THE WOLLONGONG TOWN HALL PIPE ORGAN

Builder - R. W. Sharp

The late Alderman George Hanlay proposed that investigations be made into the acquisition and installation of a pipe organ in the new Town Hall.

An investigating Committee, headed by the former Mayor, Alderman A. Squires, advised by Mr. S. Palmer, Architect, conferred with Mr. W. Mehaffey, Acoustics Engineer - Australian Broadcasting Commission and member of the Organ Society of New South Wales, and recommended the installation of a mechanical pipe organ modelled on the European instruments of the 17th Century. It was found that the modern trend in organ installations had tended away from the cumbersome and slow pipe organs of the 19th Century, back to the smaller and craftsman-built instruments of the 17th Century.

These organs required the builder to have great skill and craftsmanship to give the fine and delicate tonal qualities and responses which characterised them. Very few organ builders in the world today are capable of building organs of this quality.

Australia is fortunate to have such a person in Mr. R.W. Sharp of Sydney. Mr. Sharp has been building organs of this quality for nine years. He has built organs for the Australian Broadcasting Commission, St. Mary’s Cathedral, The Knox Grammar School and ten churches and denominational schools. He was commissioned to design the pipe organ for the Sydney Opera House and travelled overseas in connection with this project. The Wollongong Town Hall Pipe Organ was the thirteenth organ he built.

SPECIFICATION:

Pedal  Hauptwerk  Positiv
Subass 16  Prinzipal 8  Gedackt 8
Prinzipal 8  Rohrflote 8  Prinzipal 4
Oktav 4  Oktav 4  Rohrpfieife 4
Mixtur 111  Nasat 2 2/3  Blockflote 2
Posaune 16  Oktav 2  Quint 1 1/3
Schalmey 4  Terz 1 3/5  Sesquialtera 11
Mixtur 1V  Mixtur 1V  Scharff 11
Trompete 8  Trompete 8  Krummhorn 8

3 couplers
2 tremulants
4 combination pistons

mechanical key action
electric stop action
case - Tasmanian blackwood
front pipes - burnished tin

R. (BOBBIE) V. GRANT - SOMETIME ILLAWARRA BANDMASTER

As a Soprano Cornet player, Bobbie Grant was held in the highest of esteem in both Australia and overseas. His first competition success was in Hobart in 1898 and his last at Rockdale in 1955.

R.V. Grant was born in Hobart and studied under J. J. McCann, organist and piano teacher. He played the flute and piccolo in St. Mary’s Boy’s Band which eventually changed to a brass band.
On leaving school he joined the Hobart Garrison band under T. W. Hopkins. Besides early competition success on the Soprano Cornet, Bob Grant won prizes on the Bb Cornet, Tenor Horn and Flugel Horn.

As a bandmaster, he had a long list of successes with the following local brass bands: Balgownie, Corrimal, Wollongong, Kiama and Port Kembla. In addition Mr. Grant coached many country bands, including those of Wagga and Forbes. Locally, he may be remembered by some readers for playing trumpet and cornet parts at the Wollongong Picture Theatre for many years before the coming of the 'talkies'.

The following local competition successes were among his achievements.
1st. Bulli-Woonona 1912
1st. Wollongong 1914, 1918, 1920, 1921, 1922, 1937
1st. Helensburgh 1916 and 1917
1st. Corriamal 1930

FUTURE EXCURSION

Advance Notice is hereby given of a proposed excursion to Sutton Farm on the highlands during the first or second week of March, 1990.

KORUMBURRA MINERS - THE ILLAWARRA CONNECTION

I am a regional historian studying the Victorian Coal Miners Association (VCMA) 1893-1915 in the Korumburra (Vic.) district. I am especially interested in the great strike (or lock-out) of 1903 and the co-operative coal mining movement.

The great strike/lock-out began in January 1903 and was called off in May 1904. None of the union miners could get employment without renouncing the union and signing on as non-union men, which few of the men were willing to do. To make it easier for the men who remained, the union voted to disband in August 1904. By this time most of the radical and prominent miners had either left the district or sought work elsewhere and I estimate that only about 150-200 families out of an original pre-strike 800 mining families remained in the district by 1908.

I wish to trace descendants of the VCMA miners with the long term aim of collecting folk stories and stories of individual miners. I am after biographical details, portraits and other photographs, family details, family stories of the union and strike, and locating the whereabouts of memorabilia such as union cards etc. and written records such as diaries, reminiscences or letters.

Of the 600 families that left the Korumburra district between 1903-8 I estimate that roughly half went to NSW coal fields and further 150-200 went to coalfields in W.A., Queensland, Tasmania and some probably to New Zealand. I would appreciate any assistance your readers can give me in this task or any further contacts that may help my research.

In the meantime I am slowly building up a card index of union miners with details, such as union activities, accidents, court appearances etc. that may be of interest to any descendants. Any descendant or person seeking information on the VCMA can contact me at the following address, Peter Dean Gardner, 9 Farmer St., Mirboo North 3871.