

48TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE MAGIC LANTERN SOCIETY

THE MUSICAL MUSEUM, BRENTFORD, LONDON

Saturday 20 January 2024

A total of more than 60 members and guests came to some part of the meeting in January at the Musical Museum. We began with a live link-up with **Henk Boelmans Kranenburg** and **Monique Wezenberg** in the Netherlands who told us more about the special meeting at Henk's Magic Lantern Museum in Scheveningen, 15 and 16 June this year (details are on the MLS website www.magiclantern.org.uk).

After a few technical difficulties, **Lester Smith** then showed some of his extremely rare large-format slides from the Royal Polytechnic Institution, starting with the Houses of Parliament in London. After some other



Martin Gilbert in the market

historic buildings including the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, he showed a few slides of two stories from *The Pickwick Papers* by Charles Dickens – *Gabriel Grub* and *The Bagman's Uncle*. The latter tells the tale of a ghostly ride in a derelict mail coach. He concluded with a slide of a young Queen Victoria.

Next **Helmut Wälde** presented his voyage of discovery leading to the *Excellent Art of Wrestling* and the *Leiden Aratea* that he describes in this issue's front-page article (see p. 1). **John and Jacqueline Townsend** then took us on a trip around London – or 'Here and There About London' according to the title slide – with a mix of Carpenter and Westley and unusual photographic slides. Among the views were Greenwich, the Brunels' Thames Tunnel, St Paul's Cathedral, the Royal Exchange, the Monument and the Great Fire of 1666 reaching the Tower of London, Nelson's 'Pillar' – laying the foundation stone of what became Nelson's Column in Trafalgar Square – the Exeter Change (a menagerie of wild and exotic animals in The Strand), and the Great Exhibition of 1851 in Hyde Park. Along the way John told the story of Cleopatra's Needle being shipped from Alexandria and how he pinpointed the location of the Egyptian Hall – where Albert Smith gave his *Ascent of Mont Blanc* slide presentation – to opposite the Royal Academy on Piccadilly. The second part of the show was a beautiful Carpenter and Westley set *A Child's Dream of the Zoo*, with Jacqueline giving the original reading. This took us back to Regent's Park and the zoo at night, in a dream, with all the animals behaving in surprising ways.



Lester Smith's RPI slides: *Gabriel Grub* (left) and *The Bagman's Uncle* (right)

healthy initial sales from the new book (*The Magic Lantern Dancer*) and income from new members and renewals going up. Costs of venues, printing and postage had risen, however a transfer from reserves led to the fairly sound overall position. By the end of the year membership stood at 285 (about 343 members in total) and Richard thanked **Jerry Fisher** the Membership Secretary for his work during the year. Subscription rates will not change for 2024. As Secretary, Richard reported no progress on either changing the MLS's status to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) or the proposed Convention in 2026. He commented that five people appear to organise about 90 per cent of the MLS's activities. **Ine van Dooren**, MLS archivist, reported that when sorting out the archive she had been struck by the impact of the magic lantern on people's lives as described in letters, etc. **Anastasia Kerameos** sent a report that the MLS Twitter (now X) account has 1,105 followers and she had started an overhaul of the website. **Jeremy Brooker**, Research Officer, commented on the MLS Awards (see *TML* 37) and urged more members from the UK and mainland Europe to consider applying in 2024. **Mary Ann Auckland** thanked all *TML* contributors and encouraged members



Richard Crangle (left), Richard Feltham (centre) and John Townsend (right)

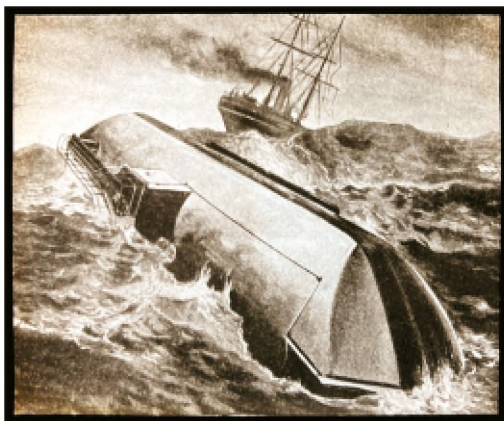
After lunch **Dick Moore**, joining us online from the US, gave us a porcine tale (tail) from (old) Hampshire composed of pig-themed slides from sets such as *Simon and His Pig*, long slide 'chases', pig-riding slides and many other sources, accompanied by every porcine joke and play on words possible. In the tale, the pig causes havoc in the village and is banished to the New Forest where he finds freedom, love and a very sophisticated lifestyle before returning to the farm.

The official business of the AGM followed this. The Chair, **Richard Feltham**, remarked on the amazing presentations during the year and the encouraging number of new members. He urged members to consider taking on some or all of the Secretary's role. **Richard Crangle** as Treasurer reported



A *Filoscope* (right) and a *Dick Moore* slide (below)





Transporting Cleopatra's Needle (left) and a slide from A Child's Dream of the Zoo (right)

to send in articles, especially ones suitable for the front page and about their magic lantern activities. She also reported on behalf of **George Auckland** that *Connect* had reached issue 93 and he hoped to revive *New Light on Old Media* (two issues subsequently published). Linda and Edgar Gibbs offered to be honorary auditors (accepted!), suggested more online Committee meetings to save costs and time, and asked about PayPal charges. **Matt Schnittker** (online) asked for more information about the website changes and commented that PayPal charges for non-profit organisations are lower. **Dominique Santens** suggested cutting back and carrying out only essential activities, given the lack of volunteers. The Committee, together with new member **Sandra Lawrence**, were re-elected.

Ian Christie then explored the relationship between early films and flip-books, beginning in Hatton Garden with Robert Paul manufacturing Kinetoscopes (not patented by Thomas Edison). In 1895, when Edison cut off supplies of loops, Henry Short introduced Paul to Birt Acres and they made a suitable camera – but then fell out. Short made films for Paul and re-invented the flip book as a 'Filoscope' in 1898. Some of Paul's lost films are contained in Filoscopes and Ian has been instrumental in restoring and re-animating examples from the Bill Douglas Collection, Exeter. Ian 'flipped' through one that was a version of Paul's 1896 *The Soldier's Courtship*, possibly the first fiction film in the world. He also discussed Léon Beaulieu and his *Scenes animées*, another type of 'improved' flip book, that featured lost films by Georges Méliès including his remake of the Lumière Brothers' train coming into a station.

Next **Bernd Scholze** told us about a late 18th-century 'ghost box' that he came across in the museum in Waldenburg. The purchaser in the 1790s was Johann Heinrich Linck who had a connection with Mr Schröpfer, demonstrator of ghost appearances in Leipzig. The maker was Heinrich Marcus Brunner from Nürnberg, a maker of strange machines, travelling showman, author, etc., who never made much money. The box was originally called 'phantasmorasi' – a term only used for a short time that appears to come from the popular phantasmagoria shows of Philipidor (Paul de Philipsthal) in Vienna. Brunner probably copied the concept via

that connection. Bernd has traced ghost boxes in Munich and Darmstadt museums but concludes that it was more a failed toy than a show device and probably did not seriously frighten the audience.

The 'Bring and Show' section began with two invitations – to exhibit magic lanterns at an event in the Black Country Living Museum in November, and to lend the National Gallery in London an 18th-century lantern and slides for an exhibition in 2025. **Robert MacDonald** showed a lavishly-illustrated new book on Stanhopes by Jean Scott and a less successful one on

panoramas where the fold-out pages are damaged if used. **Joss Marsh** and **David Francis** talked about the dissolving views exhibition and display of Kinoras and flip books at their museum in Deal, Kent (free cup of tea for MLS members!). **Peter Gillies** showed a slide with a photograph taken by pinhole camera and some intriguing puzzle slides. Finally **Robin Palmer** demonstrated a laser with diffraction grating and effects including a skull and chromatope-like grid.

The final presentation was about the *Lurline* Royal Polytechnic Institution (RPI) slides (see *TML* 37, p. 3), probably last projected in 1894 by Edmund Wilkie at the original Magic Lantern Society. **Huw Evans** told us about his family's connection. His great-grandfather, Walter Hibbert (1852-1935), a weaver from Manchester, came to the RPI for adult education classes and rose to become head of physics and engineering there. His son, Huw's grandfather Lawrence J. Hibbert, also worked there and was head of film and photography. In 1936 Louis Lumière visited for the 40th anniversary of the first cinematograph show, an event organised by Hibbert. It seems likely that he acquired the slides from Will Day then. For many years they remained in a box in a storage area next to Huw's bedroom.

Jeremy Brooker talked more about the RPI, the production and slides themselves. Unusually, **Martin Gilbert** has the actual words (*libretto*) that went with the slides in the form of Edmund Wilkie's personal annotated copy – a fund of information. The slides were part of the final 'big gesture' at the RPI in 1881 before it closed and Jeremy discussed the programme, the advertising, the people involved and the production itself, including *Lurline*. Some of the slides (13 x 11 inches) were made for an earlier production in 1867, enabling a comparison between artist W.R. Hill's early and late styles. Jeremy also compared them to the source engravings. He also emphasised that Hill's slides originally had special effects, now lost.

Finally **Frog Morris** narrated the tragic tale of Count Rupert, the siren *Lurline* and the wicked Bishop of Mentz. Martin Gilbert projected the legendary slides with an additional 'grotto' slide from another RPI set, courtesy of Lester Smith. What a magical end to the day.

THE MAGIC LANTERN is edited, designed and produced by Mary Ann Auckland and Gwen Sebus, assisted by Richard Crangle and George Auckland.

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Printed by Stormpress, Exeter – www.stormpress.co.uk

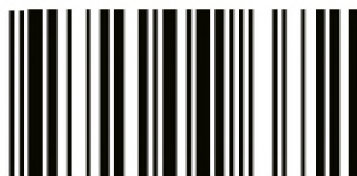
Published by:

The Magic Lantern Society
17 Dean Street
Exeter EX2 4HH, UK

www.magiclantern.org.uk

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ISSN 2057-3723



From left: Martin Gilbert, Frog Morris, Lester Smith (with slide), Jeremy Brooker and Huw Evans