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Will Queensland become another Hollywood?

QUEENSLAND ISSUE

EXPLORING EARLY QUEENSLAND CINEMA

ON LOCATION WITH JASON DONOVAN AND PHILIP CROMBIE

AND SHAKESPEARE ON FILM: WELLES AND BRABANTZ

SAD-BOY RUBY / THE PENAL COLONY / BLACKHELLAS

STEPHEN SODHEIM / WOODY ALLEN / SPECIAL EFFECTS

FOR SUBSCRIPTIONS, SEE PAGE 10

Australia's First Films:

Part Six: Surprising Survivals

When cinema began, Brisbane was a tiny colonial capital with a population of about 33,000. None of its suburbs was more than five miles from its centre and it contained less than a quarter of Queensland's inhabitants. It was in the most decentralised of the mainland states, heavily reliant on mining and agriculture with only a small manufacturing base.

Nevertheless, Queensland produced more of the surviving Australian colonial films than any other state. Their public premiere was delayed for 94 years, until the authors exhibited them at the Queensland State Library on 15 September 1993.

This extraordinary saga has only just emerged from research funded by Griffith University in Brisbane, and is published for the first time in this article.

QUEENSLAND-NEWSPAPERS,
(Two Years from "Telegraph" - Brisbane)

LAST FEW DAYS
OF
LUMIERE'S
CINEMATOGRAPHE.

Under the Patronage of His Excellency Lord Salisbury, K.C.M.G.

14 PICTURES IN TWO VOLUMES OF 12 EACH.
In which is included three of the GREATEST PICTURES PRODUCED IN EUROPE.

Exhibiting every Saturday from 10 to 11 and 7 to 10 p.m.

ADMISSION, in children and adults.

ENTRANCE FREE. -
The amount of the management being desired to take upon them is 1000/- (1000 only) (making provision) of 100/- (100/-) in lieu of the Managers' liability, and with the 100/- amount the 1000/- will be 1100/-.

Queensland producers hope G. Boivin placed his correspondence in the Brisbane Courier, 7 September 1897, p. 3.

QUEENSLAND FILM DATA SOURCES

There were no Australian film industry organisations until the advent of Pathé's Weekly (later the Australian Kinematograph Journal) in 1910.¹ Before then, we had few permanent cinemas. The earliest Australian films were made and shown by touring companies, their output being advertised and reviewed in regional newspapers. The Brisbane Courier provides most of that city's available early film production data. The opportunities for obtaining confirmation or further material from other sources are limited.

Queensland's enormous area and its tropical climate impeded the systematic archiving of its newspapers. Publishers were not legally required to donate copies to Queensland libraries until the late 1940s.² Brisbane's evening paper from the 1890s, the Telegraph, survives only in decayed head copy at the John Oxley Library, and public access is in a far better state. Both of Townsville's dailies of that period, the Bulletin and the Star, are virtually lost.³ Consequently, our attempts to assemble a Queensland filmography can only aspire to completeness.

G. BOIVIN

FIRST QUEENSLAND FILMMAKER

When the Lumière company's representative Maurice Séverin left Australia in May 1897, one of his cinematographers was bought by a Mr G. Boivin, who put it on show in Brisbane from 3 May to 26 June 1897. His later re-opened in a converted shop near the Telegraph newspaper building in Brisbane's Queen Street on 31 August 1897, showing films of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee Procession (London).⁴

On 7 September 1897, Boivin sent his Lumière cinematographer to shoot Queensland's first film, showing Queen Street's lunchtime traffic from the front of the Telegraph building. Reports suggest that several "local pictures" were taken before Boivin concluded his Brisbane season on 18 September 1897.⁵ He announced his intention of returning to Brisbane again in 1898 (whether these efforts⁶, but no report of their exhibition has been traced).

On 30 September 1897, Boivin commenced a three-night season at Rockhampton's Theatre Royal, including several Australian film titles in his programme.⁷ Excluding those available to Maurice Séverin, most were probably Lumière company films from France, assumed to imply local output.

ORIGINAL LOCAL TITLE
(after George Séverin)
[Cat. No. 27] *Coaches to London*
[Cat. No. 33] *Tiger*
[Cat. No. 40] *Swallowtail of New Year*
[Cat. No. 40] *Swallowtail of New Year*
[Cat. No. 11] *Belvedere*

ARCHIVE TITLE
(from Rockhampton Bulletin)
A Game of bowls in Sydney
Tiger in Adelaide Zoo
Breaking down a Shed in Sydney
Breaking down a Wall in Melbourne
On the Bridge in Melbourne

These misrepresentations, and the absence of the Queen Street film from the Rockhampton programmes, throw doubt on the accuracy of Boivin's Brisbane productions. Was the film successfully processed and exhibited? Was it only a publicity stunt? Was there really any film in the camera?

FACTS AND FABLES from Colonial Queensland

BOIVIN VANISHES

Boivin's tour has not been traced beyond his first Queensland appearance at Rockhampton on 3 October 1897. An undated Lumière cinematograph shown at 182 Pitt Street, Sydney, in December 1897 may have been his.¹

Alternatively, Boivin may have sold his machine to Alfred Mason. On 23 November 1897, Mason advertised "Lumière's Improved Cinematograph" (improved, in that it projected both slides and movies) at Rockhampton's Theatre Royal.² The show was explicitly postponed until 15 December 1897, when he exhibited the 1897 VRC Derby and 1897 Melbourne Cup, probably shot by A. J. Porter of the Sydney photographic supply house Baker & Rossie.³ Mason also advertised a film of Dancing Girls (taken at Government House, Brisbane), but this was probably another re-rolled import. He subsequently moved to Brisbane with shows opening at Queen Street's Grand Arcade from 22 December 1897⁴, but no further Queensland films were advertised.

Until the 1897 issues of the Brisbane Telegraph can be examined, we may never know more about Boivin and Mason.

BOIVIN FILMOGRAPHY

- (1) Lanchester Traffic on Queen Street, Brisbane (shot 12.30 pm, 7 September 1897).

Refer Brisbane Courier, 7 September 1897, p. 2 – announced film to be shot from front of "Telegraph" building at 12.30 pm that day. Brisbane Courier, 8 September 1897, p. 4, and 14 September 1897, p. 6, refer to "views" (plans) of Queen Street, and the intention to show them early in 1898. Some paper, 13 September 1897, p. 7, has a long report on Boivin's show.

ALFRED MASON FILMOGRAPHY

- (1) Dancing Girls (taken at Government House, Brisbane)
Refer Brisbane Morning Bulletin, 14 December 1897, p. 2. Probably a French film, re-rolled "with songs in cheek".

MELBOURNE RACING FILMS SHOWN BY ALFRED MASON

A. J. Porter, sales manager for Baker & Rossie in Sydney, recalled making films answering this description in *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 June 1923, p. 9. Mark How and E. J. Thomas also covered these events. These may be Porter's films of the 1896 Melbourne Cup and VRC Derby, manufactured in the following year's issue.

- (1) V.R.C. Derby, Melbourne, 1897.
Refer Brisbane Courier, 23 December 1897, p. 3.
(2) Start, Finish and Weighing-in of the 1897 Melbourne Cup.
Refer Brisbane Courier, 23 December 1897, p. 23, Rockhampton Bulletin, 16 December 1897.
(3) Lady Brassey Decorating "Gaulois" (1897 Melb. Cup winner).
Refer Brisbane Courier, 23 December 1897, p. 3.



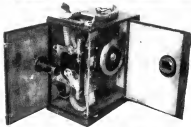
Boivin, A. C. (left) (seated) and Selby, Ray (standing) in the Cambridge University Expedition, 1899. A. C. Boivin Collection, Cambridge University, courtesy ANZIM National Collections, Canberra.

- (4) The Laws, Flemington.
Refer Brisbane Courier, 23 December 1897, p. 2.
(5) Arrival of Train at Flemington.
Refer Brisbane Courier, 23 December 1897, p. 2.
(6) The Crowd at the (Melbourne) Cup.
Refer Brisbane Courier, 23 December 1897, p. 2.
(7) Carriage Returning from the (Melbourne) Cup.
Refer Brisbane Courier, 23 December 1897, p. 2.

FIRST ANTHROPOLOGICAL FILMS HADDON'S CAMBRIDGE EXPEDITION TO TORRES STRAIT – 1898

Sir Walter Haddon Spencer's 1946 film of Australian Aborigines are often portrayed as the pioneering effort in the field. His effort was posthumous, but Spencer was following a precedent set in 1898 by his colleague Alfred Cox Haddon (1855-1940). Haddon's films were the first ever taken on a field expedition.¹⁴

Two years after graduating from Cambridge University in 1878, Haddon was appointed Professor of Zoology at the Royal College of Science, and Assistant Naturalist to the Science and Art Museum in Dublin. In this capacity, Haddon spent eight months on an expedition investigating the marine zoology of Torres Strait during 1888 and 1889. There, he became fascinated by the rapidly disappearing customs and remnant of the Islanders, spending most of his spare time making details for subsequent publication. Several minor papers were subsequently published, but the research was inadequate to enable a general ethnographic work on the region.¹⁵



Above: Three photographs from film made by A. C. Haddon courtesy of Kim Bevan. Top: Island Film 8: David Andrew, Ma-Bowen Office. Left to right: Mike Brown, Ceremony at Kae'u, 4 September 1898; Murray Island: Islanders Dancing on One Meadow on 4 September 1898; Murray Island: Islanders Dancing on One Meadow (No. 2), 4 September 1898; Murray Island: Five Making (4 September 1898) Murray Island: Australian Anthropologist Dancing "Maika-A-Lay" on Beach (4 September 1898).

Left: 1897 Newman and Gourdine camera is used by Professor Haddon in the Torres Strait in 1898. Just a conventional film path coming through gun under tropical conditions.

Below: (left) Ray recording Mike song on the island, Torres Strait, during Haddon's Cambridge Expedition in 1898. With two photographs, a movie camera and a movie phone made; they were expertly repaired. A. C. Haddon Collection, Cambridge University, courtesy MAHAR Parvati Collection, Canberra.

months were spent in the Murray Islands, whose accessibility and relatively unaltered culture made them particularly suitable for study. Two visits were made there, the first starting May 1898, the latter commencing on 20 July and concluding on 8 September.¹⁹

HADDON'S FILMS

In March 1898, Haddon purchased a 35mm Newman and Gourdine movie outfit in London, including 30 rolls of raw film 75 feet long, according to special-use Islanders' diaries, one woman and customs.²⁰ The dispatch of the film was apparently delayed by being made recently scarce to Haddon's friend, Sir C. Horn, in Sarawak.²¹ As a result, filming did not begin until the last week of their second stay on Murray Island, after 1 September 1898. Another problem was encountered with the Newman and Gourdine movie-camera, which sustained damage en route, causing the film to jam in the tropical climate. Only a few films were taken successfully.

According to Haddon's diary²², the films were made by Haddon himself, possibly assisted by Anthony Wilton.

3 September 1898: Tried twice to cinematograph photos of her making. By Pua, Sergeant and Mike (?) in morning.

6 September 1898: Tried to make cinematograph photos of Murray I. Kapua Australia involves (he) to get men on board the lugger Coral Sea belonging Fred Lawson's. [...] Beauli-Mala cinematographed (?) at Kae'u. [...]

Haddon's journal covering the work of 1-8 September 1898, written while the expedition was packing for its departure from Murray Island, indicates that filming had only been a partial success:

[...] some other important things went up at the last [...] For example some Australian natives came in a boat in our boat and I wanted to get a cinematograph of their dancing - and it was the only part at the last that we could get part of the Mala ceremony danced with the masks that had been made for me - but the dance was waste waiting for I tried to cinematograph it but as has been happened the machine jam and the film is spoiled - I am afraid that this part of my work will prove a failure to the entire photography as I hear at present of little practical value I have had many disappointments on this expedition, perhaps I was too sanguine.



Haddon, therefore, assembled a team of scientists, all subsequent leaders in their specialties, to go to Torres Strait in 1898 and make a thorough study of it. They were completely and expertly equipped with the very latest scientific recording instruments. Salween Bay, an authority on the languages of Oceania, the zoologist Dr C. S. Myers and the naturalist Dr C. G. Seligman used two wax-cylinder phonographs to make about one hundred records of islander speech and song.²³ These records in the British Institute of Recorded Sound. Their photographs but included equipment for taking rolls, movies and even experimental colour photographs by the first and July seasons. These would have been the earliest colour photographs taken in Australia.²⁴ The photography was set up by Haddon and by a 21-year-old student with previous experience in Algeria and Egypt, Anthony Wilton, who died of dysentery in Cairo only three years later.²⁵ The psychologists and medical experts Dr W. H. R. Rivers and Dr W. McDougall completed the party.

They reached Thursday Island on 22 April 1898 and spent almost seven months at the Torres Strait and New Guinea. Four



Thursday 8 September [1898] we left Murray Island [for the "Star"] at 10 a.m. [...]

Haddon's diary about his films were ill-founded. On return to London, he had the few rolls shot on Murray Island processed by Newman and Gardner. Reporting on these on 28 June 1899, J. Gardner told him:

With respect to the Kinetograph, while waiting for you to return the machine for repair, when we will report as to what has gone wrong with it in the meantime, we beg to enclose a print from a strip of one of your films. We would not less than be nothing much to complain of with a machine that produces work of this quality precisely on the first trial and under thoroughly unfavourable circumstances. We regarded the film, and have developed about that process good results. We will have one or two more to finish.¹⁷

Although limited in both scope and duration, the surviving 43 acetates of Haddon's films continue to surprise readers in such ways with their high technical standard. The minimal surviving material the descriptions in Haddon's diary and journal, and these seem to be little missing from the pan in. Strangely, no acetates of the films by Haddon have been traced. The one volume of *Reports of the Cambridge Anthropological Expedition to Torres Straits*, published between 1900 and 1935, contain virtually no mention of the films, other than a few frame collages (plate 28) in volume six. These show "the movements of the eggbe" (both parents) from the Boma-Mala ceremony, stated to have been shot at Kiam in the Eastern Torres Strait.¹⁸

INFLUENCE ON BALDWIN SPENCER

On 23 October 1900, leaving of Spencer and Gillen's forthcoming expedition to Central Australia, Haddon wrote to Spencer:

You really must take a kinematograph – a biograph – or whatever they call it in your part of the world. It is an indispensable piece of anthropological apparatus. Get an ordinary commercial one. If you order from London I think I would place myself in the hands of the Warwick Trading Company, 4 Warwick Court, High Holborn W.C. I have asked them to send you a catalogue and to write to you as well. I have stated what you would like. I have no doubt that your films will pay for the whole apparatus if you can make some of them be copied by the trade.¹⁹

Examensator of the Warwick Trading Company film catalogue for August 1901 reveals that Haddon may have allowed one of his

films to be "copied by the trade" in the manner he suggested:

Car. 6250b. *Parsons of Thursday Island, the Headquarters of the Pearl Fishing Industry.* This tribe known almost a very difficult of access, but from the generosity of the linguist and finest people are obtained. The view presented in the film embraces the gritty alongside which the sailing craft are moored as they return from the fishing grounds. In the background the combination of the island is distinctly seen, while in the camera

enters a number of the peering canoes are seen lying at anchor in the straits. Length 75 feet (1 minute 13 seconds)

The film is now known to survive and the inclusion of the "pan" movement described is puzzling, as none of Haddon's known films show what he could "pan" to follow dancers' movements. However, Spencer was quick to follow Haddon's advice. On 1 December 1900, Spencer wrote to Haddon:

I am writing home to the Warwick Co. to send me out the Biograph [sic] instrument. They wrote me by last mail saying that a catalogue was forwarded [...]. I was so happy that you would have given me some advice as to how much film to take with me as I have had no experience in this line and ought to be helped here [in Melbourne].²⁰

Spencer's work with the Warwick Biograph in Central Australia during 1901 is well known.²¹ Many papers in series could have as being the proven of these exchanges, ignoring the Torres Strait precedent. Haddon hoped not to forget towards it. In 1900, he was appointed University Lecturer in Ethnology at Cambridge University, and in 1901 was elected to a fellowship at Christ's College.²²

Haddon's films were stored at Cambridge until 1947, when they were copied then.²³ Prints are now held by the

National Film and Sound Archive and AUSTS in Canberra, and by Ian Doolan at Film Australia in Launceston. They are the oldest surviving Queensland films, and the oldest films of Torres Strait Islands. As a result of the bicentenary of James Cook's visit to Murray Island on 8 September 1898, they are also the oldest films of Australian Aborigines.

HADDON'S TORRES STRAIT EXPEDITION FILMOGRAPHY

(1) *Mala-Boma Ceremony at Kiam* (shot c. 6 September 1898)

Three men in forest setting wearing leaf skirts, leading man wears the cardboard mask made for Haddon and two men hold a pole. They dance in procession. Length 50 seconds at 56 f.p.s.

(2) *Murray Island Islanders Dancing at Davi Headman* (probably 6 September 1898)

Three men in. In between perform a processional dance on a beach. Camera pans across mid-shot and the dance re-emerges. Length 70 seconds

(3) *Murray Island Islanders Dancing at Davi Headman* (probably 6 September 1898)

Unidentified dance, same camera position as (2), but with the camera panned slightly to the right. Three men dancing in procession on a beach. Length 13 seconds



Walter Haddon Spencer (1844-1926), Professor of Biology at Melbourne University and Director of the Natural Museum of Victoria. Haddon's experiences as the anthropological camp of Torres Strait and social accounting. He was the origin of the use of film experiments much further than Haddon, showing 1,000 feet of Aboriginal ceremonies and dances in his first work following 2 April 1901. Complete and cinematograph on film apparatus in London was made for Spencer by Haddon. Photo from Giff Sydney 11 October 1964; c. 1951, courtesy of Mr. Chris Long.



Shows left: Frederick Charles Wills, Chief Artist and Photographer, Queensland Department of Agriculture, 1897-1903. Photo from Queensland Agricultural Journal, June 1901 (opp. p. 408). Courtesy Pine Library, Queensland Department of Agriculture. Above, centre: Henry William Molisby, Assistant Photographer, Queensland Department of Agriculture, 1897-1903. Gift Photographs 1904-1950. Wills' assistant on the making of the 1899 film. Above, right: *Lancette Gastrographica* No. 176, 1899, used by Wills and Molisby of the Queensland Agriculture Department to shoot the first of five government films, 1899. Currently held by Queensland Museum, and still in its long silver slide frame by one copy of Mark Whiston's Queensland Museum. Right: Wills' Lantana camera's apparatus to show the film gate and lightproof bellows together with 35 feet film load capacity. There was some very crude work on this camera. The glass window behind the film gate (on right) provided a view of the image on the film and before shooting commenced to advance the bellows. Photo courtesy of Mark Whiston © Queensland Museum.



10) Murray Island, Pine Making (shot 3 September 1898).
Three men – Pin, Sergeant and Man – sit cross-legged on the ground, marking a stick between their palms leaning upon a wood block (sill) method. Length 30 seconds.

11) Murray Island, Australian Aboriginals Dancing "Shake-A-Lag" on Beach (shot c. 4 September 1898).
Four dancing Australian Aboriginals wearing headdress clip, then dance, then clap again. A fifth man beats rhythm by hitting a long pole with a branch. Film in three sections with cuts separating them. Some looks as items (2) and (3). Length 78 seconds.

QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT FILM PRODUCTION: 1899

Immigration to the colony of Queensland was promoted by a touring lecturer in Britain named George Randall, working under the direction of the Queensland Agent-General in London, Sir Horace Tozer.¹⁰ In the late 1890s, Randall illustrated his lectures with lantern slides prepared in Queensland by the official photographer of the Department of Agriculture, Frederick Charles Wills.

Wills was young and enthusiastic, actively involved with the Queensland Amateur Photographic Society, and a frequent contributor to Australia's photographic magazines.¹¹ Appointed to the Department of Agriculture as Official Artist and Photographer on 13 March 1897¹², his interventions were constantly resisted by conservative co-workers. For instance, in March 1898 the *Queensland Agricultural Journal's* editor tried to eliminate its personal content.¹³ Fortunately for Wills, a Ministerial decree overruled this.

In October 1898, Wills suggested that Randall's lectures on emigration would be enhanced by "lantern slides [...] prepared on

the Lantana Gastrographica principle".¹⁴ The instrument of the prestigious Greater Britain Exhibition at Earl's Court in 1899 provided an incentive to give this project a trial. Many of Wills' lantern slides were exhibited there, though the films were not completed in time for it.

Queensland's Chief Secretary's Department agreed to finance the motion picture venture for a year starting in October 1898¹⁵, and the world's first governmental film production project was launched in December 1898, the Minister for Agriculture instructed Wills to go to Sydney to obtain a Lantana Gastrographica and then operate co-operatively.¹⁶ Baker & House imported the gear, and early in 1899 Wills made about five trial films with it in Sydney.¹⁷ Success was reported in the *Australian Photographic Review* on 23 March 1899¹⁸, the Sydney films including several Redfern to-baby stations and various types of ferry transport arriving at Mission Point. Few earlier films of Sydney survive today.

On his return to Brisbane in March 1899, the Department gave Wills an assistant.¹⁹ Henry William Molisby (1861–1933) helped Wills to produce and process many of the 1899 films. After Wills' resignation in 1903, Molisby continued to produce Queensland government films specifically until he retired in August 1930.²⁰

During Wills' "trial" photography excursions around Queensland for the Department of Agriculture between March and October 1899, he produced about 30 one-minute films on the Lantana gastrographica. Many of these illustrated agricultural processes in an attempt to attract British farmers to the colony, which was the motivation behind George Randall's propaganda tours. However, Wills also filmed historical events which can be readily dated.

Queensland's Colonial Governor, Lord Lamington, is seen arriving at the opening of Colonial Parliament in Brisbane on 18 May 1899 – the oldest of Wills' Queensland films which can be

dated.¹⁸ On the evening of the following day, Will gave his first film show to the Queensland Amateur Photographic Society, exhibiting "some very good specimens of locally taken cinematograph pictures."¹⁹ These probably included the surviving views of Brisbane's Roma Street station, Queen Street and Victoria Bridge.

Between June and August 1899, the amateur cinematographer accompanied H. W. Mobley on the tour of the government mines vessel "White Star" to Torres Strait.²⁰ Queensland's Home Secretary, James Footson, received reports of problems in the pearling industry, and of abuses of the miners in the Torres Strait. The subsequent parliamentary party included Aboriginal Protector Rado, Footson, Footson's wife, The Hon. Island Administrator John Douglas, Dr Tilston, Police Chief Perry-Galabin and Mobley. The two surviving films of the expedition show the Church of Rock Light Ship recording sites off the Townsville Coast, and Footson receiving a gift of bananas from Islanders on either Dumby or Murray Islands in the Eastern Torres Strait.

Mobley also attempted to take a film in Weipa when Footson officially gave it that name, but the attempt was aborted when "An unexpected earthquake fell through owing to darkness of time."²¹ An extensive album of "artificial" photographs taken by Mobley on this trip, probably intended for presentation as lantern slides to companies and supply stores the film, survives in the John Oxley library.²² The expedition concluded on 5 August 1899 when the party returned to Townsville.

The greater part of Will's surviving films were apparently taken in the Spring of 1899, following Mobley's return to Brisbane, and illustrate aspects of wheat harvesting on the Darling Downs, sugar harvesting in North Queensland, and of stock management. These are among the earliest Australian industrial documentary films, and are among the earliest films of this type in the world. Many of the 60-second rolls are constructed in sequences of two or three correct segments, and the rolls are intended for exhibition in a logical order to construct a narrative of the agricultural processes they see. "When a subject takes more than one film", Will casually observed in 1900, "they are joined with the aid of careful editing with some of the old-fashioned art."²³ Will made the earliest surviving Australian films exhibiting sequential editing techniques.

Especially in the wheat harvesting scenes, the shots are superbly composed, logically sequenced and include a "jump-cut" from a

wide view of a wagon bringing stacks to the shearer into a close view of operations at the shearer staff. In the North Queensland harvesting scenes a similar "jump-cut" takes us from a wide view of a horse-driven teamway bringing a load of cane to the mill's conveyor, cutting close into a scene of men working opposite one at the conveyor. The logic for creating scenes of particular importance for its evaluation of "karakia" labourers or such - cheap Melanesian manpower imported to work under conditions resembling slavery in the Southern states of the US. The usage of this device force created with the advent of American film-makers, and Will's films are among the few surviving remnants of this dramatic chapter in Australia's history.²⁴

Will's showed an artist's concern for methods of composition and working, contained in a lecture he subsequently gave on film making.

There is a time, time needed in these and a time spent of subject as much, and the process, than in ordinary photography. I find a lot in what is the same I wish in photography whatever it might be, that is when persons are to play any part in the picture, as these circumstances to photography often do the wrong thing at the wrong time, and possibly cause a film to be wasted, although I have been very fortunate myself, as out of thirty negatives and thirty positive films which I have exposed only two negatives and one positive have been spoiled. It believes one to be careful when each film costs 25s.²⁵

Of his "cut-outs", one negative is included in the collection which appears never to have been printed. It shows a close view of railway tracks receding from the end of a railway cutting in rural Queensland. Will apparently misjudged the coverage of his camera from the rate of the train, pointing it downwards too far to record any meaningful scenery. Fortunately, two successful travelling shots of this type do survive in the collection, one showing scrub on the vicinity of the railway at Eumundi (near Nambour) and the other showing forests in the Atherton tablelands on the Cairns-Maclean line.

In 1899, the concept of cinema with a moving picture view was unprecedented in Australia, and Will's "phantom train rolls" attracted favourable comment.²⁶

A constant rule of documentary production is that the operator should be kept happy. Will did well to include his employers, the Queensland government, in a film of them boarding the government public steamer "Laurinda" for a Christmas banquet. It was shot at a Brisbane Quay when just behind the (then) new Agricultural Department building on William Street. Highgate Hill can be seen across the Brisbane River. The occasion is thought to be their outing in connection with the Queensland Federation League on 14 October 1899.²⁷

Will's last and most expensive film recorded the departmental celebrations of the first Queensland (Cavalry) Contingent for the Boer War in South Africa at the end of October 1899. The Queensland Mounted Infantry, 15 officers and 210 men under Colonel P. Roberts, are seen marching a paved sand-off during their final parade past Post Office Square in Queen Street on 28 October 1899.²⁸ Later accounts show that Roberts led out the Brisbane Governor Sir Samuel Griffith on the Brisbane Domain that afternoon,²⁹ and the leading of their returned horses for South Africa aboard the troopship "Cornwall" at Pinkenba on 31 October 1899.³⁰ This was the last occasion on which Queensland troops went to war, and it was attended with far colourfully gaudy displays of patriotism, as the film indicates. No other films of Australian Boer War troop departures are known to survive.

At the end of October 1899, the Chief Secretary's firm rating of the film experiment ceased. The value of this film to Queensland now had to be demonstrated.

North Street Steam Ferry Passenger Dismounting (Shot in Albert Park in February 1899). First engagement of use of film Will. Also shot in a real white against the Lanchester machine from Under & Bussell Sydney. Combined scenes of Queensland. Shows can be seen on the opposite shore, with Queensland. Print and Four Magazine on the left. Photo courtesy of Ming Lichten. National Film & Sound Archive, Canberra.



Films Contained or Obscure

Wills' only complete showing of his films was a private one, given in the boardroom of the Agricultural Department in William Street, Brisbane, on the evening of 17 November 1899.¹⁴ From notices previously passed the films, expecting great value to accrue from their exhibition, Brisbane Chamber suggested that "the Department would do well to give the general public some wider opportunity of seeing the pictures before they are sent away [to Britain]."¹⁵

Wills' outstanding productions never received a public showing in Australia, and had only the briefest cage in England. They were partly the victims of technological progress, partly passed over owing to business delays being long.

After some delays, Wills' films were dispatched to Britain through Sydney via the steamer ship "Orizaba" on 3 February 1900.¹⁶ In London, extreme difficulty was found in locating a firm willing to hire one Lumière camera projector¹⁷, which was being monopolised by projectionists with larger film capacity. The Queensland films had Lumière perforations which would not fit the newer machines.

Even when a Lumière projector was located, George Randall would not use it. He had not been consulted regarding the need for the films, and evidence suggests that they were found on him.¹⁸ They are not mentioned in his voluminous papers at the Fryer Library at the University of Queensland. Only when Queensland film advertising was revealed for London's Franco-British Exhibition in 1904 did Randall reveal his opposition to these schemes. He considered that showing the films in English market towns would attract immigrants who were "the farmers and peasantry of the area".¹⁹ In his opinion, farm workers were the only justifiable migrant group for Queensland:

[...] the good men from the villages, that is to say the men who are at work, not the men who are out [...] Farmers, when they visit the nation towns, do so on business [...] They are too busy to listen to an immigration agent. [This film scheme] has benefited, not only by Canadian immigration agents, but by impost, when working for Queensland [before 1902], with most unsatisfactory results [...].²⁰

Wills' film production never resumed. He gave one last comprehensive lecture on the subject to the Queensland Amateur Photographic Society on 15 June 1903, which the Australian Photographic Journal later serialised.²¹ Following other disappointments within his Department, he resigned from government employment in 1903 and his later work is unknown.²²

OBSCURITY AND RETRIEVAL

Wills' films appear to have occurred in Australia in 1904 after only brief experimental usage in Britain²³, and were stored away at the Queensland Department of Agriculture until 1963. They were then sent to the Queensland Museum with Wills' cinematographic, photographic equipment and reference books including Hopwood's *Living Pictures* (London, 1898).²⁴ In 1962, the films were sent to the National Library's Film Archive in Canberra.²⁵ By that time all knowledge of their provenance had been lost.²⁶ The subsequent separation of the Film Archive from the National Library halted preservation work. In the move to the present National Film & Sound Archive (NFSA), collection components became separated and the confusion resulted in some items being located and preserved faster than others. Finally, the NFSA negotiated with the French Archives to copy Wills' films onto modern 35mm film, at great expense, during 1989-92. A few of Wills' Sydney era films have still not yet been copied.

Asne Dwyer-Gardie and the AVF staff of the State Library of Queensland worked with the authors to publicly promote the Wills-Mobsey films for the first time. Melbourne NFSA office manager Ken Berryman supplied a video copy, which was used with the

Queensland State Library's video projection to give Wills' films their long-awaited public premiere on 13 September 1993 – almost a century after their production!

Posthumously, at least, Wills can now reap the long-deferred credit deserved by his pioneering effort, allowing colonial Australia to live again on the screen.

WILLS-MOBSEY FILMOGRAPHY,
QUEENSLAND 1898

This list is in rough chronological order of production. Titles are taken from a Queensland Museum listing. Running times are obtained from the videography, affected by transferred from film to 12 pictures per second by double-framing. Even at that speed, some films run slightly faster than optimum.

A. TRAM FILMS MADE IN SYDNEY BY FRED WILLS
c. FEBRUARY 1898

(1) *North Shore Street Ferry Passengers Descending*
Taken overlooking Milton's Point ferry wharf, with Rowland Point, Fort Macquarie and Government House in the distance. Ferry with "Sydney" destination board and "Penny Ferry" sign up rails is on the floating platform wharf. Length 19 seconds.

(2) *North Shore Horse Ferry*
At Milton's Point terminal looking East towards Karribilli. Horse-drawn vehicles disembark from ferry, passing under a wooden gantry at the terminal stage. Length unknown (not yet on video).

(3) *Redfern Station No. 1*
Before Central Station was built in 1904, this was the city terminal station of the Parramatta Railway. View looks South along the line from No. 3 platform, with passing trains. Length unknown (not yet on video).

(4) *Redfern Station No. 2 (7 - probably 6) (broken)*
Presumably a reverse-angle shot to the previous. Looking North towards Sydney city along the line, with a tall castellated tower at the rear. Length unknown (not yet on video).

(5) *Peterborough Railway Station and Rail from Newcastle*
Scene view from platform of commuters moving towards an incoming train, followed by a travelling shot taken from the rear of the train crossing the same station. Advertising buildings and a road bridge over a cutting are seen. Length 41 seconds (the station shot is divided into two shots).

B. BRISBANE SCENES SHOT BY FRED WILLS
c. MARCH-OCTOBER 1898

(6) *Opening of Queensland Parliament, 1899*
Arrival of Lord Lamington, Governor of Queensland, in his coach at Parliament House, Brisbane. Guard of Honour, consisting of Queensland's Paramilitary Artillery under Lieutenant Black, moves past. Taken either 18 May 1899 or 18 September 1899 – there were two openings that year. The former is the more likely subject of the film, as a matchbook photo at the Queensland M. Length 61 seconds.

(7) *Queen Street and Victoria Bridge*
View of Treasury, Victoria Bridge and electric trams in Queen Street, followed by reverse angle shot down Queen Street. Bridge and trams were both less than two years old at the time. Length 52 seconds.

(8) *Queen Street Station*
Passengers disembarking from train and passing close to camera up the exit ramp. Length 49 seconds.

(9) *Government Picnic Party, S.S. "Lactada"*
Queensland Parliamentarians boarding the government paddle

master "Lairds" at the wharf/boat and the Agricultural Department building in William Street, Brisbane. In three shots: boarding, coming off, and master moving down the Brisbane River. Probably 14 October 1899. Length 58 seconds.

(10) S.S. Koroowa Unloading

Probably shot at Proserpine. Unloading timber apart at an active wharf. Length 31 seconds.

(11) Building Construction

Demolition workers, some black, overtopping and demolishing a wall. May have been demolition activity in William Street, clearing the way of the then new Agricultural Department building. Length 38 seconds.

© FOXTON'S TOWNERS STRAIT TOUR, JULY 1899

(FILMS BY MESSBY)

(12) Channel Boat Light Ship, North Queensland

View from deck of M. V. "White Star" of light ship proceeding across off the Townsville coast. Length 30 seconds.

(13) Naivies, Doreilly Island, How. J. F. G. Foxton

Taken last July 1899. Photo album APSA9 or John Odey Library shows a small photo of the scene, labelled Murray Island. Home Secretary Foxton and his wife receive a gift of bananas from islanders passing him at single file. Thursday Island Government Resident J. Douglas also appears. Length 36 seconds.

© QUEENSLAND RURAL RAILWAY VIEWS

(14) Scrub from Back of Trees, Emerald

Travelling shot of fully scenery receding from rear of train. Some cuttings and built-up railway formations. Length 56 seconds.

(15) Cairns Railway

Travelling view of tropical undergrowth from rear of train. Could have been taken during Northern tour of Agriculture Minister Chetwynd, as scrub abutting this railway had just been acquired by the Department for conversion into experimental farming plots, mid-1899. Length 39 seconds.

(16) Barron Falls, near Cairns

Scenic shot of falls, approached via Cairns railway. Length 36 seconds.

(17) "Outtake" View from Rear of Train

Probably a rejected view, showing only the rails receding from camera mounted at the back of a train. Surrounding scenery is outside the bounds of the picture. Length 63 seconds.

© WHEAT HARVESTING ON THE DARLING Downs, SPRING 1899

(18) Reaper and Binder, Harvesting at Jimbooa (near Dalby)

"Backyard" reaper and binder moves away from camera at wheat field with mountains in distance. Labourers work the sheaves from the reaper. Length 37 seconds.

(19) Carrying Wheat (at Jimbooa?)

Scenic countryside as previous shot. Sheaves are tossed up onto wagon for conveyance to the thrasher. Length 34 seconds.

(20) Threshing at Allera No. 1

Wide view of thrasher at work with steam traction engine and farmyard water cart. A man-horse team pulls a huge wagon laden with wheat/sheaves passing on its way to the thrasher. Length 65 seconds.

(21) Threshing at Allera No. 2

Close view of same thrasher shown in previous shot, with details of activity raising sheaves in, bagging wheat and stacking chaff. Length 47 seconds.

(22) Mechanical Hay Stacker at Birmahage State Farm

near Warwick

Horse-pushed hay onto canvas-covered fork. Fork lifts to load onto the

walk behind. Some scene appears exp. 35a (Peter Lloyd's *Guiding Queensland Agriculture* (Department of Primary Industry, Brisbane, 1988). Length 16 seconds.

© SUGAR HARVESTING AT HAMBOUR, SPRING 1899

(23) Cutting Cane

Kanaka labourers cutting sugar cane under the watchful eye of an overseer. Cane is stacked onto wagons at rear of shot. Length 34 seconds.

(24) Sugar Mills, Nambour

Shot uses horse-drawn traction load of cane driven at conveyor belt in walk-shot. Shot twice close view of processing operations at conveyor carrying cane into mill for crushing. Length 61 seconds.

© STOCK MANAGEMENT, 1899

(25) Sheep Dip

Head-on view of sheep being dipped in aromatic pondage. Man with forked pole creates total immersion of each beast. Length 37 seconds.

(26) Sheep Raising Through Gate

Mix-up scene, sheep sheep run through. Taken in and country – possibly Jimbooa or Talgo. Length 47 seconds.

(27) Agricultural College Cattle, Gatton

Long-haired cattle (Ayrshires?) herded by driver on horseback. Feet-and-tail view at rear. Length 45 seconds.

© DEPARTURE OF FIRST QUEENSLAND CONTINGENT TO BOER WAR, OCTOBER 1899

(28) Travelling Contingent, Queen Street

First Boer War Contingent, Queensland Mounted Infantry under Colonel P. Kerriem, giving their final Brisbane march-past near Post-Office Place on 28 October 1899. Length 41 seconds.

(29) Queensland Contingent for South Africa in Domain

Review of First Boer War Contingent before Lieutenant-Governor Sir Samuel Griffith on afternoon of 28 October 1899. In three shots: cavalry lines approaching, close shot of passing cavalry, supply wagons and rear of parade with children following up behind. Length 58 seconds.

(30) Loading Horses, S.S. "Castroville"

Loading of refractory mares onto troopship *Castroville* for South Africa, 31 October 1899. Length 19 seconds.

(31) Horses Being Unharnessed

Content unknown, but may be related to Boer War depovers. Length unknown – not yet on video.

© UNIDENTIFIED FILMS, 1899

(32) Feeding Pigeons

Possibly a war film featuring H. W. Melody, mentioned in *Wills'* 1900 Q&A letters. Length unknown – not yet on video.

(33) Country Show

Mentioned in Brisbane Courier report of *Wills'* private film show, 18 November 1899, p. 5. No print known. Length unknown.

NEXT ISSUE

So far, we have examined the work of Australian pioneer film producers working on their own. Our first corporate film producer made more than 200 films between 1897 and 1908. The only one of its productions is remembered. For too long, we have typed the myth of "Soldiers of the Cross" while turning a blind eye to the other 200 films that they did produce.

Next issue: the Salvation Army Lantern Department

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Also thanks to Clive Severy (New Zealand), Phil Goss (Melbourne), Ron Wain (Perth), De Mary Laughlin (Brisbane) Professor Spind survived Chris Long's several cancelled attempts at Queensland to become Mrs Long on 7 November!

NOTES

- 1 *Puffin's* Weekly commenced publication around the start of December 1919, various copies (apparently held by an Austin family) The State Library of South Australia holds the original from the time it changed its name to *Acacia* (*Acacia* Photographs Journal as used 1912)
- 2 Information from Colin Sheehan, State Library of Queensland
- 3 Newspaper in Australian Libraries: A Union List. Part 2. Australian Newspapers, National Library of Australia, Canberra, 1993.
- 4 *Probus* Courier, 3 May 1897, p. 1, 26 June 1897, p. 2.
- 5 *Ibid.*, 31 August 1897, p. 2.
- 6 *Ibid.*, 7 September 1897, p. 2, 8 September 1897, p. 4
- 7 *Ibid.*, 11 September 1897, p. 4
- 8 *Moving Picture* (Blackboard), 28 September 1897, p. 2, 1 October 1897, p. 2, 2 October 1897, p. 2.
- 9 *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 December 1897, p. 2, 7 December 1897, p. 2, 11 December 1897, p. 2
- 10 *Moving Picture*, 18 November 1897, p. 1, 23 November 1897, p. 2.
- 11 *Ibid.*, 14 December 1897, p. 2, 16 December 1897. *Acacia* Courier, 23 December 1897, p. 2
- 12 *Probus* Courier, 23 December 1897, p. 2
- 13 Ian Dunlop, "Cinematographic Film Making in Australia - The First Seventy Years", in *Ancient History* 2078, 30
- 14 *Terraviva* Film, 19 March 1896, pp. 2-3. A. C. Hamilton *Acacia* and *Puffin* Paper Books, National Library of Australia, 1991, p. 1
- 15 Alan Ward, "The Fraser Collection of Wax Cylinders: An Introduction", in *Research Journal* 61, Journal of the British Library National Sound Archive, January 1994, p. 1. See also A. C. Hamilton Papers, Cambridge University Library, envelope 1049. The two photographs were in folders "Home" and a Calender "Days"
- 16 Unlike Australian cinema photos were previously assumed to have been taken by Mack Flow in 1895. Refer: Alan Davies, *The Mythical Eye in Australia*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1983, p. 104
- 17 A. C. Hamilton, *Woodbushes: Black, White and Brown, Melbourne, London, 1991*
- 18 *Ibid.*
- 19 A. C. Hamilton Papers, Cambridge University Library, envelope 1049. Microfilm copy held in National Library of Australia, Canberra.
- 20 Information from Frances Gilbert, *Ibid.*
- 21 A. C. Hamilton Papers, envelope 1856: Diary 18 March 1894-25 March 1895.
- 22 A. C. Hamilton Papers, envelope 1000: Hamilton's 1894 Journal.
- 23 A. C. Hamilton Papers, envelope 1049 (p. Gazette in A. C. Hamilton, 28 June 1895)
- 24 Agents of the Cambridge Anthropological Expedition to Torres Straits, Vol. 4, pp. 304-307
- 25 H. B. Swain Papers, Peabody Museum, Cornell University. Haddon to Spence, 23 October 1900. Copy held by Ian Dunlop
- 26 A. C. Hamilton Papers, Box 1 envelope 3: Spence to Haddon, 1 December 1900

- 27 Basil Lennell and Peter Bailey, *The Documentary Film in Australia*, Centre Papers, in association with Film Victoria, Melbourne, 1982, p. 13
- 28 A. C. Hamilton *Acacia* and *Puffin* Paper Books, National Library, Canberra, 1991, p. 1
- 29 Swiss Film Institute catalogue card, "Torres Straits" (HMG, Haddon 278. *Ibid.*, 3 June, from Cambridge Ethnographical Society, 1997.
- 30 12 volumes of Hamilton's manuscript notes are held at the Fryer Library, University of Queensland. (FTRM nos. 2011 to 2022)
- 31 *Australian Photographic Journal*, March 1895, pp. 10-11, "How to Wash in a Dark-room" by F. C. Wills is a typical example
- 32 *Blue Book of Queensland, 1897*, Appendix C: list of Officers under the Secretary for Agriculture, including F. C. Wills
- 33 A. J. Boyd to Under Secretary for Agriculture, 28 March 1916: AGPS/9494, Box 1746, Queensland State Archives (QSA)
- 34 Chief Secretary's Under Secretary to Department of Agriculture Under Secretary, 24 October 1919 (Premier's Department Letterbook, PR/6122, p. 267, QSA
- 35 *Ibid.*
- 36 *Queensland Agricultural Journal*, 1 December 1916, p. 471. Also "An Anecdotal Introduction", *Australasian Photographic Review*, December 1919, p. 29
- 37 *Australian Photographic Journal*, 20 September 1900, p. 200, quotes Wills as saying that he shot only two "the first (film) I took when in Sydney producing photographs on the subject". Same printed, 20 November 1900, p. 249, states that there were five of these Sydney films
- 38 *Australasian Photographic Review*, 21 March 1919, p. 21
- 39 Richard Petherington. Personal correspondence 10 November 1989 to Chris Long. *Melody* was appeared *Youngster* and *Photography* on 1 March 1909, and was printed in *Arts and Photography* on 1 July 1909
- 40 Reverses of *Melody*'s page film may be found on *Evergreen* (Opalite), 11 June 1904, p. 2-12 in *Evans* 1925, p. 64. *Melody* page film and photographs are held on the Fryer Library at the University of Queensland
- 41 *Brisbane Courier*, 19 May 1893, p. 6. *The Queenslanders*, 27 May 1895, p. 297, has photos of the crew.
- 42 *Australian Photographic Journal*, 20 June 1895, p. 141. *Brisbane Courier*, 22 May 1895, p. 4
- 43 *Torres Straits Film*, 12 July 1895, 12 July 1898. March *Queensland Herald* (Townsville), 17 July 1895, pp. 4, 10, 14 August 1895, p. 4, 14 August 1895, p. 5
- 44 *Probus* Evening Observer, 21 July 1895, p. 3
- 45 John Oxley Library, photo album A9410 "Torres Strait"
- 46 *Australian Photographic Journal*, 20 November 1900, p. 249
- 47 *Green Screen*, Leon and Kasperov, Fremont, Brisbane 1976, pp. 84-3
- 48 *Australian Photographic Journal*, 20 November 1900, p. 243
- 49 *Brisbane Courier*, 19 November 1895, p. 2. *Evening Observer* (Brisbane), 18 November 1895, p. 2
- 50 *Brisbane Courier*, 14 October 1895.
- 51 *Ibid.*, 20 October 1895, p. 2-4
- 52 *Ibid.*
- 53 *Ibid.*, 1 November 1895.
- 54 See note 49.
- 55 *Ibid.*
- 56 Chief Secretary's Under Secretary to Department of Agriculture Under Secretary, 2 February 1900 (Premier's Department Letterbook, PR/6121, p. 817, QSA)
- 57 Chief Secretary's Under Secretary to the Queensland Agents-General's Secretary in London, 1 August 1900 (Premier's Department Letterbook of dispatches to the Agents-General, PR/6121, p. 514, QSA)
- 58 There are some records of Hamilton's camp notes, and access relating to his usage of Wills' films. None of the correspondence relating to the filmstrip came from Hamilton in Torres
- 59 *Brisbane*, 5 August 1904, "Answering Enquiries" *Photographic* Hamilton papers, Fryer Library, University of Queensland.
- 60 *Ibid.*
- 61 *Australian Photographic Journal*, 20 September 1900, pp. 200-201, 20 October 1900, pp. 215-20, 26 November 1900, pp. 243-4 "Fog on Cosmography" by F. C. Wills (enclined)
- 62 Information from Peter L. Lloyd, Department of Primary Industry, Brisbane, 1989
- 63 *Ibid.* for final correspondence on Wills' film is dated 31 May 1904, but the letter itself does not survive
- 64 Information from Bruce Gilbert, Queensland Museum, 1993.
- 65 *Ibid.* note 27.
- 66 Collection is held in NYSA catalogue as "Queensland Camera Films"