ROBERT McLEISH

AUSTRALIAN VARIETY THEATRE ARCHIVE: RESEARCH NOTES
See last page for citation, copyright and last updated details.

(1883-1953) Singer (baritone), entrepreneur, film industry advocate.

Considered the father of Victorian motion picture industry, Robert McLeish started out as a suburban variety entertainer in the early 1900s, often performing as an illustrated singer (in front of moving pictures). He moved into vaudeville and concert promotions before turning his attention on the emerging film industry. Initially associated with the Northcote Theatre (from ca. 1914) he went on to become one of the state's leading motion picture showmen. During this time he built theatres and Cinemas (notably the Rivoli at Camberwell), established his own cinema chain, and served in numerous official roles, including President of the Cinematograph Exhibitors' Association, Chairman of the Hoyts Victorian Executive and as President of the Green Room Club (34 years).

► See also: Northcote Theatre • Rivoli Theatre • Green Room Club (Socio-Cultural Factors)

- Although McLeish's career from 1915 onwards was primarily associated with the motion picture industry he nevertheless retained a connection with variety theatre, engaging performers to entertain his audiences between films and on occasion presenting an all-vaudeville programme at some of his suburban theatres.

- The name Robert McLeish is recorded as having been involved and charged with various misdemeanours in the Prahran/North Melbourne/Richmond area between ca. 1902 and 1909. These include theft of oranges (1902 - as a juvenile), being found on a licensed premises on Sunday (1909) and stealing a bottle of whisky from a bar (1909). It is unclear if any of these incidents involved the same Robert McLeish identified in this entry. See Miscellaneous section at the bottom this document for examples. Records located in the Ancestry database indicate that there were several people known by that name in the aforementioned area.

Further Research:
1905

COMPLIMENTARY CONVERSATION.

A conversation was tendered by the citizens of North Melbourne to Cr. George and Mrs. Foutain, in the town hall on Wednesday evening last. The stage was nicely decorated with - pot plants, and art drapings and flags were displayed on the walls. The proceedings opened with an overture by D’Gillo’s band, after which Mr. Robert McLeish sang “A Soldier of Japan.” Miss Doris Carter sang two selections in succession, “Violets” and “Japanese Love Song.” Mr. Sydney Merton gave a humorous sketch that created great amusement, which was followed by a song “By the Waters,” by Mr. George Jennings. Miss Emily Stevenson sang “Love the Pedlar.” Miss Evelyn P. Dyte gave a recitation. The first part of the programme was brought to a conclusion by an amusing quartette “The Sobbing Chorus,” rendered by Misses Carter and Stevenson, and Messrs. Jennings and McLeish.

North Melbourne Courier and West Melbourne Advertiser
13 Oct. 1905, 2.

1906

Prahran Telegraph (Melbourne) 16 June 1906, 2.

1907

ORCHESTRAL SOCIETY.

THE ANNUAL MEETING.

The Warragul Orchestral Society held its meeting of members at the Shire hall on Tuesday evening. Mr. Parker (President) occupied the chair.

As an indication of the talent which has delighted Warragul audiences from time to time, through the instrumentality of the Orchestral Society, it is interesting to peruse the list of Melbourne artists who have contributed to the enjoyment of the concerts. These include (Instrumental) Professor F. G. Constantine, Mr. Leslie Bobsien D.M.S.V., Miss Ruby Anderson, Master Adrian Amadio, Mr. J. C. Bedford, Mr. Fred Rowe, Mr. Bert Clements. (Vocal) Miss Ivy O’Shannessy, Miss Janet Patterson, Mr. Robert McLeish, Madame Cavendish, Mr. Charles Ledward, Mr. James Lockhead, Miss Jessy Tenby, Miss Edith Osborne, Mr. A. E. Woolmerspoon, Miss Hobson, Miss Emilie Stevenson, Miss Isabella Milligan, Miss B. O’Dwyer.

West Gippsland Gazette (Warragul, Vic) 12 Feb. 1907, 7.

Prahran Telegraph (Melbourne) 23 Mar. 1907, 2.
Open Air Concerts.

GREENEY'S TEA GARDENS.

The weekly open-air concert of the Williamstown Premier Band Thursday night was probably the best they have given. The evening was rather raw and cold after the recent hot weather, but the entertainment did not lack for patrons. The bioscope views by Mr. J. C. Langley were highly interesting and educative, more particularly the whale and moose hunts, the former particularly so, as showing the up-todate methods by harpoon gun and steamer to capture whale blubber. The band's contributions were "The Free Lance," "Tanncred," "Recollections of Carli Rosa," and "The High School Cadets." Mr. Robert McLeish and Mr. W. Roberts were much applauded for their solos, particularly including "The Harbour of Home Sweet Home" by the latter. The feature of the evening was, however, the sterling performance of Miss Emilie Benson, an Artistedddf winner, who delightfully sang "Love me and the world is mine" and "If those lips could only speak." Altogether Secretary J. Freeman provided a programme very much above the average.

Prahran Telegraph (Melbourne) 6 June 1908, 3.

TOWN OF WILLIAMSTOWN.

2 GRAND 2 OPEN-AIR CONCERTS
Monday, December 28, 1908, at eight p.m.
and New Year's night, 1st January, 1909.
In the GARDENS RESERVE.
Artists—Miss Emilie Benson, Mr Robert McLeish, Metropolitan Band, Bioscope Extraordinary.

NEW YEAR'S NIGHT.
Miss Treweek, Mr Bippin, Mr Cellier, Citizens' Band, Bioscope.

ADMISSION 12 or Children under 3d.

H. LINTON, Musical Director.

Williamstown Chronicle (Melbourne) 1 Feb. 1908, 2.

McLeish's Pops.

A programme full of interest and attractive items will be put on at the Prahran Town Hall on Monday evening in connection with Mr. Robert McLeish's weekly concert. In addition to the special engagement of Hughes, the "musical krang," George Sorhe, coon comedian, dancer &c.; Andy Roberts, the comical comic merchant; and Mr. McLeish himself, there will be a variety of vaudeville talent. Not the least interesting item, also, will be Sculthorpe's electric biograph pictures. It is announced that in order to encourage local talent "trial turns" will be given from 7.30 to 8 p.m. each evening, and successful performers will be engaged as occasion permits.

Prahran Telegraph (Melbourne) 25 July 1908, 2.

Williamstown Chronicle (Melbourne) 26 Dec. 1908, 2.
**Empress Pavilion.**
(UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT.)

TO-MORROW NIGHT 31st.—Grand Sacred CONCERT, at 8 p.m. Special engagement of Alex. Gunn & Sons Royal Bioscope. Artists—Miss Alice Raymond, Mr Robert McLeish, Mr Will Rhodesbury, Mr Jack O’Kane (Accompaniste).

MONDAY, 1st FEB.—Dancing 2.30 till 5; 7.30 till 10. Murdoch’s Band. Floor in splendid order. Merry go-round, Heller Skelter, &c., will be in full swing day and night.

KEN. LEWIS, Manager.

---

**McLeish’s Concerts.**

As usual an excellent programme is out for Mr. Robert McLeish’s weekly concert on Monday evening next. A special engagement has been made of the Duckworths, comedians and acrobats, of Athos, “the astounding skating dude,” and the Two Australas in their Australian sketch Coo-ee. In addition, a number of artists new to Prahran are announced, while a grand finale will be the bioscope picture of the Burns-Squires fight. Last Monday night there was an overflowing audience.

---

**Prahran Telegraph** (Melbourne) 1 Mar. 1909, 4.

---

**Miss Emily Benson, Cal Gay, Robert McLeish, Adele Montague and Claude McIntosh are to perform at the Brunswick Town Hall, next Friday night.**

---

**McLeish’s Concerts.**

As usual an excellent programme is out for Mr. Robert McLeish’s weekly concert on Monday evening next. A special engagement has been made of the Duckworths, comedians and acrobats, of Athos, “the astounding skating dude,” and the Two Australas in their Australian sketch Coo-ee. In addition, a number of artists new to Prahran are announced, while a grand finale will be the bioscope picture of the Burns-Squires fight. Last Monday night there was an overflowing audience.

---

**Prahran Telegraph** (Melbourne) 1 May 1909, 4.
“An Englishman’s Home.”

A remarkable biograph picture which Mr. Robert McLeish has secured for his weekly concert at the Prahran Town Hall on Monday night is expected to rouse much enthusiasm among the spectators. The title of the film is “The Invasion of England,” or what may happen in an Englishman’s home. It is said to be one of the best battle pictures ever presented, showing united naval and military action. In addition to this stirring picture a good vaudeville programme has been prepared, including the Swifts (sketch artists), Fisko (equilibrist and juggler), Maisie Rowlands (monologue entertainer), and others. The grand final of the singing and dancing competition for a silver cup will also take place.

McLeish’s Monday Concerts.

As the season advances a very high order of entertainment is being put on at Mr. Robert McLeish’s weekly Monday night concerts at the Prahran Town-hall. For Monday next the Swifts, described as Australia’s premier sketch team, will provide one of the principal turns; while Northcote, an expert shadowgraphist, will give a new and amusing speciality. Other engagements are the Artos, in juggling specialities; Joe Wallace, eccentric comedian; Marjorie Bray, scrio; Art Slavin, the whistling comedian; Marshall Palmer, descriptive singer; Irene Beaumont and Dorothy Swift. In addition, the bioscope will tell the sensational story of the Kelly Gang, and a gold medal will be presented to the Prahran player, judged by a vote of the audience to be the best in today’s match against Essendon.

A Sensational Act.

For Mr. Robert McLeish’s weekly concert on Tuesday night in the Prahran Town Hall, another great bill has been prepared. Owing to the hall being engaged on Monday night the entertainment has been put back one evening on this occasion, but the circumstance will enable Mr. McLeish to put on a specially attractive programme. In this respect the management have been fortunate in securing Hugarde, the Master Magician, who performs one turn that is described as marvellous. Hugarde claims to be invulnerable. Two regulation rifles are loaded with regulation cartridges, and fired point blank at the performer, who catches the bullets as they strike him. The loading of the rifles and the firing is performed by a committee from the audience, who mark the bullets prior to the firing, and identify them after. This is said to be one of the most sensational turns yet produced in Melbourne. There will also be shown a bioscope picture of holding interest, entitled “Morgan the Pirate,” said to be one of the most sensational films yet seen here. In addition there is a full bill of comedians, etc., so that Tuesday night’s programme will be one of the best of the season.

McLeish’s St. Kilda Show.

On Monday evening next (Prince of Wales’ Birthday) Mr. Robert McLeish will put on a special holiday programme at St. Kilda Town-hall, when, among other attractions, the fight for the world’s championship between Johnson and Burns will be shown by the biograph. The artists will include the Duckworth’s, in comedy acrobatic specialities; Tom Hedley, the “musical moke”; the Two Cedrics, described as juggling marvels; Lal Logie, comedian; Nancy Simmonds, Fred Champion, Harry Fleet, and other favorites. A gold medal will be presented to the St. Kilda football player who is judged, by a ballot of the audience, to be the best of his side in the match against Fitzroy on Monday.
Rival Showmen.

Was it an election meeting, a free fight, or a religious revival gathering? That was the question that forced itself on people approaching the Prahran Town Hall on Monday evening. There was a bioscope show in the old Town Hall, under North's management, being announced by four stentorian "spouters." A vaudeville entertainment in the new Town Hall by Mr. Robert McLeish was being similarly shouted in three places at once. Four newsboys, in ear-piercing tones, yelled in an endeavour to top the din, while now and again shouts from the crowd drew attention to a figure holding forth from the steps of the old Hall. The gesticulating haranguer was manager McLeish, who, on his rival's threshold, was passing an assurance to the amused assemblage that "the Kelly Gang picture would absolutely be shown at the new Town Hall only," and not in the hall where his rival had announced it. As people mounted the steps to enter North's show, the exuberant Mac advised them in his best vocabulary to "go round the corner, where the Kelly Gang picture would absolutely be shown." Meanwhile the "spouters" and North's biograph operator were loudly an-

nouncing that the Kelly picture would appear at the old Town Hall. As this picture was evidently the draw card of the night, dozens of amusement-seekers were undecided where to go. It seemed to be a toss up which was the right hall to enter. The majority chanced it at one or the other. Much heat was exhibited between the opposing "spouters," who certainly earned the longest pints obtainable for the energy they put into their vocal efforts. As it turned out, none were disappointed. Both managements had crowded houses, and the Kelly Gang went through their hair-raising performance at each hall. In fact, the Gang worked overtime, for upon being finished with at Prahran, they were taken (per film) to the St. Kilda Town Hall, where a show by McLeish's No. 2 company packed that building.

Prahran Telegraph (Melbourne) 12 June 1909, 4.  

McLeish's Pictures at Malvern.

There will be a fine picture night at the Victoria Hall, Malvern, this evening, under the management of Mr. Robert McLeish. A series of varied attractions has been provided, including an extended film entitled "A Race for Millions." A vaudeville programme will also be given by the Tylers, Walter Melrose, Nancy Simmonds, Ben. Menzies, and Melrose and Menzies.


McLEISH'S MONDAY CONCERT.

An attractive programme has been issued by Mr. Robert McLeish for next Monday night at the Prahran Town Hall. Amongst the artists engaged are Kodama, an equilibrist, Sam La Mert, in whistling specialties, Miss Jessie Lee, in new motto songs, The Australs, comedians and sketch artists, Jack Hagan, comedian and dancer, Charles Moody, in new descriptive songs, Tim Howard, and Professor Stevenson, in an exhibition of ju jitsu, the Japanese art of self-defence. The pictures are specially attractive, and include some new American art films.

McIvor Times and Rodney Advertiser (Vic)
21 Apr. 1910, 4.

NB: This advertisement was published in numerous newspapers throughout Victoria up until at least 1915.
THOSE AFFLICTED WITH ANY FORM OF
Anaemia, Weak Vitality, Poor Appetite, Sick Headache, Impaired Digestion, Sluggish Liver, Weakness, Melancholia, Lassitude, Functional Kidney or Liver Troubles, should read these Letters to THE GREAT Life-Lengthening, Life-Strengthening Medicine

Clements Tonic

WHICH IS THE Sure Remedy for Poor Blood & Weak Nerves

Read this Wonderful Victorian Testimony:

This is a testimony from Mr. Robert M’Leish, baritone vocalist, Vaudeville Manager, proprietor for six years of the well-known Melbourne “Pops,” and living at 235 Abbotsford Street, North Melbourne. Mr. M’Leish is emphatic in his opinion of this medicine as a health maker, because it not only cured him of nerve breakdown, but also restored his voice, which he had lost for months. Read his letter:

CLEMENTS TONIC LTD.

“Three years ago I lost my voice for nearly twelve months, which was largely due to general breakdown of the nervous system, affecting the vocal chords. I tried medical treatment, without good result; but a friend told me to take the nerve and blood medicine—Clements Tonic—and I was surprised at the almost immediate effect it had upon me, and, by continuous use, I improved daily. It performed a miracle in my case, and after a few weeks my voice returned, and in less than three months I was singing as well as ever. It is the best nerve, blood, and stomach medicine I have ever used, and I never intend to be without it.”

(Signed) ROBERT M’LEISH.
McLeish at St. Kilda.

OPENING OF WINTER SEASON.

Mr. Robert McLeish, having secured the lease of the St. Kilda Town Hall, will open his winter season this evening with a vaudeville entertainment and magic display. The artists include Hesley and Bartlett, a new combination, in a musical specialty, introducing a number of novel instruments; Master James Iles, the boy soprano; Lal Logie, the comedian; The Creigh-tonis in jugglting, tumbling and hand-balancing; Miss Kitty Stanley, soprano, in illustrated songs; and Sam La Mert, operatic whistler and mimic. The star picture this evening will be "Uncle Tom's Cabin," a film 3000 feet in length. The charge for admission will be—Front seats, one shilling, and back seats and balcony sixpence.

Mr. Robert McLeish is an experienced stage manager, of many years' standing, and his name is quite a household word in Prahran, Richmond and South Melbourne during the winter season. In the former he has been providing amusements for the people at the City Hall for the last six years, and this year he breaks fresh ground, having secured the lease of the St. Kilda Town Hall for the season. He will therefore run three shows simultaneously every Saturday evening—viz., in the St. Kilda Town Hall, Richmond Town Hall, and at Moonee Ponds, while on Monday evenings he will occupy the South Melbourne Town Hall.

McLeish's Concerts.

A very strong and attractive programme is presented by Mr. Robert McLeish at the St. Kilda Town Hall this evening. Foremost comes Raymond, the lock and handbell defier, from Wirth's circus. Hesley and Bartlett will appear in musical specialties, and the wizard Ramos will give an exhibition of magic. Ted Anderson, eccentric comedian, Ernie Vockler and Lily Lambert are also on the bill, and the pictures for the evening comprise a wide selection. The baby show will, however, be one of the most attractive features to many, for from fifteen representatives of young Australia the audience will be asked to vote for the best.
1912-1913

McLeish's career movements during the years 1912 and 1913 are yet to be established. A search of newspapers digitised by the National Library of Australia's Trove service (using "Robert McLeish" as a phrase) currently brings up no records. A number of secondary sources note that McLeish was involved in the opening of the Northcote Theatre in June 1912 and identify him as its general manager. While this may have been the case, no evidence is provided. Interestingly, his name is not associated in any capacity with the Northcote Theatre (in any newspapers currently digitised) until 1914 - and then only as a performer and musical programme organiser (see below). It is not until 1915 that he is mentioned as the theatre's manager (see below). Further to this, in its coverage of the opening of the Northcote Theatre, the Argus makes mention of the Northcote Theatre Company's directors and secretary, but McLeish's name is included. Given McLeish's reputation as a Melbourne entrepreneur and performer to that date it seems strange that none of the city's newspapers mention him in connection with the theatre between June 1912 and mid-1914. The AVTA would be grateful for any information or clarification regarding this issue.

► See also: Northcote Theatre (Melbourne Suburbs)

1914

---

See for example "Northcote Theatre." Darebin Heritage. [sighted 5/2/2015]
THEATRE FOR SUNDAY SACRED CONCERT.

R. McLeish, manager Northcote theatre, wrote applying for permission to open the theatre on Sunday evening, 14th March, for the purpose of holding a sacred concert for the relief of local distress. — Request granted, on the motion of Crs. Plant and the mayor.

A charity concert will be given at the Northcote theatre to-morrow (Sunday) night, commencing at 8.15. An excellent programme of music and elocution has been arranged, among those taking part being Miss Ruby Bond, Miss Ruby Groves, Miss Josephine Samuel, the talented elocutionist, Mr. Robert McLeish and Mr. Geo. Allen. Miss Bond will sing Sullivan’s “Lost Chord,” with full orchestral accompaniment, and Miss Samuel, who will be heard for the first time in Northcote, is certain of a warm reception. There will also be a carefully chosen programme of picture gems, and several orchestral selections. The proceeds of the entertainment will be devoted to relieving any distress that might exist in the city.

NORTHCOTE THEATRE’S EFFORT.

£43 17s 6d RAISED.

To augment the fund for the sick and wounded soldiers a special performance was given at the Northcote theatre on Sunday evening, and the result was most successful, there being such an attendance that £33 17s 6d was taken at the doors. To this the Company added a donation of £10, so that the contribution from the effort will be a substantial one. In addition to a fine picture programme, including “Kismet,” featuring Oscar Asche and Lily Brayton, songs were kindly rendered by Miss Evelyn Ashby, Miss Ruby Groves and Messrs. C. H. Ledward and Marks. In announcing the result the manager (Mr. R. McLeish) announced that the amount taken would go to the fund without any deduction whatever, everybody having given their services free, and the theatre, printing and advertising was also given gratis.

Social News.

An interesting ceremony took place in Northcote on June 14. Mr. T. Empson, one of the staff of the Northcote theatre, was presented with a handsome souvenir by the manager, Mr. R. McLeish. Mr. Empson, who is 70 years of age, has been connected with the theatrical profession for over 60 years, and during that time has travelled through different parts of the world, including India, Burmah, Straits Settlement, China, Japan and the whole of the Australasian Colonies. Tommy Empson arrived in Australia in 1864. He is very popular and highly respected by all. The usual congratulations were given by his numerous friends.


RIVAL SHOWS.

A HYPNOTIST'S CLAIM.

In the County Court yesterday, before Judge Monle, Richard Rowe, entertainer and hypnotist, claimed £40 from the Northcote Theatre Company as damages for loss of profit on entertainments given at the Town Hall, Northcote, on June 21, 22, and 23, owing to the company, by its servants or agents, having destroyed a number of bills, by which plaintiff was advertising his performances. Mr. Magennis (instructed by Messrs. Corr and Corr) appeared for the plaintiff, and Mr. S. Lewis (instructed by Messrs. Maddock, Jamieson, and Lowe) for the defence.

Richard Rowe, the plaintiff, said that about May last he saw Richard McLeish, manager of the Northcote Theatre, and asked him to play him a tune in the theatre, where he had appeared before. McLeish offered him about £10 for three nights. Witness said that was no good to him, and he would go out and play opposition at the Town Hall. McLeish said, "If you do, I will have to give you a bump, and put a star picture against you, or something of the sort." Witness engaged the Town Hall for three nights, and posted about 37 posters round the town, in some places with permission, and in others without. The bills were pulled down, and he believed that the failure of his performance was due to this.

In cross-examination plaintiff said he did not remember having posted bills over the Northcote Theatre Company's bills. He had given successful performances at Northcote last year, when McLeish managed for him.

Mr. Lewis: Did you make people believe that you hypnotised them?

Witness: I did.

Mr. Lewis: Did you pay people to cut candles for you?

Witness: I did pay some to do it. Others ate candles, and I did not pay them. The defence was that the company did have certain of Rowe's bills that were posted on the company's boards torn off, but not by any others.

Robert McLeish, the defendant, said he told Rowe that, owing to his having shown at Northcote a year previously, he did not think Rowe's hypnotic charms would dress well, and he could only offer him three shows at the theatre for three nights. The only instructions that he gave to the theatre bill-poster when he heard that Rowe was going to appear at the Town Hall was, "Watch our heads."

Other witnesses gave evidence that they had no association with defendant company, but had torn down Rowe's bills because the bills were posted without permission on premises of which they had charge.

Judge Monle said that if anyone bought rights to post bills in certain places so one else had any business to put other posters over them. Many of plaintiffs' posters were torn down from places where defendant company had no rights, and the case was full of suspicion that defendants servants had done this. Plaintiff had to satisfy him that this was the case, and had not done so. He would give a verdict for defendant, but, owing to the element of suspicion, would not give costs.
**Venue**: Rivoli, Camberwell

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event Date</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Suburb</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Postcode</th>
<th>Latitude</th>
<th>Longitude</th>
<th>Capacity</th>
<th>Suburban</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Screens</th>
<th>Operation Dates</th>
<th>Roles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1921-01-01</td>
<td>Rivoli</td>
<td>481 Burke Road</td>
<td>Camberwell</td>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>3124</td>
<td>-37.84513</td>
<td>145.053867</td>
<td>2200</td>
<td>Suburb</td>
<td>Cinema 1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1921-01-01 - 1940-01-01</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>Rivoli</td>
<td>481 Burke Road</td>
<td>Camberwell</td>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>3124</td>
<td>-37.84513</td>
<td>145.053867</td>
<td>2200</td>
<td>Suburb</td>
<td>Cinema 1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first Rivoli in Camberwell was built by Robert McLeish for 30,000 pounds. It reportedly seated 2,200. McLeish’s idea was to build a luxury cinema theatre in the suburb so people would not have to travel to the city for a night out. It was officially opened on Wednesday evening, May 18, 1921. After a trip to America in 1928 McLeish purchased a vast amount of sound equipment from R.C.A. and was thus one of the first Australians to install sound to his cinemas.


**References**

Tod, L. "Rivoli Cinemas." *Kino: Cinema Quarterly* 95 (2005), 8-10.

CAARP


*Table Talk* (Melbourne) 26 May 1921, 42.

*Table Talk* (Melbourne) 30 June 1921, 13.
Mr. Robert McLeish, an old showman both in vaudeville and motion pictures, has again been elected president of the Green Room Club. Other officers are:—Vice-presidents, Mr. Fred Champion and Mr. W. A. Gibson; governing board, Messrs. G. F. Carden, H. Pride, L. J. McLeish, Vaughan C. Marshall, D. Casey, G. Livingstone, H. Lane Bayliff, P. L. Nelson, F. Graham, and F. Ireland; hon. treasurer, Mr. Kershaw Garrett; hon. minute secretary, Mr. J. C. Langley. Mr. Stanley H. Henry, the new secretary, has been long associated with the Allan Wilkie Shakespearean Company.
1929

*News (Adelaide)* 3 Aug. 1929, 1.

*Advertiser (Adelaide)* 5 Aug. 1929, 14.
Table Talk (Melbourne) 14 Apr. 1932, 35.

Mail (Adelaide) 20 Aug. 1932, 2.

NEW HARTWELL THEATRE

Mr. Robert McLeish, managing director of Hartwell Theatres Pty. Ltd., has received a cable message from Tyrone Power in Hollywood congratulating the directors on the opening of the Regal Theatre, and asking him to purchase six tickets for presentation to the nurses of the Children's Hospital with Mr. Power's compliments. Mr. McLeish is asking six nurses to be guests of the star at the gala night next Friday when the Mayor of Camberwell, Councillor R. B. Barnes, will open the new theatre. The Regal will be open to the public on Saturday. It has been built on the site occupied for 90 years by the Tyrone Hotel, once a hunting and coursing rendezvous.

Honour for film man

A portrait of Mr. Robert McLeish, a pioneer of the film industry in Victoria, will be unveiled at the Hotel Australia at 5 p.m. tomorrow.

The portrait, painted by Aileen Dent, marks the completion by Mr. McLeish of 31 years as president of the Green Room Club, meeting place for Melbourne’s show business.

The ceremony will be performed by Mr. Holt, Immigration Minister, who has been closely associated with Mr. McLeish in the theatrical industry for many years.

Argus (Melbourne) 4 Apr. 1950, 3.

Movies on Sundays opposed

Film exhibitors are strongly opposed to opening their theatres on Sundays, in spite of the plea for “brighter Sundays” by Cr. J. S. Disney, Lord Mayor.

“Exhibitors have their work cut out to provide good film entertainment for the public on the other six days of the week,” Mr. Robert McLeish, of the Cinematograph Exhibitors’ Association, said yesterday.

In his experience of more than 40 years in the film and entertainment industry, he said, there had never been any strong move to open Melbourne theatres on Sunday.

“Today more than ever before, if we were to propose such a thing, we would imperil the present happy relations between employers and employees, and fall foul of the unions and a mass of modern regulations.

“In any case,” Mr. McLeish added, “I doubt whether public patronage would warrant it.”

Argus (Melbourne) 1 June 1950, 21.

Actors and film people in both Melbourne and London will never forget Robert McLeish, president of Melbourne’s Green Room Club.

His portrait in oils will look down on them in the club rooms here. A coloured photograph of his portrait will look down on members of London’s Green Room Club.

Miss Aileen Dent, who painted the portrait in oils, is now exhibiting it at the Athenaeum Gallery.

The portrait was photographed and reproduced realistically in colour by Mr Harry Pride, of Renwick, Pride, and Co., and airfreighted to London for presentation this week to the London Green Room Club.

Argus (Melbourne) 17 Aug. 1950, 6.
McLEISH, Robert, of 3 Mindanao court, Armadale. — On October 6 (suddenly), husband of Edith Evelyn McLeish.

McLEISH, Robert. — On October 6, dearly loved father of Robert James, father-in-law of Dorothy, loving grandfather of Pamela and Margaret.

McLEISH, Robert. — On October 6, dearly loved father of Doris (Mrs. R. Blair) and Thelma, loving grandfather of Peter.

McLEISH. — The Funeral of the late ROBERT McLEISH will leave St. George's Anglican Church, Gienferre road, Malvern, THIS DAY (Wednesday), after a service commencing at 2 p.m., for the Springvale Crematorium.

A. A. SLEIGHT PTY. LTD., St. Kilda road, Melbourne. Phone MX4636 (3 lines).

---

Obituary

Mr. R. McLeish

Mr. Robert McLeish, "Father of the Victorian motion picture industry," died suddenly at his home in Armadale yesterday. He was 70.

Mr. McLeish was managing director of McLeish Theatres, which controls seven suburban cinemas in Melbourne.

He entered the motion picture field in 1903 when he organised open air concerts, at which short silent films were shown.

At the time of his death Mr. McLeish was president of the Cinematic Exhibitors’ Association and of the Cinema Industry Benevolent Fund.

He was president of the Green Room Club for 34 years.

A racehorse owner, he was a member of all Melbourne racing clubs.

He is survived by his wife, two daughters and a son.

The funeral will leave for Spring Vale Crematorium following a service at St. George’s Church, Malvern, at 2 p.m. today.
DEATH OF A GREAT SHOWMAN

By F. KEITH MANZIE

THE Australian film industry suffered an irreparable loss yesterday in the death of veteran showman Robert McLeish.

No one in Australia has done more in pioneering and establishing motion pictures in this country.

Theatres in the McLeish chain, such as the luxurious Regal in Hartwell, and Rivoli in Upper Hawthorn, did much to gain for Melbourne suburban cinemas the reputation of "the best in the world." Mr. McLeish was a tireless worker for Melbourne's charities and needy film industry employees.

President of the famed Green Room Club since 1920, the genial Bob had an international reputation as a host to visitors. And it was Bob's own money which sustained this theatrical club when it passed through parlous times.

Robert McLeish, who was 70, began life in North Melbourne — where another world-famous film personality in Al Daff, now chief executive of Universal Pictures in America also had his beginning. It was as a silvery-throated baritone that he broke into show business.

As a singer of "heart-throb" songs such as "Goodbye, Little Girl, Goodbye," and "In the Shade of the Old Apple Tree" — Mr. McLeish was in great demand at the start of the century at Sunday night open-air concerts and singing in front of the screen at silent film shows.

After Tivoli Theatre minstrel shows, Mr. McLeish went into management for himself, conducting "McLeish's Weekly Pops" in suburban and country town halls throughout Victoria and Tasmania. Then, sensing the potential growth of screen plays, he took over management of the Northcote Theatre in 1912, where he showed complete programmes of pictures, instead of the mixed vaudeville-movie shows previously presented.

In 1917 he leased the Newmarket Theatre; took over the Clifton Hill Theatre in 1918; and in 1921 the McLeish "chain" really started to operate with the acquisition of the old Rivoli Theatre, in Camberwell.

In 1944 Mr. McLeish won the title of "Mr. Melbourne" in a competition conducted in aid of the Australian Comfor- ts Fund. As the Amusement Industries candidate he topped the poll with something like a million and a half votes; which represented the sum of £18,148.

When not working on behalf of the entertainment industry Bob McLeish found time to take a keen interest in horse racing. He was a member of the Victoria Racing Club, the Victorian Amateur Turf Club, the Melbourne Racing Club, and the Moonee Valley Racing Club.

Mr. McLeish added to his impressive personality a rare flair for storytelling and a rich gift for making speeches, either before or after dinner. He was never at a loss for pungent comment, the inclusive shaft of humor, or the quick "comeback."

Green Room Club members gathered yesterday to drink a silent toast to the passing of a loved president and a good friend. Mr. McLeish leaves his son, Rob, to carry on for him at the Green Room Club and in the conducting of the affairs of the McLeish Theatres.

The funeral service is to be held at St. George's Church of England, Glenferrie rd. (next to the Malvern Town Hall), at 2 p.m. today. It will be conducted by the Rev. Rockee Wilson. The Funeral will then proceed to Springfield Crematorium.

Argus (Melbourne) 7 Oct. 1953, 3.
McLEISH.—Cherished memories of our beloved president, Robert McLeish, passed away October 6, 1953. (Inserted by the Green Room Club members.)

McLEISH.—Fondest memories of our late chief, Robert McLeish. (Inserted by his managers.)

McLEISH.—In fond memory of Robert, a dear friend, passed away October 6, 1953. (Inserted by Harry Pride and Dan Casey.)

---

£1,414 given to film fund

Cr. Selleck, Lord Mayor, at the Town Hall yesterday, presented a cheque for £1,414, proceeds of the 1954 Movie Ball, to Mr. M. Slo- man, chairman of the Cinema Industry Benevolent Fund.

The cheque is part of the special effort being made this year by the film industry in Victoria to commemorate the memory of Mr. Robert McLeish.

Mr. McLeish, who was a veteran showman, and president of the Green Room Club, died in October last year. He was a tireless worker for needy film industry employees.
**Law Notices**

ROBERT McLEISH, Late of 243 Collins Street, Melbourne, Managing Director, Decased. After fourteen clear days Robert James McLeish, of 243 Collins street, Melbourne, director, the executor appointed by the deceased's will, dated the 22nd day of March, 1951, will APPLY to the Supreme Court of Victoria for PROBATE of the said WILL. Dated 15th October, 1953. HOLT, GRAHAM & NEWMAN, 178 Collins street, Melbourne, solicitors for the applicant.

---

**30 theatres join group**

A new group of 30 independently owned cinemas has been formed in Melbourne suburbs under the title of Regional Theatres.

Chairman is Mr. Robert McLeish, Jnr. (at present in U.S.A.), with Mr. Garnet Curwen as vice-chairman.

"Each theatre will maintain its separate identity," said Mr. Curwen yesterday.

---

**Wider screen**

THE ultimate in wide-screen projection is the new Todd-AO process... according to Robert McLeish, Melbourne film exhibitor, just back from a tour of America, England and Europe. The Todd-AO medium gives improved clarity, realism and sense of audience-participation, says Mr. McLeish.

This process is photographed on 70 mm film, which calls for only half normal enlargement for a panoramic sweep.

---

**They meet the stars**

---

**Lost his way; his wife died**

---
It is unclear if any of the items below relate to or are associated with this entry's Robert McLeish. See Trove for further examples.

**1902**

*John McLeish, Frank Morris Charles Walsh, Charles Hudson, Alfred Young and Robert McLeish, were charged with fruit stealing. R. McLeish turned King's evidence, and the charge against him was withdrawn.*

Robert McLeish said that he resided at South Melbourne. The accused with him went to Mr. Harper's, Toorak, and took the oranges out of the garden. They heard there was a constable coming and ran. "Charlie Hudson" was caught. They got about six oranges each. They all came from South Melbourne.

Constable Perkins said that at 9.30 on the 27th June he caught Hudson. He had obtained 16 oranges from Hudson, who gave him a wrong address and the wrong names of all the boys.

All the accused were fined 5s each.

_Prahran Telegraph_ 26 July 1902, 6.


**1909**

*FOUNDED ON PREMISES.*

Robert McLeish was charged with being found on licensed premises without lawful excuse, at a time when such premises should not be open to the public.

Constable McGowan said that on Sunday week he was on licensing duty with Constable Sainsbury, and saw defendant go into the Turf Club Hotel, and when he came out got his name and address. Defendant said he went into the hotel for a purpose, but to witness's knowledge he only lived 150 yards away.

Defendant was fined 20/-.


*STOLE THE WHISKY.*

Robert McLeish was charged at Footscray court on Thursday with stealing one bottle of whisky, the property of James Tognini, on April 10th.

Defendant admitted the charge. James Tognini stated that on Saturday afternoon he left defendant in the bar to go into the kitchen. He returned a few minutes later on hearing a noise in the bar, and found a customer there. Defendant had gone, and witness missed two bottles of whisky and a bottle of stout.

Sergeant Jones stated that defendant was a hardworking man, but drink had been his downfall. He had taken the pledge for life. There was a family dependent on him, and he did not think defendant had any criminal instinct.

A fine of 30/- was imposed.

_Independent_ (Footscray) 19 Apr. 1909, 2.


---

_Australian Variety Theatre Archive: Research Notes_

Published by Clay Djubal: 7/02/2015 • Last updated: 20/03/2018

NB: The URL for this PDF will change each time it is updated. If you wish to link to this record please use the following:

Australian Variety Theatre Archive • http://ozvta.com/entrepreneurs-m-r/

The information within these pages should be considered a snapshot only. Its purpose is to serve as a basis for further investigation and as a repository for online references that may eventually disappear.

Any works snagged or transcribed from other sources remain the copyright of their respective authors/publishers.

The authorship and/or original publication details are provided and these should be cited (not the AVTA).*

New information is continuously being made available as more newspapers are digitised by Trove (Australian National Library Digitised Newspapers resource)

* Materials published in this entry will be removed if requested by the copyright owner. Please contact the AVTA.