

45TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE MAGIC LANTERN SOCIETY

23 January 2021

Only a month after our 'Zooming up to Christmas' get-together (see p.14) 62 members of the Society met again virtually for the AGM, with Martin Gilbert hosting and Frog Morris making everything happen. Our Chair Jeremy Brooker introduced proceedings from the 'Oval Office' echoing the recent handover of the US Presidency. However later we voted to amend the MLS Constitution to extend the chair's tenure by a year in exceptional circumstances, such as the current pandemic – so no handover in the MLS this year.

Jeremy showed the agenda for the inaugural meeting of the MLS on 23 October 1976, with Sir George Pollock performing a live presentation of *Transformations* – the subject of the film discussed by Linda Gibbs later on – and a show by one Jeremy Brooker with Janet Tamblin. Jeremy also talked about the difficulty of projecting with a magic lantern in the Royal Albert Hall with its natural light from the roof and structural challenges – a feat achieved by Charles Goodwin Norton. Jeremy thanked the many members who, in similar vein, have overcome current challenges and given us excellent shows online.

Next Pippa Stacey shared a film of her stunning homemade glass chromatropes, one projected onto her (friendly) neighbour's house. She printed the designs on glass, fired them in a kiln and cut them out – some she coloured – then mounted them in 'spare' frames supplied by Richard Rigby. The finished products gave a new dimension to this traditional magic lantern art form. From the USA Dick Moore then gave his presentation on *Ally Sloper* (see p. 6).

The formal part of the AGM began with Jeremy thanking various people including your *TML* team, the MLS Committee, George Auckland for *Connect*, Ine van Dooren and Lydia Jakobs for judging the MLS Awards (see *TML* 24) and especially Richard Crangle for his work as Secretary and Treasurer. Richard reported that membership was holding

up with many recent new members and that, due to savings on meeting costs, a 25 per cent reduction in the subscription had been agreed for all renewals



One of Pippa Stacey's handmade chromatropes using Richard Rigby's casing

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A slide from Andrew Gill's *The Reward for Honesty* (left) and Sir George Pollock at the meeting in 1976 (right)

due in 2021. He successfully ran three votes via Zoom on changes to the Constitution, and Nicholas Hiley and Monique Wezenberg formally joined the MLS Committee.

Monique then told us the story of Peter Bonnet (1896-1979), a magic lantern collector from an early age, who founded the Laterna Magica Museum, in the beautiful northern Dutch city of Sloten, to house his collection. Nowadays this is in the Museum of Sloten. Among the items are very rare early 18th-century (although originally dated early 19th-century) Musschenbroek slides including four lever-action moving examples – one a lanternist with a magic lantern on his back. Linda Gibbs then talked about Sir George Pollock (1928-2016, see *TML* 8 obituary) and the making of *Transformations* which can be viewed via the website.

For his now regular live presentation, Lester Smith showed us some rare early optical illusions – both paper and porcelain. These transformed when lit from the front and then the back. Among the images on semi-transparent paper young Queen Victoria turned into a family picture with Prince Albert, Mount Vesuvius erupted and St Paul appeared preaching. The porcelain lithophanes included Napoleon on horseback and Scheherazade. Andrew Gill then gave us three very different shows. The first was life model set *The Level Crossing* with an unusually sympathetic treatment of pregnancy outside marriage; next a Bamforth song set of *Goodbye Dolly Gray* (from the Boer War not WW1) that included the second verse telling of the death in battle of Dolly's sweetheart; and finally, a comic set *The Reward for Honesty* recounted a chain of well-intentioned mistakes that ended in chaos – and in front of the magistrate.

We returned to the USA for *Phantasmagoria* – a work in progress from Dawn Elliott and Joel Schlemowitz that won the MLS Dick Balzer Award (*TML* 25). Dawn and Joel had built their own fantascopes (complete with wheels), hand-painted their own slides based on originals and made projectable puppets in order to recreate a phantasmagoria show. With plenty of skeletons, witches, graves and appropriate sound effects, this was a real treat.

The evening was brought to a close with a set of song slides from the collection of Henk Boelmans Kranenburg that was supposed to be a 'surprise' at the end of the Christmas meeting (modern technology, eh?!) – *Someday, Somewhere, We'll Meet Again*. How we are looking forward to that! You can see the following via 'past events' on the MLS website:

- *The Rural Idyll* by Delia and Peter Gillies
- *Peter Bonnet and his fascination for the magic lantern*
- *The Diverting History of John Gilpin* by Mary Ann Auckland
- *Transformations* photography and production by George Pollock and Michael Tickner, presentation by Linda and Edgar Gibbs