



ZOOMING TOWARDS CHRISTMAS ... AGAIN

18 December 2021

Although we had met in person for the autumn meeting (see *TML* 29), as 2020's Christmas Zoom special proved so popular, we repeated this extra meeting online in 2021. Many countries were once again facing restrictions in December due to the new Covid variant and an MLS meeting proved an excellent way to raise spirits with some seasonal treats. After all, in days gone by, Christmas was the height of the magic lantern season. Nearly 60 members joined in, enjoyed some great shows and a chat afterwards. The main shows (all now available to members via the MLS website 'past events') were:

- *Introduction – plus more!* by **Jeremy Brooker**
- *Zooming into the Cratchit family at Christmas Eve* by **Monique Wezenberg**
- *Feux Pyriques* by **Ditmar Bollaert**
- *A short discussion about Christmas in the light of Austrian research* by **Felix Cikanek and Elli Jegel**
- *Neapolitan Nights video sing along* by **Henk Boelmans Kranenburg**

An upside-down **Jeremy Brooker** with twitching moustaches and Daliesque background welcomed everyone and talked about the 1936 International Surrealist Exhibition in London, at which Salvador Dalí appeared for his lecture in a full diving suit (from which he had to be rescued) and gave a pastiche magic lantern lecture with magic lantern jokes (hence the upside down appearance – although Dalí's images were no more comprehensible either way up).

Next **Monique Wezenberg** with her biunial gave us part of Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol*. She had edited her beautiful Newton & Co.

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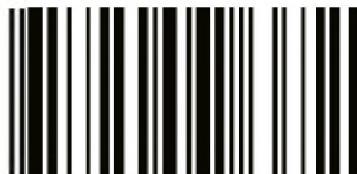
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60-slide set (drawn by Harold Copping), as suggested in Newton's catalogue, and projected the Spirit of Christmas Present's visit to the Cratchit family. Thanks to the technology we could clearly see both Monique and the images on the screen.

Ditmar Bollaert then introduced his video of the 'feux pyriques' cabinet in action. This was acquired by his father Herman about 20 years ago (see *TML* 29, p. 1 for the story) but he had never shown it. Ditmar brought it back to life spectacularly in the 'House of Mysteries' at the 2021 Ghent Light Festival in November. Ditmar then talked with Monique about the cabinet and the difficulty of projecting the enormous (1.2m high) 200-year-old images.

Next came a welcome return to Austria and the Laterna Magica Theater of **Felix Cikanek** and **Elli Jegel** with their analysis of Christmas fuelled by a fine bottle of gin (with blue devil and lightning). After discussing some elements of Christmas – angels, the Holy Spirit, animals, the comet and Santa Claus (who was, of course, Austrian but migrated north due to lack of reindeer in Austria) – they concluded that the essential symbol was a candle, lit by Edelweiss matches.

Henk Boelmans Kranenburg from the Toverlantaarnmuseum in Scheveningen concluded the shows with a beautiful song set from the Quality Slide Company of Chicago – 'Neapolitan Nights' ('Oh Nights of Splendour'). This was the theme song of *Fazil*, a 1928 Howard Hawks movie, but the song was already popular by the time the film was made, at the dawn of the 'talkies'. Henk was therefore not sure how the slides were used. The set featured a Vesuvius eruption effect and some rather Venetian-looking gondolas.



Bob Cratchit with Tiny Tim (left) and Mrs Cratchit with a (rather small) Christmas pudding (right) from Monique Wezenberg's presentation