

Huge response in second year of search

Response to the National Library of Australia's "Last Film Search", about to enter its third year, has far exceeded expectations. More than 10 million feet of historic film has so far been located, 1½ million of them in the search's second year.

The search, launched on October 27 1981, was conceived by staff members in the Library's National Film Archive and has been sponsored by Kodak (Australasia) Pty. Ltd. and eight other organisations. It will continue until 1986 with the aim of locating as many as possible of Australia's early silent and sound films before the nitrate film stock on which most of them were printed begins to destruct.

Hundreds of documentaries and home movies of the past have been added to the archive in the search's second year, but the latest finds have undoubtedly been a 300-foot segment of the world's first feature film, *The Story of the Kelly Gang*, made in 1906; part of one of Australia's first sound films, *Isle of Imtrigue*, made in 1931; a piece of another early sound film, *The Burgomeister*, made in 1935; and the trailer for the first sound version of *The Silence of Dean Maitland*.

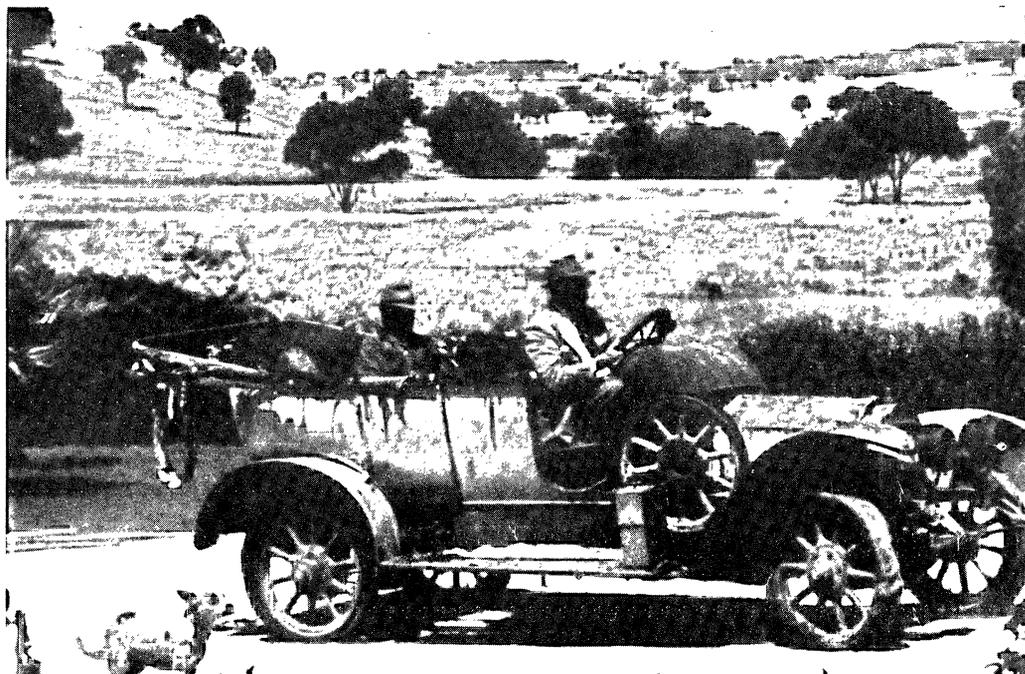
Two feature films rediscovered are the Raymond Longford classic, *The Woman of the Year*, (1918) and *In New Guinea Wilds*, made by William J. Jackson in 1926.

Films have come from many parts of Australia and from overseas, from sources as diverse as the Victorian Police, the Uniting Church of Queensland, a fight-film enthusiast in New York and countless other individuals.

Two of the biggest individual collections received, each comprising about 100 reels, came from rural properties at Cowra and nearby Mandurama, New South Wales. All these films relate to farming and farm techniques developed over a period since 1930. One reel shows Italian prisoners-of-war in World War II working an Australian farm. These two batches of film arrived almost simultaneously, each donor unaware that the other was contributing to the search; it was discovered that the films were the work of two cousins, J.H. and W.K. Fagan, both graziers, who were movie buffs and carried out their filming separately in their spare time. The quality of these films has been described by one archive officer as brilliant.

Other films of historical importance include footage of J.C. Bancks drawing the original Ginger Meggs in the 1920s; footage of a Tasmanian tiger at Beaumaris zoo, also in the 1920s; some excellent film of Australian Test cricketers at Lords in Ceylon, Egypt, Italy and Switzerland in the 1930s; and a film of the Hobart Carnival in 1910.

Apart from its historical value as a documentary of Tasmanian celebration, the carnival film is important as a rare example of the work of Cozens Spencer. In the early days of moving pictures in Australia, Spencers Pictures and Wests Pictures were



Travelling in the country, circa 1930. This still comes from one of the films taken by Mr W.K. Fagan, a grazier of Mandurama NSW.

Photograph from the National Film Archive, National Library of Australia.

among the pioneer cinematographers. There was great rivalry between them and not many of their films have survived.

The film from the Uniting Church of Queensland deals with Aboriginal missions on Mornington Island before World War II, when Rev J.B. McCarthy was stationed there. Different films of the same missions have also been received from Mr McCarthy's daughter, Mrs E. East, of Melbourne.

The Director-General of the Library, Mr. Harrison Bryan, said the Last Film Search had been a great success. 'It reflects great credit both on the members of the Library staff who had the idea and on the sponsoring organisations who made it possible to proceed with the scheme', Mr Bryan said. 'Quite apart from the actual film discovered, the search has clearly done much to alert the public to the urgent need to preserve Australia's cultural heritage in all its forms'.

The asbestos dispute

Most readers will be aware by now that the ten weeks of industrial action and negotiation were successful in leading to a ministerial decision to set up a committee to examine and report on all health-related issues concerning asbestos at the National Library and Watson High School.

The independent arbitrators made the following recommendations regarding the National Library:

- the removal of all asbestos in accordance with National Health and Medical Research Council Code of Practice
- removal operations to be phased with priority being given to the area to be disturbed by the extensions
- all loose asbestos in the roof area to be cleaned up and properly disposed of

- asbestos in plant rooms to be enclosed
- it is essential that removal be carried out by an experienced contractor under experienced, independent supervision

The Branch Secretary of ACOA has advised that a detailed paper on the asbestos dispute will be provided early in the New Year and quotes from the Annual Report of the ACT TLC:

... (it was) the most extensive and critical campaign ever conducted ... picket lines were placed on the two access points to the Library on 30 June and were maintained, primarily by ACOA members, with some assistance from other unions, until a compromise was finally reached in an endeavour to resolve the dispute on 8 September 1983 - a period of 10 weeks, 24 hours a day, seven days a week ...

The results indicate that their actions were justified and that the inconvenience suffered during the 10 weeks was worthwhile for the health of both users and staff of the National Library.