

## FROM THE CHAIR

*Richard Feltham*

What an amazing meeting we had in Girona, accompanied by great weather. This was my first visit to the museum – and I hope to go back again. Sergi's show on Saturday evening was greatly enhanced by the use of two magic lanterns (I may be biased) and hugely appreciated by members of the public as well as the MLS. The Sunday trip to Figueres to visit the Salvador Dalí Museum was an eye opener into aspects of his work that I had not appreciated, particularly his jewellery (again I might be biased) which is stunning. A very big 'thank you' to all those who organised and took part in a very successful event. I am looking forward to future quarterly meetings outside the UK.

It is good to see a steady intake of new members. I encourage you, if you can attend a meeting, to come and introduce yourself to me – or even consider giving a show or presentation (and the latter applies to all members!). Magic lantern slides cover an extremely wide range of subjects so other members' interests are always fascinating. If you need help giving a show, expert support is on hand. Please get in touch, whether you have a fully-fledged show or just an idea for one.

### Questions Answered

#### *How do I restore the colour to a Russian iron lantern?*

This is a question that I was asked recently. Russian iron was made by assembling sheets of iron into 'books' with either coke or charcoal. It was then heated to a high temperature before being treated in an acid bath, which produced its distinctive colour. The best method that I have found to date is 'cold bluing' using gun blue (search the internet for where to buy and how to use it). This method requires the piece to be cleaned and polished before applying the gun blue. I recommend practising before trying it out on your precious lantern. If you are not



confident, I suggest using a rust converter. This will blacken rust spots and improve the appearance.

#### *Do you have any tips for a show?*

Here are my five top tips:

1. Pick a subject or set of slides that inspires you and you know well.
2. Start the show with an attention grabber – and remember that the audience's attention can wander quickly. The odd slide upside down or back to front can often bring them back, rather than be a problem (other attention grabbers are available).
3. Always check that the slides are in the correct order and the correct orientation before you start your show (slides seem to have a knack of moving on their own even when you have checked!). The same rule applies to your speaking notes.
4. Remember your audience will have different interests and varying knowledge of the subject – including of magic lanterns. If it's a **factual** subject, you may be best to keep to the basics and include a bit of humour, unless you know they are more expert (e.g. a learned society). Generally it's best to aim to raise interest in the subject, rather than tell every detail. If people want to know more, they can ask you afterwards. If presenting an **entertainment**, it must be entertaining. That sounds obvious, but we have all experienced a show when even the presenter doesn't seem to be enjoying it. Go for humour, drama and even a strong moral.
5. Above all, be confident, and if things go wrong **don't panic**. Shows 100 years ago were much harder to put on – and now you're bringing history to life.

#### *How do I prevent a slide change 'showing' if I don't have a lens cap?*

You can use anything that blocks the light from the screen, such as a piece of card, a jam jar lid or, if possible, dimming the illuminant. A Beard slide carrier, while not hiding the slide change, simulates a dissolve between slides and can make a feature of the slide change.