



THE SPECIAL MEETING AT IBSTOCK

SATURDAY 4 JUNE 2016

Mary Ann Auckland

Nearly 30 members and guests found their way to the Palace Cinema in Ibstock, near Leicester, for a special meeting organised by John Finney. In suitable costume, John welcomed us and gave a brief history of the building. It opened as the Picture Palace on 3 January 1913 – probably one of the first purpose-built cinemas in the country. Seat prices were: balcony 9d, pit stalls 4d and pit 3d. According to the

1952 *Kinematograph Year Book* the Palace had by then 520 seats – prices were now 2s and 1s – and put on one show nightly, two on Saturday, and had two changes weekly. On 1 January 1970 the cinema closed with *The Jungle Book* and after a period as a bingo hall, shut down altogether. After restoration, it re-opened for functions and multiple entertainments in September 2006.



We were royally entertained on the day too. Jan and Richard Rigby gave us a rendition of the melodrama *The Fireman's Wedding*. The audience were provided with coconut shells, bells and crinkly foil to supply the sound effects. Keith and Jennifer Uttridge then set a fiendish quiz with the 'missing words round' foxing most of us but not Richard Crangle who was the clear winner. John Finney, with Jan's help, gave us the sad tale of the tipsy geese who overdid the cherry brandy, ending up plucked and needing flannel jackets.

Next Robin Palmer showed us scenes of London – part of a set of over 80 slides judging by the numbers he had acquired. They featured Westminster Abbey, Trafalgar Square, the Embankment, St Paul's and a detailed tour round the Albert Memorial. What followed was possibly a 'first' with Richard Rigby and Keith Uttridge putting on an unrehearsed back-projected phantasmagoria show – with some horrifyingly good results. Volunteers then had a turn and all agreed we should do this again.

Lester Smith gave a show featuring cats in various guises. Some were surprisingly obliging to pose in elaborate outfits... A selection of information and advertising slides, including several 'coming soon' cinema slides, from John Finney took us to possibly a 'last'. Andrew Gill put on a wonderful programme including the multi-tissue stories of *Billy's Rose* and *The Doctor's Fee*, the salutary tale of the *Wet Paint*, the tragic *Loss of the Titanic*, some spectacular chromatropes and finally *The Lost Chord*.

The day finished with a nostalgic history of sweets from Kevin Varty. This revealed a lifelong interest, possibly rivalling magic lanterns for some in the audience.

We learnt that some, like Kendal mint cake, began as accidents, that 'unclaimed babies' and 'peace babies' were forerunners of jelly babies and that Wagon Wheels are larger (the original size) in Australia than here. A memorable day – well done, thank you John!

