

# THE CIVIC THEATRE

## HSTY3902 - Project Proposal

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### **Community Work**

#### **Main contact**

Minas Coroneo

Owner of the Civic Theatre, Scone

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#### **Organisation**

Civic Theatre, Scone

#### **Background**

The Civic Theatre in Scone was built in the 1930s by architects Guy Crick and Bruce Furse. Following the introduction of television and later home video, the theatre struggled to stay afloat. The building has been closed for business since the early 2000s and is in serious disrepair.

#### **Present day**

Seeking to revive the theatre to its former glory, the owner, Minas Coroneo, is conducting a major restoration of the building. While it is no longer feasible to run a conventional cinema in Scone, Minas plans to open the theatre for public and private functions, during which old and new films will be played on the restored projectors.

#### **My work**

I contacted Minas regarding the restoration, and ask whether I could be of assistance with the historical aspect of the project. Minas was very interested in my help, and asked me to try and track down the original plans for the building. When I was successful in procuring some of the old plans, we discussed further what I could do as part of my major project for HSTY3902. I suggested that I could produce a historical display for the foyer of the restored theatre, and this idea greatly interested Minas. Hence, my role is to research, prepare, and execute a historical display within the restored theatre.

## Major Project

**Question:** What is the most effective way for the history of Scone's Civic Theatre to be preserved and delivered to a large and varied audience?

### Section 1: The Project

For my project I aim to produce a historical display to be placed in the soon to be restored Civic Theatre of Scone. This display will consist of photographs, original plans, oral testimonies, old films, and artefacts which visually capture the history of the theatre, the town, and its people. Accompanying the primary material will be my own explanations of the sources and their historical context. Ultimately, this multimedia display aims to make history and historical material accessible to a wide and varied audience, and contribute to the restoration of an important building.

### Section 2: Audience and benefit

#### *Local audience:*

For a local audience, the display will provide stories from the town's life across the 20<sup>th</sup> century. These stories will hopefully be of interest to multiple age groups, ranging from those who lived during the theatre's glory days, to those like myself who have never watched a film inside it.

#### *National audience:*

For a travelling national audience, this display will provide an easy means of accessing the town's history.

#### *International audience:*

For an international audience, this display will inform people of county town life in Australia during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and will add to their overall understanding of this country. (The site has been proposed as a venue for international conferences).

### Section 3: Source material

#### Primary

The primary material I will be using is varied. Firstly, I will be displaying photographs of: significant events at the theatre; key people involved in its running; films made in the district; as well as before and after shots of the restoration process. Secondly, I will be displaying copies of the original plans alongside modern plans for the restoration. Thirdly, I will be seeking out original posters for films shown at the theatre, such as *The Shiralee*.<sup>1</sup> Fourthly, the original hand-powered projector will be put on display along with other artefacts held by the theatre. Finally, I hope to track down a number of old films played at the theatre during the 1900s. A projector in the foyer will play these films during events, adding to the overall engagement of the historical display.

#### Secondary

Secondary material on Scone's Civic Theatre is limited. So far I have found one major work by Heather Ashford called *Moving Images and the Theatre*. This book was produced by members of the Scone and Upper Hunter Historical Society and is highly useful for providing the context for many primary sources. Other more general histories of theatres in Australia are useful for providing the national context.

### Section 4: Process and presentation

#### 1) Research

I have spent the past month and a half researching the history of the theatre and tracking down key historical documents. I have used online and print resources available at the State Records Office in Kingswood, the Mitchell Library, the State Library, The National Archives, and the University of Sydney. I am yet to visit the Scone and Upper Hunter Historical Society. Please see my bibliography for further details relating to this research.

#### 2) Oral histories

I plan to conduct interviews with Scone residents. These interviews will add to my knowledge of the theatre's history, and some will be reproduced in the final display.

#### 3) Printing, framing, restoration

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<sup>1</sup> This film had its international premiere in Scone in 1957.

The logistical side of this project will require me to attain permission for the display of copyrighted material, as well as produce and frame quality prints, and restore artefacts. The necessary funding for this will be provided by Minas.

4) Presentation to community

I need to present my findings in a visually engaging manner. The display will have accompanying descriptions which provide the history of the photographs, plans, documents, artefacts, films, and stories. The multimedia approach to the display will hopefully make this engaging to a wide audience. The limited space in the theatre's foyer will require me to be selective in the documents I reproduce for the public.

5) Presentation as a Major Project for HSTY3902

As Scone is a long way from Sydney, I will have to present my project through a printed reproduction of the display. This should not be overly difficult, as I can include a photograph of each work and accompany it with its description as found in the theatre.

### **Section 5: Concerns and potential issues**

- 1) First and foremost, I will not be able to install my display in the theatre before the November 16 deadline. I can still present my completed work for marking; it will not, however, be installed in the theatre until sometime next year when the restoration project is complete.
- 2) I'm worried many of the sources I hope to use will be restricted by copyright laws.
- 3) The process of producing quality, framed prints for display may take longer than anticipated.
- 4) I intend to continue with this project beyond the November 16 due date because I am thoroughly enjoying working on the restoration. Therefore, the final display in the theatre may not be the same as that which I submit for the project.

# Bibliography

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## Primary material

**Artefacts:** these artefacts will be put on display in the main foyer after being restored by the theatre's projectionist.

Hand-powered film projector, kept at Civic Theatre

Old film reels, kept at Civic Theatre

Poster advertising *The Shiralee* film, owned by Minas Coroneo

**Building plans:** These plans show the original designs by architects Crick and Furse. I plan to produce prints of these and frame them. During the 1950s, the seating plan was on display in the main foyer. When booking a seat, your name would be posted on the sign; this would inform others which seats were taken and who would be attending the evening's screening.

*Seating plans for Civic Theatre*, produced by Guy Crick and Bruce Furse, Scone, 1937.

Obtained from State Records NSW, series 15318, container 17/3283, item 554.

*Building plans for Civic Theatre*, produced by Guy Crick and Bruce Furse, Scone, 1937.

Obtained from State Records NSW, series 15318, container 17/3283, item 554.

**Films:** Minas owns a copy of *The Shiralee* which will be screened on a small projector in the main foyer. I intend to track down copies of other old films made in the Scone district.

Norman, Leslie (Director), *The Shiralee*, (London: Ealing Studios, 1957).

**Photographs:** There is a significant amount of photographs of the theatre and the functions held there. Many of these are contained in Heather Ashford's work, *Moving Images and the Theatre*. I have tracked down further photographs at the Mitchell Library.

*Photograph of Scone's main street with Civic Theatre, 1949.* Obtained from the Mitchell Library, call number: Government Printing Office 1 – 46252. Available at: <http://www.acmssearch.sl.nsw.gov.au/search/itemDetailPaged.cgi?itemID=218291P>>Accessed on: 6 October 2015.

Photographs from the filming of *Smiley gets a gun*, filmed in the Scone district. Obtained from the Mitchell Library. Available at: [http://www.acmssearch.sl.nsw.gov.au/s/search.html?collection=slnsw&meta\\_6=83606&q=Smiley%20gets%20a%20gun&f.Date%7C4=1957&f.Type%7C9=slnsw-web&start\\_rank=1](http://www.acmssearch.sl.nsw.gov.au/s/search.html?collection=slnsw&meta_6=83606&q=Smiley%20gets%20a%20gun&f.Date%7C4=1957&f.Type%7C9=slnsw-web&start_rank=1)>Accessed on 6 October 2015.

**Company documents and letters:** These documents and letters provide insights into the establishment and functioning of the theatre. They will be useful for providing the historical background for the display, and could be printed for display themselves.

Scone Theatres Pty. Limited, *Memorandum of Association of Scone Theatres Pty. Limited*, (New South Wales Department of Stamp Duties: 1937). Obtained from State Records NSW, series 12951, container 17/9481, file 18596.

*Letter to Chief Secretary's department, Board of Fire Commissioners, regarding the change of sites for the proposed theatre.* Written by Guy Crick and Bruce Furse, 15<sup>th</sup> November 1937. Obtained from State Records NSW, series 12951, container 17/9481, file 18596.

*Report regarding fire of 22<sup>nd</sup> September 1954.* Chief Secretary's department, Board of Fire Commissioners, to Theo Coroneo, 22 September 1954. Obtained from State Records NSW, series 12951, container 17/9481, file 18596.

*Letter regarding fire of 22<sup>nd</sup> September 1954.* Chief Secretary's department to theatre owner, Theo Coroneo, 22 September 1954. Obtained from State Records NSW, series 12951, container 17/9481, file 18596.

*Reply to letter regarding fire of 22<sup>nd</sup> September 1954.* Theo Coroneo to Chief Secretary's department. 28<sup>th</sup> October 1954. Obtained from State Records NSW, series 12951, container 17/9481, file 18596.

**Newspaper articles:** Due to the theatre's prominence in the town it is discussed in many local newspaper articles. Many of these old newspapers are held at the Scone and Upper Hunter Historical Society which I am yet to visit.

The Scone Advocate, *The Civic: Scone's New Picture Theatre Opened in Blaze of Splendour*, 29 July 1938. Obtained from Trove, National Library of Australia. Available at: <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/158851169> > Accessed on: 25 September 2015.

The Scone Advocate, *£5000 Damage in Scone Theatre Fire*, 24 September 1954. Obtained from Trove, National Library of Australia. Available at: <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/107753381?searchTerm=Civic%20Theatre%20Scone&searchLimits=exactPhrase||anyWords||notWords||requestHandler||dateFrom||dateTo||sortby> >, Accessed on: 7 October 2015.

## Secondary material

Ashford, Heather, *Moving Images and the Theatre*, (Scone: Scone and Upper Hunter Historical Society Incorporated, 1997).

Potter, Edith, *The Scone I Remember*, (Scone: Scone and Upper Hunter Historical Society, 1981).

Spinks, Kim, ed., *Australian Theatre Design*, (Sydney: Australian Production Designers Association Inc., 1992).

Thorne, Ross, *Picture Palace Architecture in Australia*, (Melbourne: Sun Books, 1976).

Thorne, Ross, *Theatres in Australia*, (Sydney: Department of Architecture at the University of Sydney, 2006).