

2008 Australian Mechanical Organ Society (AMOS) Rally Echuca, Victoria, Australia

Daphne Holt

David and I have just returned from our annual (2008) mechanical organ rally in Echuca, Victoria, Australia. There is only one rally every year, each held in a different place because our members are scattered all over the country. Some of us travel long distances so we usually make a holiday of it. We live south of Adelaide in South Australia (in the bottom of the country) and have to travel hundreds of miles to the next city. This rally we decided to take our new robot, “Roger,” and his dog, “Rex,” to the rally (Figure 1).



Figure 1. “Roger” and “Rex”. Roger is a robot fitted with a Melodica (with the help of Alan Pell, England) while Rex has an electronic voice which ‘barks’ when a coin is dropped in a slot in his head. Roger disassembles to sit in the back seat of the car and causes many heads to turn. Of course, he wears a seatbelt!

After six days of driving (we visited Ballarat, a gold rush city; Lake Goldsmith, a site for steam rallies; and Geelong, a city by the sea with over 100 painted wooden bollards make to look like comical people [Figure 2]) we headed north to Echuca, the site of our 2008 rally. Echuca is situated on the River Murray, the largest and longest river in Australia, and 150 miles north of Melbourne. It is now a large rural town and farming center which draws a large amount of tourists to enjoy the old wharves and paddle steamers.

The wharf area has a street with old-style buildings where we set up our organs on the weekend of the 8th and 9th of November 2008. The atmosphere was excellent because everything belongs to the same era. Friday evening it rained; but no one complained as we have had a bad drought.



Figures 3 (above) and 4 (below). An Australian-built hand organ. Each figure moves with the music.



Figure 2. Four of 103 painted wooden sculptures on the Geelong waterfront.

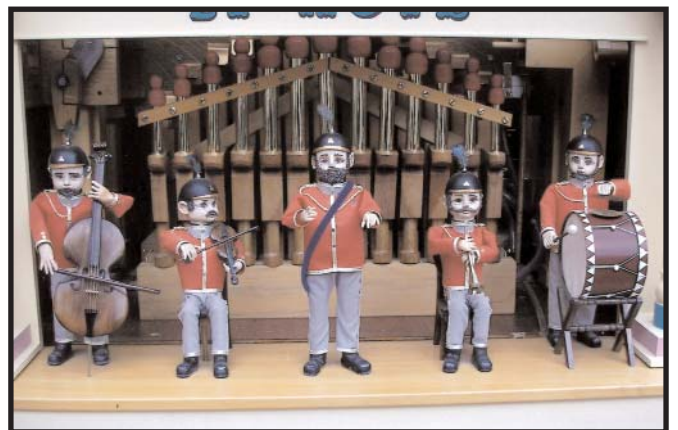




Figure 5. A Stuber hand organ called *The Golden Klomp*.

Saturday was dry, which was good for an organ rally. The owners of the hand-cranked organs (**Figures 3 - 5**) set themselves up in one of the old streets and the larger organs (**Figures 6 - 8**) on a lawn area facing the paddleboats and the river. The lovely old time music floated over the whole area, including the river, creating a wonderful atmosphere. Saturday evening was spent cruising the river on an old steam paddleboat *Canberra* of which we were the exclusive guests.



Figure 6. A large Australian-built organ, *The Tyrolian*.



Figure 7. The Dutch street organ, *Berber Maria*, was built in Belgium by Decap for an Australian owner in the 1990s.

Our group consists of members from all different walks of life and economic situations but we come together with a mutual love of mechanical music and friendship. We have one couple who come from New Zealand every year. David and I journeyed 500 miles back home on a number of back highways, many going through dry and parched fields with wheat crops nowhere near the height they would normally be as follow-up rains again failed to arrive.

The 2008 rally was a success and we all look forward to next year when we can catch up with each other again.



Figure 8. The *Crusader* is another Australian-built organ.

Daphne and David Hold have been organ owners for 20 years, playing at events almost every weekend with their large and small organs. They now play only occasionally, but attend their AMOS annual rally every year no matter how far awar it is.

COAA Rally in Gallipolis (June 20-21, 2009)

What is it about the sound of carousel music, fairground organs, circus calliopes or even street organs that puts a smile on everybody's face? It's festive, innocent and fun. It's the *Happiest Music on Earth*. Information regarding the rally may be obtained from Bob Hood at bobhood@visitgallia.com or call 800-765-6482. Those who wish to register in advance may contact one of these hotels:

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| Holiday Inn 577 St Rt. 7N Galliopolis, OH 45631 740-446-0080 | Super 8 321 Upper River road Galliopolis, OH 45631 740-446-8080 | Hampton Inn 444 St Rt. 7 S Galliopolis, OH 45631 740-446-8000 |
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