

49TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE MAGIC LANTERN SOCIETY

THE MUSICAL MUSEUM, BRENTFORD, LONDON

Saturday 25 January 2025

Around 60 people joined us for the AGM and shows, using **Martin Gilbert's** triunial lantern throughout the day, including many members from mainland Europe. After an introduction from Chair **Richard Feltham** during which he remembered MLS members no longer with us – Stephen Bromfield, Tony Brown, David Cozens, Dennis Crompton, Margery Edwards and Kentwood Wells – **Richard Crangle** outlined the programme for the next quarterly meeting which, unusually, will not be in the UK but in Girona, Catalonia. This was illustrated by photographs of the city and some of the 'must-see' exhibits in the Cinema Museum



The polar expedition (top) and The Broken Pitcher from Dominique and Philippe's show



An example of a film title slide (of the Boer War 1899-1902) from Nick Hiley's presentation

where the meeting will be based (see TML 12 for their fantascope).

Next **Dominique Santens** and **Philippe Khazzaka**, with AI script assistance, showed a set of Wilhelm Busch's story of *Diogenes and the Naughty Boys of Corinth*. Then Dominique sang to life model slides of *Green Isle of Erin* (Ireland) followed by a polar expedition comprising a beautiful collection of slides featuring ships, polar bears, ice forms, sledging parties and concluding with an aurora over a street of igloos. They finished with Philippe singing accompanied by a life model set, *The Broken Pitcher* (1897).

We were treated to a sneaked video of Lester Smith being presented by Sir Paul McCartney with a memento on his recent retirement from Abbey Road Studios (see TML 41, p.2). Lester himself then showed a miscellany of larger format slides made by J. Barnard & Son. These were exteriors and interiors in the same style – some clearly from comic tales. Towards the end one was marked 'Plum Pudding' and then a series had a familiar title slide *Jack and the Beanstalk*. Lester would like to hear from anyone who knows more about them.

Nick Hiley took us forward to the dawn of cinema, starting with a reminder that W.C. Hughes, famous for his wonderful lanterns and slides, turned to making cinematographs in the 1890s. These doubled as magic lanterns so the projectionist could show the title on a glass slide while threading up the nitrate film. Nick showed early title slides such as *High Diving* (of people diving into the Baths of Diana in Milan – the film could be reversed to great amusement) and 'a phantom ride' (filmed from the front of a train). The next examples he showed related to the Boer War. The slides (called 'announcement slides' initially) were produced commercially – some of Nick's were by the Warwick Trading Co. – and cost 1s. 6d. for white lettering, 2s. for coloured. Slides had the advantage that the picture was stable, so the wording could be left on screen for longer. As the first films were viewed in a Kinetoscope 'box' with a title label on the outside, people were possibly used to the title being separate. Further examples included people leaving work and one fictional film title *The Despatch Bearer* (Mitchell and Kenyon, 1900). In some cases showpeople made their own slides. Nick had no examples beyond 1902 and has found no other film title slides in any collection. In later years lantern slides were used in cinemas for notices (e.g. 'ladies please remove your hats'), advertisements, etc.

After lunch the business part of the AGM began with Chair **Richard Feltham** reporting on a good variety of content at meetings during the year and the trip to the Netherlands in the summer. In his report Treasurer and Acting Secretary **Richard Crangle** commented that the MLS achieved what we intended in 2024 and balanced the books. He thanked **Keith Uttridge** for



Richard Crangle, Richard Feltham and John Townsend at the AGM



Lester with Martin's triunial (photo David Burder) (top) and 'Plum Pudding' from his show



Martin Gilbert and Juliette Harcourt count the CIO votes (photo Anastasia Kerameos)

storing publications, **Jerry Fisher** for the crucial task of Membership Secretary (Jerry was awarded a life membership on his retirement), **Edgar and Linda Gibbs** for auditing the accounts, and **Frog Morris** and **Anastasia Kerameos** for looking at the conversion of the MLS to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO – see below). He reported relatively stable membership numbers with new members nearly balancing those leaving. On the accounts, the largest rise in expenditure was due to increases in postage. Richard had added to 'committee travel' with two trips to the Projection Box in Hastings to collect book stock – but sales then accounted for the higher than predicted income from publications. He appealed for help with managing our stock. For the 2025 budget, he was expecting venue hire and postage increases. As a result, subscriptions were rising for the first time since 2013.



Jeremy Brooker browsing the market (photo Gwen Sebus)

Mary Ann Auckland reported on *Connect* and *New Light on Old Media*, the two online publications edited by **George Auckland**. Both have higher than average opening rates and contributors to *Connect* report good sales as a result. Mary Ann thanked *TML* co-editor **Gwen Sebus** and proofreader **Richard Crangle**, and encouraged members to contribute. **Nicole Mollett** reported on behalf of the online communications team of **Anastasia Kerameos**, **Sandra Lawrence** and herself. Thanks to Sandra the pre-Christmas period was very successful, running a story on *The Home of Santa Claus*. Nicole encouraged people to let them know about their shows and share photographs and other content. She also invited people to follow the MLS on *BlueSky* – the MLS is currently not active on X (a show of hands supported this position). **Jeremy Brooker** then spoke for him and **Martin Gilbert** in highlighting the difficulty of filling meeting programmes and how short presentations would be welcome. As Research Officer, Jeremy spoke about the MLS Awards and thanked **Ina van Dooren** and **Frog Morris** for assessing entries to a very tight timetable. Finding the balance between rewarding work done and encouraging new work is an ongoing dilemma (see *TML* 41, p.4 for 2024 winners).

Next the meeting considered the proposal to change the MLS to a CIO. **Richard Crangle** explained the main reason was to give the MLS some legal standing for a more secure future, particularly in banking. A working group of the Committee concluded that an association-type CIO was the best solution. Advantages include limited liability, enabling collaboration with more organisations and the option of claiming Gift Aid. Points raised included the possible need for professional help, training for trustees and additional administration. A vote was then taken among those in the room and online or via email. Of the 83 votes cast, 76 were in favour, 2 against and 5 abstentions, so the motion was carried. During 2024 **Keith Uttridge** had retired from the



The Castel Sant'Angelo in Rome



Martin, Sandra and 'morning breaking' (photo Gwen Sebus)

Committee and **Matt Schnitker** was co-opted on. The Committee was re-elected with the addition of new member **Dominique Santens**.

Next **Jeremy and Carolyn Brooker** and **Martin Gilbert** gave us the great fires of London and three in particular – Cheapside (see p.1), Jewin Street (1897) and the Barbican (1902), all near St Paul's Cathedral. Along with Jeremy's analysis, they projected some



From the steam train sequence

spectacular dissolving effects, one section accompanied by **Annea Lockwood's** artwork *Piano Burning* (for real).

Deac Rossell followed up the lead article in *TML* 41 ('The Ganz Lanterns') by discussing a small book *Das Pinakoskop* by **J. Scherer** from 1886. This was most unusual for its time because it was about only that one particular lantern, albeit very well known and admired. Deac recommended **Thomas Ganz's** 1994 book on magic lanterns.

The meeting was brought to a close by a truly amazing selection of dissolving views and many other magical moments – again a 'last show' from **Martin Gilbert**, assisted by **Sandra Lawrence**. Among other treats we went to Rome and Venice, boarded a steam train, attended the Mandarin's Dinner Party, saw old favourites like the changing seasons and the watermill, witnessed the Smugglers' Cove and finally saw the Royal Yacht go through Tower Bridge.

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

Letters to the Editors can be sent by email to: editor@magiclantern.org.uk

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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

