. In their place was a rich-toned musical instrument.



Noel Stokes makes tuning adjustments to some of the smaller pipes of the organ. Complete tuning is done every three months, but minor adjustments are made more often.

#### Transformation of a Church

Before the organ project was completed, many features of church atmosphere had been missing from St. Columb's.

Good deeds, however, seldom pass unnoticed, and the news that the church was to have an organ stimulated other people to acts of generosity. Somebody thought the floor needed sanding and polishing and unobtrusively had it done. Then, one day, a new carpet appeared in the aisle. The sanctuary was redesigned, and delicately scrolled fretwork added a touch of artistry to the rear wall.

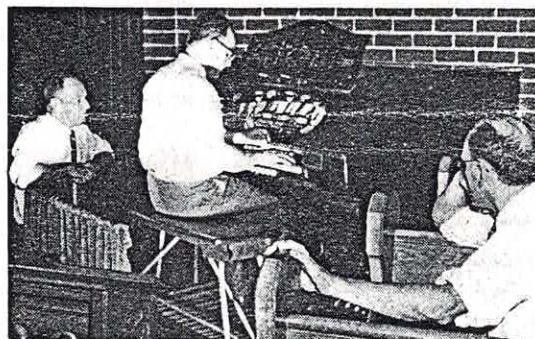
In these sacred surroundings, the reconstructed organ was dedicated by Archbishop Gough of Sydney on October 2, 1960. As its pealing notes led the worship of the congregation, three satisfied men stood quietly by.

then settled down to a steady process of giving new life to neglected materials and restoring their mechanical and electrical vim. This was a tedious period of trial and error when the skill and judgment of the three men directing the work were put to severe tests. Their enthusiasm, far from diminishing, was communicated to other people who readily came to their assistance with various special tasks.

#### Experiments Successful

Excitement increased as the work progressed to the stage where the first experiments to test its effi-

Seated by the church organ are its builders (from left) Tom Raynsford, Ken Jordan and Noel Stokes. The mechanism and mass of pipes are built into the rear of the church.



*From what I have read and heard about it, it seems that this 2/8 Christie organ was installed in 1929 in the Gordon Kings Theatre, which had opened in 1924. The organ was used for radio broadcasts on 2CH quite a lot in the 1930's with organists Valda Kersey and Percy Burraston at the console. In the 1940's and 50's it*

*seems to have been played only rarely, and in 1960 it was sold to St Columb's for installation in that church, and left there when this building eventually became the church hall. The Gordon Kings Theatre closed in 1963 and was demolished.*

*In a future issue of TOSA News*

*we hope to publish some more details of the history of this organ, including the story of its removal from St Columb's in 1992 and its purchase, removal and storage by TOSA in 1993. It is now spread over 3 locations awaiting a new venue for its next re-installation for our listening pleasure.*

## The CLARENCE BLACK Story

It has been said that there are many musicians who choose a musical career as a result of a lucky break during their childhood. Clarence Black first became interested in music as a result of a break - not a lucky break, but a broken hip! He was born in Adelaide and at the age of 4 fell and broke the already-mentioned hip. This caused him to spend the next 8 years in the Adelaide Children's Hospital, and it was here that he discovered his interest in music. A party from the Blind Institute, which was opposite the hospital, used to play occasionally for church services in the wards, and one of the party played the harmonium. Young Clarence made up his mind that when he left the hospital he would learn to play this instrument. However, when he did make his start in music, he began to learn the piano, practising on the harmonium until such time as his family could afford to buy him a second-hand piano. He was the youngest of a family of 10, and the family finances did not run to the purchase of a piano just at that time.

A few years later he won a scholarship to the Elder Conservatorium in Adelaide, and earned the money to continue his musical studies by playing for dances, etc., as well as for professional shows in Adelaide's theatres. His first show was *The Marcus Show* which introduced to Australia as American artist who was billed as "The Last of the Hillbillies", better known later on radio and TV as Bob Dyer. Clarence soon gained the degrees of L.R.S.M. and L.Mus.A.

His next step was to take up the study of the organ under Mr John Horner, and only 6 months later he won a 3 year Elder Scholarship for organ. He also took up oboe with Miss Mignon Weston, a pupil of Leon Goosens, and in the same year won a 3 year scholarship for piano, as well as one for 6 months for oboe. This record of 3 scholarships for 3 different instruments has never been broken. He had the pleasure of playing under the baton of Percy Grainger at the Adelaide Conservatorium.

About this time he heard the WurliTzer organ of Hoyts Regent Theatre, Adelaide, and was completely fascinated by it. Its sheer magnificence overwhelmed him and he immediately applied to the management for permission to practise, and this was granted. After some 6 months he was asked by the manager to accept the position of organist. He had not had any lessons on theatre organ style, but had developed his own from listening to records of Reginald Dixon, Jesse Crawford, and others. He remained at the Regent Theatre for 3 years as resident organist, during which time he broadcast live from the theatre every Sunday night.

Whilst at the Regent he met Desmond Tanner who was in Adelaide with the *Larry*

*Adler Show*, and the two became firm friends. Desmond persuaded him that he should go to Sydney, and soon afterwards he left Adelaide, bound for the harbour city. On arrival he stayed at the home of Eustace Dodd of Blakehurst. Mr Dodd, the WurliTzer Company's representative in Australia, had a 2-manual WurliTzer installed in his home.

Clarence Black's first engagement in Sydney was at the Astra Theatre, Parramatta, which had a 2-manual Christie organ installed. The organ had a glass console which was lit with coloured lights from within and looked very effective. On Friday mornings the theatre had a shoppers' session which was very popular with women shoppers, who used to snatch a couple of hours away from buying the weekend groceries to watch a film, whilst they devoured their lunch of fish and chips, etc. Ever after, Clarence could never smell fish and chips without thinking immediately of those good old days at the Astra Theatre.

Later on he transferred to the Strathfield Cinema for an eventful season. The organ lift was at that time going through a period of temperament and would frequently refuse to rise from the pit. When this happened, Clarence would have to do his feature presentation with the console at the bottom of the pit. To add to his problems, numerous small boys seated in the front-row stalls would amuse themselves by trying to throw their peanuts and lollies over the rather high surround at the top of the pit, attempting to land them where they thought the unseen organist would be! When a number of organs in the circuit of the Company began to shut down, Clarence left the theatre scene and returned to piano playing again.

Then came the war, and the Government Manpower Office placed him at Mascot aerodrome, helping to build Beaufort Bombers for the Air Force. Later, when he was released by the Manpower authorities, he worked at Palings Pty Ltd, in the sheet music department. He started doing regular broadcasts for the ABC as a classical and novelty pianist. He was featured in the programme "A Handful of Keys" many times, also accompanying soloists and the ABC Wireless Chorus. He played for such combinations as the Jay Wilbur Strings, the Clive Amadio Quintet, and was solo pianist many times at the Sydney Town Hall with the ABC Military Band. He was featured in many 2-piano recitals with Dot Mendoza. In the field of commercial radio, he did solo work for such famous shows as *The Colgate-Palmolive Show* and *The Lux Radio Theatre*. During the run of the radio show *The Life of Paderewski*, it was Clarence Black that the radio audiences heard at the piano. He toured with the Polish-

Australian Ballet, and also with Leo Cherniavski, the famous Russian violinist.

He toured Australia, New Zealand and New Guinea as associate artist to the great Australian baritone, Peter Dawson. The arrival of the wonderful English duettists, Anne Ziegler and Webster Booth in this country found him once again on an extensive touring schedule. Under the Harry Wren banner, he toured with such famous shows as *Icecapades*, *Hellzapoppin*, *Thanks for the Memory* and *The Tommy Trinder Show*. For J.C. Williamson's Theatres he played for *Oklahoma*, *Brigadoon*, *Song of Norway* and for film star Joe E. Brown in the stage play *Harvey*.

For a number of years he had suffered with ear trouble and was gradually becoming deaf. In 1958 the poisoned bone in his ear caused meningitis to occur and he was admitted to Lewisham Hospital for an operation which was successful and his hearing was restored by 80%. He was advised by his doctor, however, to give up music for several years to allow the ear to settle down. He took a position as an inspector in a refrigerator factory, and stayed there for 7 years before deciding to return to music.

His first engagement on his return to music was for J.C. Williamson's, touring as Musical Director for *Irma La Douce*. Then came a period as pianist and Deputy Conductor for Tivoli Theatres, and he also did shows for the Phillip Street Theatre before returning once more to Williamsons. Some of the shows he was associated with during this period were *Paris By Night*, *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*, *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, *The Sound of Music* and *The King And I*.

He became interested in Hammond organ and was invited by Palings to teach for them, which he did for three and a half years. He achieved successes in the organ section of the City of Sydney Eisteddfod with his pupils. He owned a Hammond A-100 model organ and was a brilliant performer on the electronic instrument, as well as on the theatre pipe organ.

A brilliant organist, pianist, conductor and Musical Director, Clarence Black had an unusually wide experience in all fields of musical endeavour, ranging from theatre organ work, through concert appearances and orchestral work, to national radio shows. He was a member of TOSA (NSW) for some years and gave his first recital for the Society at the Annual General Meeting in 1968. He was a friendly, co-operative and sincere person who enjoyed passing his knowledge on to young organists through his teaching.

Frank Ellis



# A TOSA AFTERNOON AT BONDI RSL CLUB

with Ian Davies and friends - report and photographs by Barry Tooker

It had been some time since TOSA had had a concert at the **Bondi Junction-Waverley RSL Club**, but a good many members turned out on **Saturday, 13th November** for this special afternoon's entertainment.

As usual, we were in for an afternoon of fun and good music. **Ian Davies** started the show off with some of his inimitable jokes, before introducing compere, **Frank Ellis**.

**Frank** informed us that he and **Ian** were the same age, **Ian** being 8 days **Frank's** senior, and that **Ian** had been our patron since 1972 - a total of 21 years. After a bit of good-natured banter, the first artist was introduced.

**Valda Lang** opened her part of the musical afternoon with her signature tune, *On a Wonderful Day Like Today*. This was followed by a wistful *When You Wish Upon a Star* from **Disney's Pinocchio**, using chimes and harp. **Valda** is obviously at home on the **Rodgers Trio** and this was clearly shown in her treatment of 3 **Rodgers and Hart** pieces, *Falling In Love With Love*, *There's a Small Hotel* (using the Woodblock) and *The Lady Is a Tramp*. *The Dancing Tambourine* was followed by **Widor's Toccata** from his 5th Symphony. **Valda** had stuck 10 pages of music to a large piece of cardboard to save turning pages as she played this difficult piece.

From **Johann Strauss, the younger**, came *Tales From The Vienna Woods* and in

a grand finale **Valda** invited audience participation as she played **Johann Strauss senior's Radetsky March**.

**Frank** next introduced **Bill Schumacher** as "the master of the romantic ballad". No stranger to this instrument, **Bill** started with *Crazy Rhythm*, and then from **Andrew Lloyd Webber's Sunset Boulevard** he played *With One Look*. After *It Might As Well Be Spring* we were treated to a great rendition of selections from **South Pacific**, which is returning to **Sydney** in March. Great stuff, **Bill!**

After a break to wet the whistle and visit the engine room we were treated to a few words of welcome from the Club President who then handed us back to **Ian** for a couple of corny jokes and reminiscences of the times he worked with the great "Mo".

**Wendy Hambly** was the next artist. She played *The Best Things in Life Are Free*, followed by *One Kiss from New Moon*, and *Butterflies In the Rain*. A rousing *Invincible March* had us all tapping our feet. A beautiful rendition of *Bells Across the Meadow* was followed by *California Here I Come* and *Give My Regards to Broadway*.

When **Wendy** was a child she had a music box which she would wind up and listen to until it ran down, but which never finished the tune. This is what we heard as she wound up the organ and played *Music*

*Box Dancer* till it ran down and didn't quite finish for a finale.

**Frank** introduced **Ian Davies** as the final artist on the programme. **Ian** is well known for starting off with a bang in 6/8 time in true theatre organ style, and treated us to his French Selection, including *Gay Paree*, *Alouette*, *C'est Magnifique*, *Thank Heaven For Little Girls* and **Valda** accompanied him on the grand piano for *Can Can*.

The Grand Organ side of the **Rodgers** was ably demonstrated with the *Trumpet Tune* by **Henry Purcell**. A little bit of nonsense followed, in the form of *Lament of the Cherokee Indians* and then we had some Christmas tunes, including *Jingle Bells* and *Santa Claus is Coming to Town*. **Ian** finished with his signature tune, *Cruising Down the River* to rousing applause.

In all it was an excellent afternoon with a packed auditorium where we could all share a bit of fun, friendship, a drink or two and fine music, in the presence of one of the last of the original theatre organists still playing for our enjoyment. Another of **Ian's** talents was displayed on stage in the form of a perfect scale model of the **State Theatre's Wurlitzer** console - all his own work.

Thank you to **Ian**, to the management and staff of **Bondi Junction RSL Club** and to **Valda, Bill** and **Wendy** for a most entertaining afternoon.



Ian, Valda, Wendy and Frank



Wendy and Ian at the Rodgers Trio

An interesting article about Robert Hope-Jones, the creator of theatre pipe organs, reprinted by kind permission of the author, Frank Hare, and the Lancastrian Theatre Organ Trust, from "The Granada Studio Tour Manchester Wurlitzer Organ" Souvenir Booklet. Special thanks from Rob Gliddon, who submitted this item, to LTOT Vice-Chairman, Don Hyde.

## ROBERT HOPE-JONES - THE MAN BEHIND THE WURLITZER



(Why is it particularly appropriate that a fine example of his work should be preserved in the North-West of England).

No one, in the long history of organ building, can have been the subject of more criticism, or more praise, than Robert Hope-Jones.

The controversy which started more than eighty years ago, continues to this day, at times to a fanatical degree, for there are people who almost kneel in prayer at the mere mention of his name!

But some of you may ask "Who was Robert Hope-Jones?"

The briefest answer is that he was the inspiration of what some people would consider to be America's finest product – the Mighty Wurlitzer. But one might add, with justifiable pride, that he was an Englishman!

Hope-Jones was born on 9th February, 1859, in a village called Hooton Grange, which is on the Wirral, almost half-way along the Birkenhead to Chester road. The third son in a large family, he was a delicate and highly-strung child, and as he was considered insufficiently strong to attend school, a private tutor was employed, and he was frequently sent to the South of France to avoid the cold of winter.

Being unable to join in the usual children's activities, he spent a great deal of time alone, and found music a great comfort. The fact that his mother was the daughter of a rector may have drawn him to the church, but he proved to be so gifted that by the time he was nine he occasionally played for services at Eastham Parish Church, about a mile

from his home. Following the death of his father, when Robert was about fourteen, his health improved sufficiently to enable him to attend school, and at the age of seventeen he became apprenticed to Laird Brothers, at Birkenhead, working his way up from the work floor to the drawing office. By this time he had become organist and choirmaster at Birkenhead School Chapel, and also at St. Luke's Church, Tranmere, where it is said that he bought and set up an organ, and also composed a considerable amount of church music.

An appointment as chief electrician with the Lancashire and Cheshire Telephone Company allowed Hope-Jones' inventive genius to come to light, for he produced and patented many improvements, and it was as a result of his experience with low voltage electrical circuits that he began to consider their application to the church organ.

The idea was not new, as it was being experimented with in England, France and Germany as early as 1850, and during the 1860's organs were being built in France with electro-pneumatic action. The first organ of this type in England was at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, London, and the builders, Bryceson Bros., made several more before Father Willis installed his first electric action at Canterbury Cathedral in 1886. Perhaps it was the knowledge of this that encouraged Hope-Jones to try his hand at St. John's Church, Birkenhead, where he had become organist and choirmaster, for it was in 1886 that he started to rebuild the organ there, with the help of the choirmen and boys, and with some assistance from Franklyn Lloyd, a Liverpool organ builder.

The work was completed in 1892, by which time organ building had become such an obsession with Hope-Jones that he resigned from the telephone company in 1889 in order to devote his full time to it. The Birkenhead organ was unconventional, to say the least. The console was mobile, and it is said that Hope-Jones wheeled it into the churchyard to demonstrate that its distance from the organ made no difference to the speed of the action. One of the most revolutionary features was that instead of drawstops, it had stopkeys – made

from the ivories of knife handles – and, what is more, the basic colours of the stopkeys were white for the flues, red for the reeds and black for the couplers. This was not to become a standard feature of Hope-Jones Organ, but the colour coding for the theatre organ of the future had, nevertheless, been laid down. (The Lancastrian Theatre Organ Trust now owns some of the original parts of the Birkenhead organ, which was rendered redundant when the church was pulled down in 1976.)

If Hope-Jones did not invent electric action, at least he produced the first completely reliable system. Most of the earlier methods required large magnets and similarly large armatures, which were attached to the primary valve wire of the pneumatic action, but Hope-Jones realised that by using a tiny, floating armature in a unit which was an integral part of the pneumatic system, not only could a quicker response be obtained, but the comparatively small hairpin-shape magnet would consume only a fraction of the current – and any saving was important at a time when dry cells had to be used for the action supply. The poles of the magnets were fitted into a zinc base, and the caps, which were beautifully fashioned out of wood, contained an adjustable brass sleeve which was closed on the inside, apart from the slots for the exhaust. At first, the caps were round, and screwed home, but soon they became oval, and were held in position by spings in locating slots, thus creating the principle which was to be used in the later years of mass production.

The Birkenhead organ was not without faults, but it soon became famous and attracted visitors from many parts of the world, resulting in orders from America, Australia, New Zealand, Newfoundland, India, France, Germany and Malta in addition to those from this country. The volume of work forced Hope-Jones to sub-contract to a number of organ builders, among them Ingram, Jardine, and Norman and Beard, who had to make every part in accordance with his instructions. The cut-away fronts of the manual jambs, characteristic of the Wurlitzer, were already a

part of his design, and remarkable devices such as second touch on the manuals, pizzicato couplers and the automatic provision of suitable bass were included in some of the specifications. Pipemakers were called upon to produce ranks with new and strange-sounding names, such as Kinura, Tibia (Hope-Jones invented the whole family of them) and Diaphone. It has often been disputed whether or not he actually invented the diaphonic bass, but what is certain is that, even before the turn of the century, his Diaphones were being constructed in the tapering wood form to be found in large Wurlitzers.

The success of Hope-Jones resulted in jealousy among the more traditional organ builders, who were quick to suggest that his electric action was responsible for fires which destroyed or seriously damaged several of his organs: in fact, it is more likely that unextinguished candles or even arson were the cause. But inventive genius that Hope-Jones was, he was no financial genius, as most of the firms with which he was associated found out to their cost, and the factories which he set up at Battersea and Norwich were no more successful. However, he did not lack charm and was able to persuade many people to provide financial backing in order to continue with his work, and to keep the creditors at bay for a while longer.

In 1903 an incident occurred which resulted in Hope-Jones and his wife quickly packing their bags and boarding a ship for America, where news of his revolutionary methods of organ building had already reached the ears of several American firms. Acting upon a rumour that he had come to join the Skinner company, one of their competitor companies, Austin, hurried forward to offer him the position of second vice-president, and during the year that he was with them, some Austin organs appeared with typical Hope-Jones features, such as the orchestral voices, diaphones and stopkey console



He then joined a New Jersey organ builder named Harrison, who soon found himself penniless due to the cost of Hope-Jones' experimental work, but firms obviously thought that he had something to offer, for he quickly found a place with the Skinner company, who later maintained that he had only been hired as a salesman, and claimed that they were the inventors of such things as electric action and suitable bass in order to comply with the contracts Hope-Jones had obtained!

Clearly, Hope-Jones' relationship with other organ builders was no more successful than it had been in England, and, in 1907, he managed to obtain sufficient financial support to set up his own factory at Elmira, with executive offices in New York City. There he began furthering the idea that an effective "orchestral" organ could be created by enclosing the entire pipework in a number of cement-lined swell boxes, making every section individually expressive, and also arranging for certain ranks to be playable on manuals other than their own. Of the organs which he built, none were more successful than that in the Ocean Grove Auditorium, New Jersey, where the distance of the sound ducts from the chambers resulted in wind pressures of up to fifty inches being used for the first time.

By the end of 1909, seventy people, including several from England, were employed at the factory, and a new organ was being completed every three weeks. The production side was successful, but yet again the financial side wasn't, and the man who had been the steady influence left to join the Kimball company, in no time at all the Elmira factory, with its materials, patents, name and goodwill, was sold to a manufacturing company named Wurlitzer, in North Tonawanda.

In its many years of existence, this company had produced all manner of musical instruments, including automatic organs of the orchestrion and band type, and they saw the Hope-Jones organ as something further for their production line. They were in the entertainment business, into which church organ work hardly fitted, so they turned their attention to the growing cinema industry, having noted that the conventional organs were being installed in a number of theatres for the accompaniment of the silent pictures.

Here, it seemed to them, was the ideal place for the Hope-Jones orchestral organ, and, thanks to an aggressive coast to coast sales force, it was not long before the "Wurlitzer Hope-Jones unit orchestra" began rolling off the production line. Using Hope-Jones' principals and developments Wurlitzer designed a standardised instrument, playable from a neat keydesk in which the manuals were surmounted by one or more "horse-shoe" rows of stopkeys, to allow for easy accommodation in the orchestra pit. The more glamorous console cases were to come later when the

organs emerged on lifts as solo instruments.

However, the Wurlitzer was not the instrument which Hope-Jones had envisaged. Unification, the method by which a limited number of ranks are available at numerous pitches on all manuals and the pedals, was employed to the full, and, except in the largest organs which were to come later, the instrument was contained in only two swell boxes, rather than the number which he considered should be employed for maximum effect.

But he could do nothing about it, as Wurlitzer stipulated that, for their own safety, he must not interfere with the standardisation they had adopted, or indulge in further experimental work. Nevertheless, Hope-Jones was persistent, and eventually he was forbidden to enter the factory, the company considering that, whether or not he sold any organ for them, it was cheaper in the long run to compensate him in accordance with his contract.

With his mind still active, Hope-Jones and his wife spent several miserable months in a New York hotel before some old colleagues who were forming the Marr and Colton company invited him to join them. But any joy he felt quickly disappeared when he found that his contract with Wurlitzer was binding, and after leaving his lawyer on 12th September, 1914, he rented a room in Rochester, instead of returning immediately to his wife. The next day he was found in his room, having asphyxiated himself by an ingenious method. His inventive mind had work to the very last. Following his funeral at a North Tonawanda cemetery, a granite cross nine feet tall was erected above the grave, inscribed with the dates of his birth and death, and a reproduction of the signature of this extraordinary man.

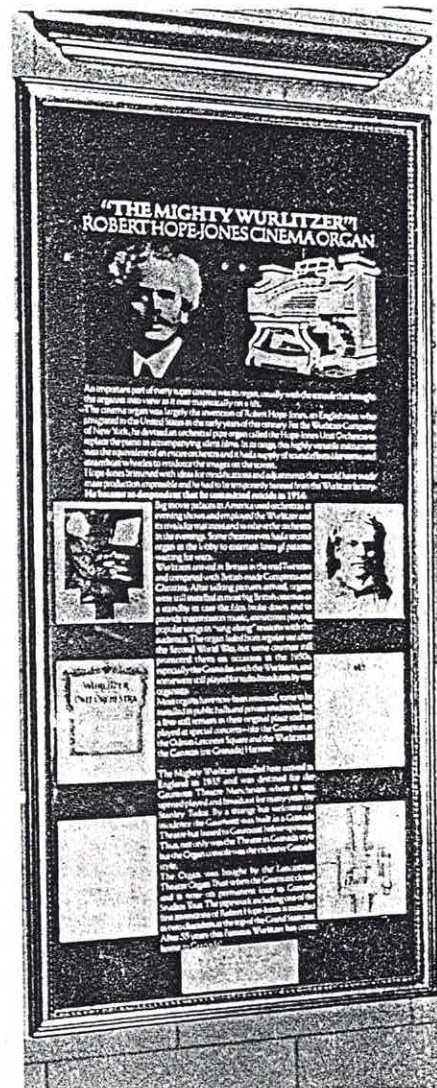
For twenty-five years after Hope-Jones' death, the Wurlitzer factory was to maintain production of the cinema organ which was to become the best known make of them all. More than two thousand instruments, some large, some small, were to roll off the production line, but however large or small, they all comprised the standardised parts which had been evolved in the early years. The electrical and mechanical systems which they employed proved so reliable that they were never changed, and one cannot help feeling that the Wurlitzer's unit organ design – compromise though it may have been – was the right one. It is highly unlikely that Hope-Jones' more space consuming, and undoubtedly more expensive design would have met with similar success.

Had Hope-Jones never existed, would we have ever had the thrill of hearing a true theatre organ? It is hard to say, as several of his contemporaries were of an inventive mind, and it is fairly certain that some were thinking along the similar lines. England's John Compton, to name but one, was experimenting with electric action and the idea of unification in the early years of the century, and the firm he later

founded incorporated some remarkable innovations in their instruments. But undoubtedly the Wurlitzer has long been the one by which all others are judged, and the one on which the products of other firms were based. And there would probably never had been the Wurlitzer theatre organ but for the brilliant, eccentric, and often unhappy, Robert Hope-Jones.

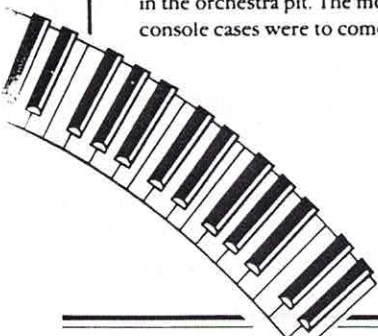
©1977 Frank Hare.

(Nothern Theatre Organ Trust Secretary)



In Granada Studios Tour can be seen this short history of Robert Hope-Jones with information on some of his inventions.

Other similar frames in the Projections Banqueting Hall provide the history of the major cinema circuits in this country.



# NEWS FROM NORFOLK

**Peter Irwin** of Norfolk Island recently sent reports of 2 organ events on the island : the visit of **David Parsons** and the closing down of **NICOS**, the Norfolk Island Concert Organ Society.

## DAVID PARSONS

Old friend, **David Parsons**, accompanied by his wife, **Beverley**, arrived on 26th September to give his second concert on the **Father Willis** organ in **St Barnabas Chapel**. He spent a lot of time going through the organ, tuning, etc., so that when he gave the concert on the 30th, the organ was in great shape (to the delight of the church organist!).

The **Willis** organ has 7 stops, one manual of 32 notes, no swell, a pedal board with all pedals parallel.... but, as on his last visit, **David** showed that one does not need a large organ to make lovely music.

He started with *The Queen* - the Island folk are very loyal to the Crown and do not consider themselves to be Australians. Then we had an hour of a set programme, starting with the *Trumpet Voluntary*, *Pictures at an Exhibition*, *Dambusters' March*, *The Holy City*, 4 excerpts from *The Pirates of Penzance*, *All I Ask of You* from *Phantom of the Opera*, and **David** finished the first half of his programme with a tribute to **Audrey Hepburn**, *Let There Be Peace on Earth*.

During the interval **David** presented the President of the Friends of **St Barnabas**, **George Bottriell**, with a cheque for \$1,503, which was the amount raised at a concert in his home for this church.

For the second half of the programme, the music was all requested by those in the audience. What a memory **David** has! The items asked for included : *Largo*, *In A Monastery Garden*, *Count Your Blessings*, *Memory* from *Cats*, *In a Country Garden*, *Oh, For a Thousand Tongues*, *Amazing Grace*, *Exodus*, *I Don't Know How To Love Him*, and the *Hallelujah Chorus*. He finished with the *D Minor* - fancy having the courage to take it on with this little organ, and indeed it came across exceedingly well!

An amount of \$370 was raised for the "Friends" - all for the restoration of **St Barnabas** - a really beautiful church. We all thank **David** for all that he has done for **St Barnabas** - and we are hoping to welcome him back before too long. It was four and half years since his first visit. We were delighted to be able to enjoy a second great concert by him.

Peter Irwin

## N.I.C.O.S.

**Peter** writes : "28th October, 1993.

We have closed down **NICOS**, as you will see from the accompanying extract from the *Norfolk Islander* - our weekly newspaper. We have had a lot of fun and made many friends.

I would like to thank **TOSA** for the friendship offered and for copies of **TOSA News** which we have always enjoyed. ..."

A history of **NICOS** from the *Norfolk Islander* :

The **Norfolk Island Concert Organ Society** was formed in June, 1981, with the objects of encouraging interest in organ music, arranging concerts and assisting financially with the maintenance of the **Willis** organ in **St Barnabas Chapel**. The first patron was the world-famous organist, **Reginald Porter-Brown**. **Tim Lloyd** accepted the invitation to become Patroness.

The first newsletter was published in November, 1981 - overseas addressees were informed that the delay was caused by the lack of Gestetner skins on the island!

**Rawson Hall** was the venue of the first public concert, given by **Arthur Midgley** in Bounty Week, 1982, and in December of that year **Bev Harrison** gave 2 concerts, also in **Rawson Hall**.

In September, 1983, the first and very successful **International Organ Convention** was held, culminating in a dance to organ music, held in the **R.S.L. Club**. There were 21 organists at that Convention, all having a turn playing for us.

**Arthur** returned to give his second concert in June, 1984 - again in **Rawson Hall**, with **Julie South** as soloist. Prior to the concert (**Arthur** had met **Julie** at **St Barnabas** on his second visit), there was an "impromptu" session at **Chapel** - there had been a little "get together" beforehand and the church was packed!

It was then that the maintenance fund for the **Willis** organ was started with a collection among the "audience".

At the concert **Tim** invited **Arthur** to become Patron, taking the place of **Reginald Porter-Brown** who had died in December, 1982. **Arthur** was very pleased to accept.

During 1985 there were 2 concerts held in the **R.S.L. Club** - the first by **Don Macdonald** and the second by **Arthur** "The Great Entertainer". **Julie** sang at both concerts and during **Arthur's** she was invited to become a Life Honorary Member of the Society. **John Matthew**, the then Administrator, made a generous donation for the **Willis Organ**

**Maintenance Fund** during **Don's** concert and **NICOS** donated a further \$75.

A visiting bowler, **Ken Brigg** (who had deputised for **Reginald Dixon** at the **Tower Ballroom** in **Blackpool, England**) challenged bowler **Gary Clarke**, twice, to a match, the loser to donate \$50 towards the organ fund. **Gary** lost - both times!!

A second, but smaller **International Convention** was held in September, 1985 and in August, 1986, saw that great character **Father Jim Miller** come to give his first concert here. He then returned in August 1988 with his "offsider" **Father Andrew Rogers**, for a second concert - both of which were held in the **S.D.A. Hall** - a memorable time!

During these years, monthly meetings were held at the home of **Peter** and **Joan Irwin** and many, many visitors were entertained - and friends made. These meetings were also interspersed with evenings of the music of **Gilbert and Sullivan**.

During a dormant period, the **Irwins** continued to entertain organ "buffs" visiting the island. Last September we had great fun with 5 members of **CANTOS** (The **Canterbury Theatre Organ Society**) based in **Christchurch**.

Interest in organ "buffs" still continues and only last month we had the pleasure of meeting with **John Clancy**, an organist from **Sydney** and, as with many other visitors, **Peter**, **Joan** and myself have had some great times introducing them to the **Father Willis** and to the **Estey Harmonium** at **All Saints** (with permission of the Rector at the time) and spending happy hours with them.

Now it is felt that the **Hammond** organ, which **Peter** and **Joan** brought to the island specifically for the purpose of forming an Organ Society on the island, has had enough travelling around and it is time to "de-commission" the Society. With the advent of TV and the busier life for many of the members, membership has declined.

At a small function held at the **Irwin's** home last Saturday - with members **Alice Ferris**, **Beverley** and **Gordon Maskill-Smith**, **Julie South**, **Tim** and **Tom** and visitors **Mary Christian-Bailey** and **Bert Nisbet**, **Peter** handed over a cheque to the Minister's Warden of **Chapel**, a cheque for \$1,300 (the Society's funds in hand) for the **Willis Organ Maintenance Fund**.

We do know that any organ "buffs" who visit Norfolk will always be welcomed by **Peter**, **Joan** and myself. It has been a happy and informative time for us all.

# OUR NEXT ARTIST :

## JOHN ATWELL

**John Atwell** has become more well-known to us in recent times for his fabulous duo concerts with **Tony Fenelon**, but this time we welcome John back, for what we know will be an entertaining solo concert.

Highly talented, **John** comes originally from **South Australia** and received tuition in piano and classical organ in **Adelaide**. He taught himself to play theatre organ by listening to, and watching, **Knight Barnett** at **Adelaide's Regent Theatre**, as well as picking up other organ stylings from recordings.

Since 1971, he has lived in **Melbourne**, where he gained his PhD in Immunology/Biochemistry at the **University of Melbourne** in 1974. Currently he works for the **CSIRO** as a Senior Research Scientist in the field of Genetic Engineering/Bio-Technology.

**John** has presented theatre organ concerts, both solo and in conjunction with other artists, for most TOSA Divisions around **Australia** since 1971. Some highlights of his career as an organist include :

- \* being one of the first artists to play a concert on the **Adelaide Regent's** organ in its new location in **St Peters College** in 1970;

- \* playing the **21st Anniversary Concert**, with **Tony Fenelon**, for **TOSA (Vic)** at the **Dendy Cinema** in 1981;

- \* opening the **Compton** organ, with **Hubert Selby**, in the **Memorial Theatre** (now **Her Majesty's**), **Ballarat** in 1982;

- \* presenting a concert on the **Cassavant** organ in the **Melbourne Concert Hall** during the month-long opening celebrations in 1982;

- \* opening **Adelaide's Capri Cinema's WurliTzer**, with **Tony Fenelon** and **Ray Thornley** in 1983;

- \* recording on the **Capri** organ as part of the "**Five Alive**" album in 1985;

- \* participating in **Melbourne's "Carols by Candlelight"** each Christmas Eve on piano or organ;

- \* presenting, with **Tony Fenelon**, highly-successful duo concerts with piano and organ duets for the past 15 years.

He has had a hand in the tonal design and console lay-outs of several theatre organ re-installations, including **Dallas Brooks Hall, Melbourne**, the **Capri Cinema, Adelaide**, and the **Marrickville WurliTzer's** current refurbishment. He is also the editor of **Vox, Victoria's** excellent answer to **NSW's TOSA News!**

Welcome back!

## ORION CENTRE, CAMPSIE

Sunday, 30th January, 1994 at 2.00pm

Booking form on page 14

## DON MUNRO

17/8/1911 - 24/9/1993

**Clif Munro** has written to pass on the sad news of his father's death in September of 1993 and he has included the following details of his father's involvement with organs and with **TOSA**. **Clif** writes :

I am writing to let you know that my father, **Don Munro** of **Bondi Junction**, died in Prince of Wales Hospital on 24 September, aged 82, following a short illness.

**Don**, as you would be aware, was one of the original founders of **TOSA**. Although a nervous condition prevented him from being actively involved, he followed the doings of the society through **TOSA News**. He also remained

an active organist until his hospitalisation.

Throughout his life **Don** had 3 passions: model railways; organs and organ music; and photography. He was a self-taught musician, playing guitar, mandolin and mouth-organ. In the early 1950's his wife, **Marjorie** bought him a small American organ, beginning an active involvement with church and theatre organs. He spent much of his time studying their construction, building and modifying a number of them at **Cabramatta**. His knowledge became such that he spent 2 years of weekends with 3 friends dismantling, transporting and re-building a full-sized **WurliTzer** theatre organ (from **Auburn Civic**, I presume - *Ed.*). The 4 of them later founded the

**Theatre Organ Society of Australia**, a flourishing society which today extends throughout **Australia**.

Although not active in the society in later years, he remained a member and followed its activities through its newsletter. **Don** had a unique talent for improvisation, but felt embarrassed when called to demonstrate it to those he considered superior musicians. He remained an active organist, playing for all who visited him at home.

*TOSA is grateful to Don Munro for the part he played in our Society's origins and we are sorry to lose another of our founding members. We express our deepest sympathy to Don's family.*