

# MAGIC LANTERN SOCIETY NOTICE BOARD



## OSCAR WILDE AND THE MAGIC LANTERN

A lot at a recent auction at Bonhams in London was a letter from Oscar Wilde (1854-1900), the Irish author, poet and playwright, to Henrietta Barnett (1851-1936). She was a teacher, philanthropist and social reformer who co-founded Toynbee Hall in 1884, a so-called 'settlement house' in the East End of London that tackled poverty through education, healthcare and social support. She later co-founded Whitechapel Art Gallery (1901) and Hampstead Garden Suburb (1907).

In the letter Wilde regretted that he had nothing suitable for a lecture as he was suffering with malaria caught in France ("... it comes and goes, but I can

never be certain of myself ..."), but he agreed to do a lecture on Irish art at Toynbee Hall which would include pictures "... if I can get someone to help me with a magic lantern. Pictures are really necessary to give people a proper idea of what one is talking of." The letter appears to be dated November 1889 and is the only one known from Wilde to Mrs (later Dame) Henrietta Barnett. The lot sold for £7,040 including premium.

## PREVENTION IS BETTER THAN CURE

MLS member Stan Roberts has drawn our attention to a new publication about the Band of Hope. Titled *Prevention is Better than Cure: The rise and fall of the Band of Hope* by John K. Lander (publisher Austin Macaulay, London, UK, price £10.99, 256 pages) the book traces the history of the Band of Hope from its beginning in Leeds in 1847. The aim of the organisation was to persuade children that consuming alcohol would damage their health and life chances. The magic lantern became closely associated with the Band of Hope and was used at countless meetings. They produced their own slides, both photographs and sketches by their own artists. The book mentions the role of the magic lantern several times. The organisation lives on today as Hope UK working with young people to prevent alcohol and drug addiction.

### Prevention is better than cure

The Rise and Fall of the Band of Hope



John K Lander

## DIARY DATES

2026

23-26 April

21st Convention of the Magic Lantern Society of US and Canada  
Village at Black Creek, Toronto, Canada

2 May

Spring Meeting of the Magic Lantern Society  
Swedenborg Hall, London, UK

18 July

Summer Meeting of the Magic Lantern Society  
Millenium Hall, Lacey Green, Buckinghamshire, UK

9-11 October

50th Anniversary Convention  
The Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham

2027

23 January

AGM of the Magic Lantern Society  
The Musical Museum, Brentford, London, UK

## NEW MEMBERS

|                    |                               |
|--------------------|-------------------------------|
| Liam Boyce         | Dublin, Ireland               |
| Stephen Boyd Davis | London, UK                    |
| Ruben Burkard      | Tübingen, Germany             |
| Katy Cooper        | Glasgow, UK                   |
| Eye Filmmuseum     | Amsterdam, The Netherlands    |
| Emma Jones-Gill    | Basingstoke, UK               |
| Brian Norman       | Beccles, UK                   |
| David Soanes       | Newmarket, UK                 |
| Ann Winter         | Windsor Gardens SA, Australia |

## DEAR CONTRIBUTORS ...

The editors of *TML* and *Connect* love receiving your contributions. However, we are often sent the images at very low resolution – and our readers love high quality images. As a rough guide the file for a colour image should be **over 1 MB** (not in kB range). A typical uncompressed photograph from a smartphone is OK but images from the internet (copyright free please) often not. See p. 12 for George Auckland's guidance.