

## OBITUARY

### PATRICIA GILBERT (1941–2022)

Pat was born and brought up in the little-known town of Heckmondwike, in a part of West Yorkshire once famous for its woollen industry. Pat won a scholarship to the highly-regarded grammar school there. She was a proud leader of the local Girls' Friendly Society, passed her first piano exam at the age of six and played the church organ for the catechism class, funerals and christenings. In her younger days she also danced with the local pantomime troupe each Christmas, a time-consuming activity. At the age of seven she was taught the art of embroidery by a relative and, around then, the skills of dressmaking by a neighbour. All these became passions that she carried on, and excelled in, throughout her full and active life.

Pat's interest in magic lanterns began with her father. He was a member of the Spen Valley Literary and Scientific Society. Their photographic branch owned a lantern and some slides, the most interesting of these being a set put together by the local librarian – 'Characters of the Spen Valley'. Pat had been a junior member, attending the Saturday evening lectures and summer rambles, and writing a report on their events for the local paper. Years later Pat's father Denis Ratcliffe brought the slides back to life and gave a series of very successful lectures. Pat, now an MLS member, encouraged her father to present one at an MLS meeting and so he did – 'Ten Shillings, Five Shillings and a Pennyworth of Broken Chocolate' delivered in his best Yorkshire dialect and with dry humour at a Birmingham meeting in October 1992, to the acclaim of MLS members present. A version of this lecture had been broadcast on BBC North television in 1984 when presented by the late John Jones, a founder member of the MLS.

Pat and Ray Gilbert have been members of the MLS since 1983 and performed with their family giving lantern shows under the name 'Gilberts' Galantee Show'. Pat, alone or with the family, has been a regular performer at many MLS meetings and conventions over the years. Her last performance was in October 2018 when she teamed up with Pat Spencer to give a very knowledgeable lantern presentation – 'The Two Pats go Brontë'. This was a lifelong passion of hers as her town, Heckmondwike, was in the heart of Brontë country.

A very keen and active member of the Society, Pat always enjoyed the meetings. She was never far from a market stall when there were slides to be purchased or members she could talk to. She built up many lifelong friendships within the Society and had numerous fond MLS memories but two were especially important to her. The first was the special MLS meeting in the



Deutsches Filmmuseum, Frankfurt, Germany, in September 2012, when the family performed their infamous 'Magical Moments' show. The other was watching her granddaughter Emily and son Martin perform at the prestigious after-dinner show at the 2017 MLS Convention in Birmingham. They presented their phantasmagoria show 'I am Pulsing the Blood in your Veins', along with 14 Irish dancers – a spectacle that she, and probably all those members there, would never forget. Pat rarely missed an opportunity to mention that Emily is the fourth generation of lanternists within the family, a fact of which she was immensely proud.

Although Pat qualified for university, she opted instead for teacher training college as she had set her heart on primary school teaching. Pat trained at Padgate College in North Cheshire where she met Ray and, together, they enjoyed 54 years of happily married life. She also had a primary school career of which she could be justly proud and spent her last 20 years of teaching in two assessment centres in Lichfield for emotionally and behaviourally disturbed children, excluded from mainstream education.

Pat passed away on 13 January and the funeral service in early February was taken by MLS member the Reverend Peter Spencer whose close personal connection with the family made it a very fitting farewell. The Society was well represented and, as you would expect, there was a little 'magic lantern' thrown in for good measure.

*Martin Gilbert*

