Coburg is a suburb of Melbourne, 7.5km north of the CBD. Prior to 1994 it was the centre of the municipality of Coburg. It’s impressive Town Hall, built in 1922, is in Bell Street. Films were screened there during the 1930s. In 1994 there was an amalgamation of the municipalities of Coburg and Brunswick, to become the City of Moreland. This was a cause of some consternation to the Theatre Organ Society of Australia (Victoria division) who had been negotiating for relocation of its Blackett & Howden theatre organ into the Coburg Town Hall – amalgamations often mean rationalisation of facilities. Fortunately, use of the Town Hall as a community and cultural venue continued and negotiations by TOSA were successful.

The Blackett & Howden organ, built in 1929, had been an organ of 8 ranks and 2 operable manuals installed in the Prince’s theatre, North Shields, England. Minus the console, which had been destroyed, it was acquired by TOSA in 1970, and from 1975 utilising a Christie console (formerly of the Lyceum theatre, Sydney, New South Wales) was installed in Cinema North, Reservoir, another northern suburb of Melbourne, as an organ of 2 manuals 9 ranks – the additional rank being a wooden Wurlitzer Tibia Clausa. When this cinema was closed for demolition in 1991, the organ was placed back in storage and further restorative work performed while a new location was found. The work of providing organ chambers (one atop the other to the right of the stage in the auditorium at Coburg), providing a pit for the console hoist and otherwise making the organ ready for reliable use, was to take until 1999. An informal “opening” occurred during a national theatre organ convention on 3rd April 1999, with organists David Johnston, Gail Dibben and Glenn Maus performing. The official opening took place on 20th February 2000, with organists Ray Thornley and Gail Dibben, and it has frequently been heard in concert and used by TOSA members since that time. (Regrettably it could not be accessed for the national convention held in Melbourne at Easter 2005.)

The console, painted in vivid white (as it had been at Cinema North) and with decorative mouldings that formerly graced the Wurlitzer console at Melbourne’s Capitol theatre, rises on a hoist from within an angular extension to the stage.

Dispersion of pipe ranks at Coburg are:

**Solo chamber (above):** Tuba, Metal Tibia, Clarinet, Vox Humana

**Main chamber (below):** Diapason, Tibia Clause (wood), Viol d’Orchestre, Celeste, Stopped Flute.