THE 43rd ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE MAGIC LANTERN SOCIETY

The Musical Museum, London

Saturday 26 January 2019

Around 50 members of the Magic Lantern Society gathered for the AGM at the Musical Museum in Brentford, with more members and guests joining for the afternoon session.

Our Chairman, **Jeremy Brooker** (left), started with a summary of 2018. Two of the four meetings had 'special' themes – the April meeting was a memorial to Mervyn Heard and Dick Balzer and the October meeting focused on women and the magic lantern. Both comprised a larger-than-normal number of short presentations and members agreed this had been a very successful and enjoyable format, one to repeat alongside more relaxed programmes, such as the summer meeting at Lacey Green.

Jeremy acknowledged the work of the Committee and thanked both **Martin Gilbert** and **Jeremy Fisher** for taking on the roles of Meetings Manager and Membership Secretary, respectively. However more volunteers are needed, especially to be editor of *New Light on Old Media*. He thanked the publications and social media editors. Juliette Harcourt reported that Facebook 'likes' were two short of 500 [now passed] and encouraged members to join.

Frog Morris (top), Lester Smith and Helmut Wälde looking for bargains in the market

Bernd Scholze's purchase (left) and Iasi in Romania where Roth gave a show (below)

Among the other highlights of the year, the Chairman mentioned the opening of Kent MOMI in Deal, the *US and Canada MLS Convention* in April and the auction of Mervyn Heard's collection in July. He highlighted the success of the *Million Pictures* project, now finished, the start of the *B-magic* project and the joint meeting with the MLS in April at which Jeremy and Carolyn Brooker will be giving a show (see pp.1 and 11). He paid tribute to a number of members who have died over the past year, including **Ricky Jay, John Burgess, Thomas Ganz** and **Jan Rigby** (see opposite). Jeremy and the rest of the Committee were re-elected for another year. **Richard Crangle**, the Secretary/Treasurer, took us through the intricacies of the accounts which he reported as being in a healthy state. In view of this **Andrew Gill**, from the floor, suggested an 'introductory offer' for new members to encourage recruitment (see p.2).

After lunch **Bernd Scholze** gave us an update on his research into Imrich Emanuel Roth (1814-1885) who saw the magic lantern as an ambassador connecting different cultures and religions. Roth was Jewish, born in modern-day Slovakia, and trained to be an artist in Vienna, Düsseldorf and Budapest. He almost certainly saw the shows of Leopold Ludwig Döbler (1801-1864) in Budapest. Döbler had commissioned a lantern and slides from the Polytechnic Institute but the slides were not finished and, although people loved the shows, they reported that the quality of the slides could have been better. Roth painted his own slides, including dissolving views (e.g. Holyrood Chapel by day and night), from 1844. He gave three shows in Budapest – during the third the audience never stopped clapping so they could not hear the orchestra. From there, in 1845, he went on to Romania, Transylvania, Odessa and Constantinople (Istanbul) – the first person to give such shows in this part of Europe.

Stephen Herbert and the elephant disc

While in Constantinople, the heart of the Ottoman Empire, Roth gave a show at the wedding of the Sultan's youngest sister in a temporary theatre built in the palace. The Sultan loved it and two days later Roth gave a show to the harem! With a letter of recommendation, he then went to Alexandria where he was asked to repeat the complete show as soon as he'd finished. Four days later he gave another show with the Marina Orchestra before sailing on to Cairo. Roth gave the first shows in Asia and Africa as well as entertaining people from many different backgrounds and religions.

Bernd then produced, from behind the curtain, a recently-purchased large phantasmagoria lantern made in England and dating from 1805-1810. With its own original stand on wheels it matched the image of Philidor's lantern from the same period. He also showed a very different small German-made lantern from 1800-1805. We are looking forward to hearing more about all Bernd's researches in the future.

Next **Stephen Herbert** told us about his recent work on Eadweard Muybridge's zoopraxiscopes at Kingston Museum. Muybridge used the zoopraxiscope in his lectures to animate his images of animals and people moving. These were placed around the perimeter of a disc with slots, both picture and slot width being adjustable. At Kingston they have the original zoopraxiscope and two replicas, one of which

Three of Reg Bosley's panoramic slides: a fire in Algiers, a shipwreck and London Bridge with St Paul's in the background

was commissioned as a working model for MOMI – where Stephen kept it in working order. Now the lamphouse needed updating and the replica required running repairs to function. A short film showed how this was achieved, including the creation of the disc of an elephant walking, made from a transparency of the Muybridge original, that worked perfectly. Stephen then took two patterns from the base of a zoetrope – spheres and eyes – and made these into zoopraxiscope discs. The spheres in particular showed the distortion ('squashing') of the image projected by the zoopraxiscope. The replica had to go back to Kingston – so Stephen made one for himself out of Meccano! *(see his YouTube channel: Horipet)*

Carol Owens followed with the story of how she made the film *Marion at Bamforth's* shown at the autumn meeting (see *TML* 17). In 1978, as Carol Gregory, she was a final year student in Fine Art at Leeds University, and her tutor John Jones (of MLS fame) suggested she investigate Bamforth's as a potential film subject. He put her in touch with a child model from the early 1900s – Marion Barrowclough (née Leake). Marion had fond memories of Bamforth's and appeared in many slides and postcards. James Bamforth had founded the company in Holmfirth in 1870 and involved the whole community as the company tried to use real people rather than actors. Carol found the slide set of the song 'Daddy' particularly striking, featuring Marion and her real father wearing their own clothes (see p.10). Marion recalled singing the song at lantern lectures. The realism has led to Bamforth slides being seen as a social commentary on life in hard-working communities like Holmfirth. By the time Carol visited in 1978 the town was again famous through the BBC series *Last of the Summer Wine* launched in 1973.

Robin Palmer's slide with man and crumpled hat

After tea the 'Bring and Show' section featured two items. First **Allan and Irene Marriott** urged us to visit the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam which has a wide variety of magic lantern slides in its collection. These range from 12-inch dioramas, including one of the British fleet being defeated in the Medway, to long slides, slipping slides, phantasmagoria slides and slides showing trades such as weaving, glass-blowing and coopering (making barrels). **Robin Palmer** showed one extraordinary slide – a silhouette operated by levers of an angry man with an umbrella who takes against his hat so beats it … until it crumples flat!

Reg Bosley then treated us to a 'plethora of panoramic processions' on sea, land and air. In these the background remains stationary and the procession passes through it – but the odd panorama slide, where the background moves too, did slip in. Setting sail for Europe we saw the parting of the Red Sea, a fire in Algiers, a 'scene near Rome' with walkers, donkey and cattle on the bank and boats in the water, Lake Maggiore, a sleigh ride in Bavaria (with pursuing wolves) and a railway viaduct among other fine sights. Leaving mainland Europe, and passing the Longships Lighthouse on a particularly busy shipping day, we saw conga-dancing monks in County Kildare and barges going under London Bridge with St Paul's in the background. The presentation came to an end with a biplane flying over a landscape (and back again, aerobatic style), witches in flight with their familiars, musical skeletons and a sailing ship overtaken by homemade speedboat, waterskier and Loch Ness Monster. Reg thanked his assistants, Robin Palmer and Allan Marriott, for their invaluable help – the sliding glass is around 15 inches long, largely unsupported and very fragile.

The meeting closed in our traditional style with the incomparable **Juliette Harcourt** rising with the Wurlitzer played by **Chris Barber** and singing a range of songs from slides projected by **Keith Utteridge**. Juliette gave us nine songs in a row, including 'Chick Chick Chicken', 'She's a Lassie from Lancashire', 'Daisy, Daisy', 'Arcady' and 'California (Here I Come)' before pausing. Chris then told us this was sadly his last year at the Museum, before closing the show with Reginald Dixon's signature song 'I Do Like to Be Beside the Seaside' which everyone joined in. Another bravura performance all round!

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

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