

50TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE MAGIC LANTERN SOCIETY

THE MUSICAL MUSEUM, BRENTFORD, LONDON

Saturday 24 January 2025

For the landmark 50th AGM around 55 MLS members together with some guests came to the Musical Museum in London. After an introduction from Chair **Richard Feltham** the main programme started with **Mary Ann and George Auckland** projecting a selection of Mary Ann's great-grandmother's slides. Born Julia Henderson in Durham, England, in 1868, she visited Canada in 1886 and the following year married Charles Henshaw. They moved to Vancouver in 1890 and Julia wrote for several newspapers and published two novels. From the mid-1890s onwards she began exploring the country, first Vancouver Island and then the Rocky



Julia Henshaw's slides of Canada

Mountains. With newly acquired photographic skills and painting skills developed at the Royal College of Art back in England she produced many of her own magic lantern slides (3¼ x 4 inches) and lectured with them. In 1913 she was made a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society and toured the UK with her magic lantern slides under their auspices in 1913 and 1923/24 (see also p. 12).

Next **Robert Holden** gave us his personal recollections of working at the much loved and missed Museum of the Moving Image that operated on London's South Bank from 1988 to 1999. Robert, a trained actor, worked as part of the 18-strong MOMI Actors Company for 16 months from September 1989. As 'Oliver Lockhart' of 'Lockhart's Optical Emporium' Robert greeted visitors at the 'pre-cinema' section dressed in Victorian costume and introduced them to phantasmagoria, zoetropes, magic lanterns, Reynaud's *Théâtre Optique* and a Mutoscope among other optical treasures. The museum had a triunal lantern and was, Robert believes, the last place to present a daily magic lantern show. The actors rehearsed for three weeks getting to know the history and the exhibits as well as researching and creating their own characters. He believed MOMI probably proved too expensive to run as it was technically complex and employed many staff, including the actors. Subsequently developing the persona of 'Maurice Hardcastle, cinema commissioner supreme' he has appeared inside and outside cinemas and theatres around London since ... and as Father Christmas for 40 years. He also regaled us with his family connection to very early film and Charlie Chaplin.

The last show in the morning was **Tonnvane Wiswell's** highly original and imaginative *The Call of Cthulhu*. Taking on the persona of 'Andi Carter' she told of finding some lantern slides and notes in a case that had belonged to her great aunt 'Miranda Carter' (1878-1922) who travelled the world and gave talks on her 'cavalcade of wonders' but mysteriously disappeared. 'Andi' recreated the talk given to the Universal Brotherhood and Theosophical Society in 1922, accompanied (as had the original) by the eerie sound of the theremin played by **Sam Enthoven** and wearing Miranda's hat and jacket. A newspaper cutting told of a fishing boat *Alert* mysteriously washed ashore after a storm but with no sign of fish or humans. Miranda went aboard and found a case of slides, camera and paperwork in the wheelhouse. The story seemed to focus on a group of Americans searching for and finding Mayan treasures (that appeared in the slides), including gold but also human remains from sacrifices to the gods, in the Yucatan peninsula of Mexico. The last slides were of an island in the north Atlantic with steps up to a door, something emerging from a tomb and appearing on the beach. After showing a title slide 'Order of the Saffron Veil' our speaker was bundled out of the theatre ...

Back in 2026, after lunch it was the AGM. After noting apologies for absence and signing off the 2025 minutes, Chair Richard Feltham thanked **Richard Crangle** especially for his work, all the Committee members and the technical team of George Auckland, **Frog Morris** and **Nicole Mollett**, calling for more volunteers on the latter (see p. 2). He highlighted the Convention (see p. 1) and encouraged members to sign up. Nicole Mollett reported on social media – a three-strong team of her, **Sandra Lawrence** and **Anastasia Kerameos**. In less than a month the new Facebook page has gained over 90 members, and our Instagram now has nearly 500 likes. Nicole hopes these will help attract new members.

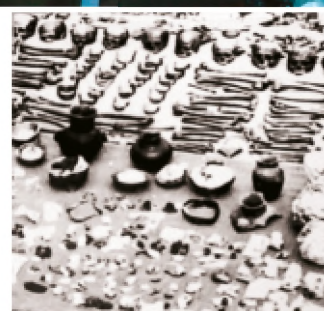


Lester Smith, now an Honorary Member, at the 2005 Convention exhibition he curated

Richard Crangle, as Secretary, reported that **Alexia Lazou** had taken over as Membership Secretary. He urged members to renew promptly and to check their email 'spam' in case reminders went there. The application for the MLS to be a Charitable Incorporated Organisation went to the Charity Commission in the summer but we are still waiting ... As Treasurer, Richard reported a financially stable year. Some costs rose, including postage, and membership was down slightly but venue costs were within budget and the Museu del Cinema generously did not charge for the Girona spring meeting. Other helpful factors were the increased subscriptions, publication sales and the 2025 Awards moving to the 2026 budget year. The Chair thanked **Edgar and Linda Gibbs** for auditing the accounts. **Mary Ann Auckland** reported on *TML* and thanked the *TML* team and all our contributors.



Richard Crangle and Richard Feltham at the AGM



'Andi Carter' and Mayan finds



Karrie Fransman with Frog Morris and Jeremy Brooker

MLS Awards (see p. 11 for details) and introduced one of the winners, Karrie Fransman. The programme then continued with Ian Christie who discussed Victorian new media with a focus on the Second Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902 (known as 'the Boer War') which boosted the popularity of the media as so many people had a close interest in the war, with relatives involved in South Africa. Illustrated newspapers, magic lantern sets, early films and stereoscopic 3-D views were the media in question, often sharing stories and images, and, in case of film and magic lantern slides, appearing in the same programme. He showed the life model set *Reported Missing* (lent by Nick Hiley) and an early Robert Paul film from his Muswell Hill Studio founded in 1898, about a soldier and



Ian Christie and stereo view

his mother. Influenced by *The Soldier's Dream* – a painting, magic lantern set, etc. – this is one of the few surviving Paul films. The most successful piece of popular culture was Rudyard Kipling's poem *The Absent-Minded Beggar* (also a magic lantern set) with music by Sir Arthur Sullivan, that raised money for injured servicemen. Although stereoscopy was invented by Wheatstone in 1838 it only became popular when Queen Victoria and Prince Albert developed an enthusiasm. That was replicated by members when Ian handed out stereoscopic viewers, some lent by Sir Brian May, and cards which everyone thoroughly enjoyed trying out.

The 'Bring and Show' section covered a wide range of topics. Richard Feltham showed some more stereo images including saucy subjects and one for opticians to use. David Burder told how his magic mirror made for the centenary of the Magic Circle, with logo including magic lantern, was accidentally gold plated instead of nickel plated when sent for repolishing – but still works. Stan Roberts promoted the Band of Hope book (see p. 2) and Trevor Beattie highly recommended the Australian Centre for the Moving Image in Melbourne, Australia – free to enter and you can make your own flick book. Robert Holden showed his family stereo viewer and cards, including a trip around the world and very delicate French slides of skeletons and demons made from tissue. Sandra Lawrence told of 'penny lick' ice creams that were more optical illusion than satisfying treat, illustrated with a slipping slide, and Phil Dunn gave an update on his slides of metropolitan waterworks including bacteria from effluent. Robin Palmer showed a film *Myriad* that started with a triunial and led to the Myriad 3-D image manipulation system.

Glass artist Pippa Stacey (a.k.a. 'Madame Oiseau' in amazing hand-made mask) encouraged some communal singing of 'There was a young woman who swallowed a fly' (slight alteration) accompanied by her wonderful slides followed by her latest chromatropes. These are created off-centre to produce more interesting shapes when rotated.

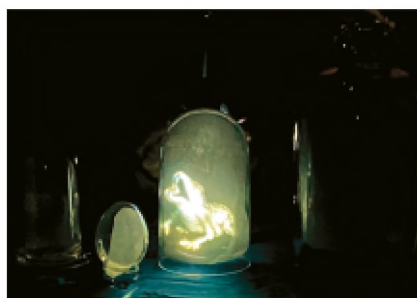
Finally Frog Morris and Nicole Mollett brought us a thoroughly original and entertaining finale. Starting with cute slides of pets we quickly moved to older and darker arts of alchemy and creatures created by magic itself. The sorcerer conjured up mythical beasts (via roving magic lantern) but found there was little money in sorcery unless you could turn base metal to gold. Sweating over his cauldron, the humanoid creature he created in his cave to do this was not satisfied with his form so was transmuted to a toad, then bat, then turtle, then lizard and finally, at his own request, a cat. He produced the gold but tricked the



Pippa Stacey's cat/dog (top) and handmade chromatope



sorcerer into turning himself into a mouse ... a tasty lunch! After visiting the cobblers for some boots the cat went off for other adventures. Meanwhile Frog and Nicole showed us the mandrakes, homunculi,



etc., left in the vessels in the cave, by projecting, with magic lanterns, into the jars – an incredible effect to end the day.

The creatures in the vessels illuminated by Nicole Mollett and Frog Morris

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