

# THE 42<sup>ND</sup> ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE MAGIC LANTERN SOCIETY THE MUSICAL MUSEUM, LONDON *Saturday 20 January 2018*

Over 50 members of the Magic Lantern Society met for January's Annual General Meeting at the Musical Museum in Brentford. Our Chairman, **Jeremy Brooker**, summed up the year as a great one for magic lanterns but certainly one tinged with sadness.

Initiatives such as the Lucerna database and the multinational *A Million Pictures* project have focussed interest and inspired a new generation to look creatively at the magic lantern. Museums and institutions have paid renewed attention to their collections and students are exploring the lantern's important



(l to r) Secretary, Chair, Deputy Chair



role in a social and historical context. This has also resulted in a number of new members joining the Society.

Jeremy thanked the Committee and picked out some highlights from the Society's three meetings held during the year as well as the 10th International Convention on the theme of *Music and the Magic Lantern*. Reports on all these are in *The Magic Lantern* (issues 10–13). He also reported that the Kent Museum of the Moving Image in Deal run by **Joss Marsh** and **David Francis** (see *The Magic Lantern* issue 12) was open for three weekends over the Christmas period and attracted a steady stream of interested visitors.

During 2017 we sadly lost a number of major figures in the magic lantern world including **Mervyn Heard**, **Dick Balzer**, **Werner Nekes**, **Jack Judson**, **John and Liz Horton**, **Eunice Elsbury** and **Anita Sancha (Lear)**. Among comments raised from the floor, members suggested another meeting in Europe and pointed out that the Netherlands has two museums dedicated to the magic lantern.



Tony Dugdale

A key figure in the Magic Lantern Society stepped down from the Committee and from the many roles he has carried out over the past 40 years. **Dennis Crompton** is a near founder member and has been the key person in the Society's communications – recording meetings and conventions, masterminding all our print production and organising its distribution. Past-chairman **Tony Dugdale** marked the occasion with a short speech. He and Dennis go back 50 years as colleagues in

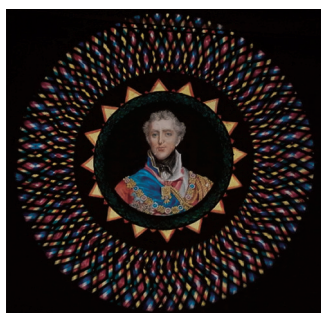


Dennis in usual disguise



With John Finney, Swedenborg

the architectural world. He described Dennis as the Society's 'invisible man' because he is usually disguised with headphones, behind a camera or hidden away in a projection booth. However our extraordinary visual archive over the whole history of the Society is due to Dennis. Tony apologised to Dennis for appointing him MLS technical editor as 120 journals, 10 books, several chairmen and editors later, he couldn't possibly have imagined what he was getting into! The visual and organisational standard of these has been amazing and is down exclusively to Dennis and his small team. He is neither a collector, nor a scholar of magic lanterns. In his spare time Dennis is a RIBA gold-medal winning architect as part of Archigram, the avant-garde group of six young architects formed in the early 1960s. Everyone joined Tony in saying a huge 'thank you' to Dennis for his outstanding contribution – a very hard act indeed to follow.



Duke of Wellington



Richard Rigby and Robin Palmer with a lantern they restored

After lunch **Lester Smith** presented a rare treat – some of his large-format Royal Polytechnic Institution slides



Lester Smith's Royal Polytechnic Institution slides – Aladdin and Baron Munchausen (x2)



Monique at the lantern



projected via their custom-built lantern. The first set was *Aladdin* from 1868. This was originally a set of 20 of which eight survive. **Juliette Harcourt** narrated the story including a scene where the evil magician, having tricked Aladdin's princess into swapping the old lamp for new, falls over some children and drops his stash of lamps. Aladdin snatches back the old one, summons the genie and leaves him to decide the true owner.



The next section was six slides from *Baron Munchausen* with **Nick Hiley** narrating. These were shown from Christmas 1864 to March 1865 and again in 1875 for a last performance. The first slide was a very rare animated slide (see page 15) with the Baron caught between a ferocious lion and a hungry crocodile (needless to say the one eats the other and not the Baron). Others featured a plum pudding tree on Christmas Island, a combat with a mad coat and the mighty Colossus of Rhodes coming to congratulate the Baron. The show ended with three slides – *Christmas Eve at the Manor Farm* from the *Pickwick Papers* (signed 'OB' 1875), the old Christmas custom of the arrival of the boar's head at Aston Hall, Birmingham, and finally a giant chromatrope featuring the Duke of Wellington.

In **Patrice Guérin's** absence, **Richard Crangle** gave a brief introduction to Patrice's new book – the first of his four-part work on the history of the Molteni Company. This business was established in 1782 and became the leading 19th-century manufacturer of projection equipment (see review, page 14). Next **Monique Wezenberg**, helped by **Martin Gilbert**, gave a show based on fairy tales with a twist – *Truth or dare, lies and deceptions*. She explained that she is not a collector but loves to tell stories – normally in Dutch! At the start, a fearsome nose grinder gave new meaning to the phrase "nose to the grindstone". Pirates appeared with ships at sea, lighthouses, lightning and thunder. Drawing inspiration from *Scheherazade*, her tricked sultan and the *1001 Arabian Nights* we had various stories. Frogs featured heavily – as can be expected – including one with a dreadful online dating profile of Prince Charming who turned out to be a real Catfish. After *Hansel and Gretel* we had *Cinderella* – both based on Roald Dahl's poems – so the sisters lost their heads and Cinderella sensibly married a jam maker. One lovely dissolve *The Enchanted Forest* (**Martin Gilbert** collection) featured two children trapped in a fairytale wood facing various perils – lions, a snake, night and snow. Luckily a fairy was on hand.



The Bring and Show section focussed on animated slides and even included one of a Chinese water scene (akin to the Virginia Water slides) that **Lester Smith** had sold that morning! **Robin Palmer** projected a beautiful steam/sail ship voyaging from Dover to Calais in 100 turns – a mechanical panoramic slipper by E. H. Wilkie. Next a ship sailed from Liverpool to Ireland (**Pat and Ray Gilbert** collection) followed by another Wilkie mechanical slide – a paddle steamer going to a fully-illuminated Blackpool. We also had a saucy slipper slide of a bathing machine as well as a remarkable Donald Trump lookalike and an Ernst Plank nose-growing slide (picking up the theme from earlier).



As has become the tradition, we ended with a sing-along accompanied by song slides and the mighty Wurlitzer. In time-honoured fashion our own **Juliette Harcourt** rose majestically with the Wurlitzer and led the singing accompanied by **Chris Barber** who was playing. **Keith Uttridge** provided the song slides, including 'If I



should plant a tiny seed of love', 'Keep the home fires burning' and 'You left me for the limelight'. We finished with some rousing choruses – 'Good-bye-ee', 'Let's all go down the Strand', 'Who were you with last night?' and 'Down at the old Bull and Bush'. Great entertainment, enjoyed by all.

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

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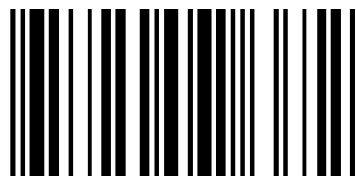
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Juliette Harcourt, Chris Barber and the mighty Wurlitzer bringing the AGM to a rousing close

