

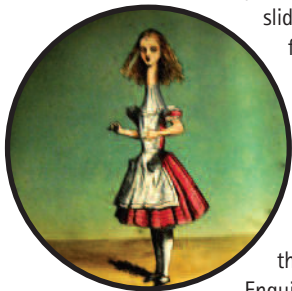


AUTUMN MEETING OF THE MAGIC LANTERN SOCIETY

BIRMINGHAM AND MIDLAND INSTITUTE, MARGARET STREET, BIRMINGHAM
Saturday 10 October 2015

Fifty-one members and guests attended, fourteen apologies.

In July 1865, the Rev. Charles Dodgson received the first disappointing copies of his children's book *Alice in Wonderland*. The printing was so poor that they were immediately scrapped. So it was only with the second printing in November that this publishing phenomenon really took off, launching what is today an entire Alice-related industry. The Society marked this 150th anniversary in style, beginning the day with a presentation by the inimitable Janet Tamblin and her daughter Bobbie. Together they created a spellbinding entertainment combining hand-painted slides from both the Alice books with those by less familiar figures like Henry Taunt, who echoed the dark, fantastical themes of Carroll's imagination.



The day continued with something of a curiosity – a set of magic lantern slides produced by NASA in the 1970s describing aspects of the Apollo space programme. Enquiries to the NASA archives have failed to discover why these slides were made, or whether they were produced in any quantity, or indeed anything very informative! This intriguing mystery was presented by Richard Rigby on behalf of Willem Hackman who was unable to attend.



Mary Ann Auckland took the podium after lunch with a set of beautiful lantern slides hand-coloured by her great grandmother, the famous botanist and author Julia Wilmotte Henshaw. Anyone would be proud to have such a remarkable predecessor – vice-president of the Canadian Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire and recipient of the Croix de Guerre with Gold Star for her bravery during WW1.



As an experiment, members were next invited to introduce one or two favourite slides. It would be invidious to single out individual contributions, but such an enjoyable and informal addition to the programme is certain to become a regular feature of future meetings. It was particularly enjoyable to hear the personal stories which lay behind the selections – seeing slides through the eyes of their presenters.



This was nicely complemented by Lester Smith in his occasional series 'Connections and Stories'. In the first part, Lester shared some views of the fishing industry of St Ives, just a stone's throw from the sadly defunct Barnes Museum of Cinematography, shown alongside some photographs taken more recently on the same spot taken by Stephen Herbert. This was followed by some beautiful Irish views by Edmund Wilkie and exceptional painted slides by W.H. Hill, and a group of slides related to the famous HMV dog, 'Nipper'. The programme finished with a delightful Mutoscope film: 740 individual frames all individually copied to create a film miniature just 25 seconds long!



Martin Gilbert next stepped in as a last minute replacement for his parents Ray and Pat. We wish them a speedy recovery and look forward to seeing their presentation at some

future time. This was an unexpected treat – an entire programme made up from shadow and silhouette slides. These included delicate slides made out of cut brass, hand shadows and beautiful hand-painted caricatures. There was even a representation of that most famous



of all shadow entertainments, the 'Broken Bridge'.

The day closed as it began with a tribute to Alice in Wonderland, with digital projections by Joost Hunnigher of the famous slides first used at the Royal Polytechnic Institution in London in 1876. Painted by W.R. Hill, these giant slides are now housed in the National Media Museum in Bradford, and can be viewed on their website. According to Carroll's diary, the original entertainment lasted an hour and a quarter and in addition to the dissolving views included stage scenes acted in mime while the dialogue was read by an off-stage narrator to satisfy licensing conditions of the theatre. Carroll must have been impressed. He attended the Polytechnic show three times, in April and twice in June 1876.

This was the last full meeting chaired by our esteemed chairman George Auckland, who entered into the spirit of the day with a touch of fancy dress. I am sure all members will thank George for his tireless efforts on behalf of the Society and join your editor's wish that he will continue to share his expertise and wisdom with us for many years to come.

Jeremy Brooker



Photos by Gwen Sebus and Nicolle Mallet

THE MAGIC LANTERN is edited, designed and produced by Jeremy Brooker, Gwen Sebus and Dennis Crompton assisted by Annie Bridges.

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