

THE SOUTH WEST MEETING IN BRISTOL

16 September 2023

Over 20 enthusiastic MLS members gathered for the (we hope) annual treat in the South West – the 'Bristol Bash'. Organised by **Keith and Jennifer Utteridge**, this informal meeting always turns up some treats and surprises. This year did not disappoint. The programme began with a preview of **Martin Elsbury's** presentation at the main autumn meeting (p. 16). Martin is the son of this event's founders, David and Eunice Elsbury, and has produced a video featuring the main elements of his parents' collection, telling the story of the magic lantern from its invention to the coming of cinema. The clips shown featured slipping slides, religious subjects, real-life and fictional stories, including Stanley and Livingstone and *Gulliver's Travels*. We saw dissolving views, followed by Queen Victoria, chromatropes and



A full 'car park'



The perils of under-age smoking!



a life model story, concluding with the Lumière Brothers' film of a train coming into a station.

Picking up the royal theme **Kevin Varty** showed some extraordinary photographic slides by **George Washington Wilson** (1823-93), Queen Victoria's favourite photographer. These included the throne room at Windsor Castle, some marble cenotaphs ('empty tomb') and Frogmore Mausoleum – now suffering badly from damp as built on a marsh. **John Finney**, our projectionist for the day with his biunial, presented some unusual slides including a busy 'car park', a steam-driven chainsaw and a butcher's shop with hundreds of fowl hanging at the front. He also showed three



Cyclist tussling with XL bully dog?

sets with the words included on the slide, including a tale of two cyclists with one 'helping' the other by pulling him along by the nose. **George Auckland** then handed out some free cardboard cut-out optical toys from his 1980s programme *Take Nobody's Word For It* and told the tale of remaking the Lumière Brothers' film for the Lears' touring show as 'train coming into Milton Keynes station'. **Gordon Casbeard** showed a salutary tale of two juvenile smokers making themselves ill with cigars, retold by Gordon in his inimitable style. This prompted Keith to mention John Finney's new print-on-demand book of rewritten scripts by Gordon, the Utteridges and others (£20). Keith read out one little changed – the story of Johnny Sands (1806). **Rene Marriott** pointed out this came from a folk song 'The Cruel Wife'.

Rene and Alan Marriott then took us on holiday, 1890s style, around the Isle of Wight via steam trains, spectacular views and famous people connected to the island. **Mary Ann Auckland** showed some of the slides from **George R. Tweedie's** *Gossip About Fairies* (see *TML* 36, p. 8). **Richard Rigby** then showed some slides made recently from a 1940s Women's Voluntary Service (WVS) poster: 'Women Wanted' to help child evacuees.



Overcoming a cycling hazard

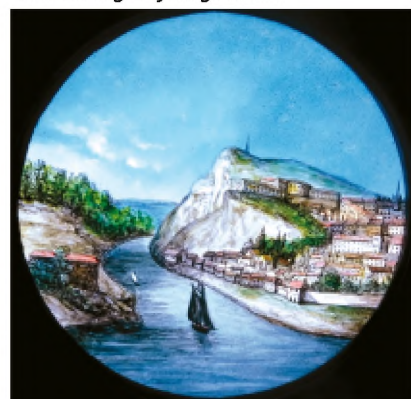
Gordon Casbeard projected a selection of unusual moving slides, some gruesome, some featuring pigs and one even a bedbug. **Kevin Varty** showed a video of animated transforming views, mainly French scenes, with chandeliers, street lights and the moon lighting up as day turned to night. **Linda and Edgar Gibbs** brought us three AV or digital stories – the first about the elegant Lou, the second a feast of animated optical art and the third 'Bomber' a tribute to the RAF in WWII.



J Class yachts

The Utteridges triggered a lively discussion on ethnicity by showing slides depicting black people, including *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Keith then showed *The Adventures of a Cyclist*, a set given to him by Eunice Elsbury. **Alan Brindle** followed with a story of a cyclist being attacked by what might have been an XL bully dog and then a rich variety of catastrophe slides – cycling seemed to be rather a theme. **Jerry Fisher** showed some decorations that looked like magic lantern slides but

turned out to be Wilko, not Wilkie. The Marriotts showed some beautiful photographic slides of J class yachts, including one belonging to King George V. John Finney showed two stories from 'Comic Life', narrated by Richard Rigby, with groan-worthy jokes. Kevin Varty showed his submarine slides (see p. 6). Gordon Casbeard picked up the cycling theme again with *Through Suffering to Cycledom* – a mixture of photographic and illustration slides. Keith then showed us some well-known sights of Bristol including the Avon Gorge before and during construction of the Clifton Suspension Bridge (see also p. 2), thus probably dating the earlier one to before 1840. Following some cinema slides, **Richard Crangle** talked about MLS books. **Stan Roberts** then finished with some homemade song slides from WWII which everyone joined in. The day concluded with, of course, fish and chips.



The Avon Gorge, pre-suspension bridge