

# PHILIP CARPENTER 1776~1833

JOHN BARNES

CARPENTER  
&  
WESTLEY,  
OPTICIANS.



From John Tallis's views of Regent Street, revised edition, 1847

Philip Carpenter was perhaps the most important person in the history of the magic lantern during the 19th century, yet very little is generally known about the man even though the lanterns and slides associated with his name are to be found in many collections.

Philip Carpenter was born at Kidderminster on 18 November, 1776, the son of George and Mary Carpenter. In 1815 he is listed in the trade directories as an optician, with a house and manufactory in Bath Row, Birmingham. Later, he also had a retail shop at 111 New Street. His first claim to fame is as the manufacturer of David Brewster's Kaleidoscope in 1819.<sup>1</sup> An example of his work in this field is represented in the Barnes Museum by a beautifully constructed telescopic kaleidoscope in brass.

It was whilst in Birmingham that he also designed a new and more practical form of magic lantern which he proceeded to supply with a series of slides made by a new copper-plate process, which ensured a greater accuracy in the delineation of the pictures and provided the means for producing them in large quantities. He was thus instrumental in raising the status of the magic lantern from a mere optical novelty or toy, to that of a scientific instrument which could be used for educational instruction as well as amusement. The availability of a practical projector with a regular supply of superior slides also

A COMPANION

TO THE

IMPROVED PHANTASMAGORIA LANTERN,

CONTAINING

*A List of the Subjects*

IN THE FOLLOWING SETS OF

COPPER-PLATE SLIDERS,

Kings and Queens of England, Views of Public Buildings, Scripture Subjects, Humorous Subjects, and Ancient and Modern Costume,

TO WHICH IS ADDED

A DESCRIPTION OF

THE LANTERN AND COPPER PLATE SLIDERS

BY

P. CARPENTER, OPTICIAN,

24, Regent Street, London.

LONDON:

H. STARIE, 23, TITCHBORNE STREET, HAYMARKET.

1835.

Price One Shilling.

A

COMPANION

TO THE

IMPROVED

PHANTASMAGORIA LANTERN,

CONTAINING A

LIST OF THE SUBJECTS;

TO WHICH IS ADDED

A DESCRIPTION OF THE LANTERN AND COPPER-PLATE SLIDERS,

WITH THE METHOD OF EXHIBITING THE DISSOLVING VIEWS,

WITH PLATES.

FOURTH EDITION.

BY

CARPENTER & WESTLEY, OPTICIANS,

24, REGENT-STREET, WATERLOO-PLACE,

LONDON.

1850.



opened the way for the boom in lantern projection which took place in the last half of the 19th century. Carpenter's magic lantern, known as the Phantasmagoria Lantern, is already well known to members of the Magic Lantern Society, but some account of the copper-plate sliders may be in order.

With the introduction of his new lantern in about 1821, Carpenter issued the first of his slides made by the new process. These consisted of a set of 18 slides on natural history, as well as some others for which we have no particulars. The immediate success of these slides induced him to make very considerable additions to them, particularly to the natural history subjects, and in 1823 he published his duodecimo volume *Elements of Zoology* as a companion to the series which now amounted to 56 slides (covering 256 subjects). They must have been exceedingly popular for they were still being produced more than thirty years later. The slides were arranged according to the system of Linnaeus and distributed as follows among its classes:

Mammalia	24 slides
Birds	7 slides
Amphibia	4 slides
Fish	5 slides
Insects	8 slides
Worms	8 slides

Other slides made by Carpenter at this time are also listed in the book and consisted of the following:

Portraits of the Kings and Queens of England, in 9 sliders, each containing four.

Astronomical Diagrams, in 9 sliders.

The Principal Constellations, in 6 sliders, each containing seven or eight.

The Northern and Southern Hemisphere, in 1 slider.

Views and Buildings, in 6 sliders, each containing three or four.

The Costumes of the Ancients, in 6 sliders, each containing from four to six figures.

Modern Costume, in 56 sliders, each containing from four to seven figures.

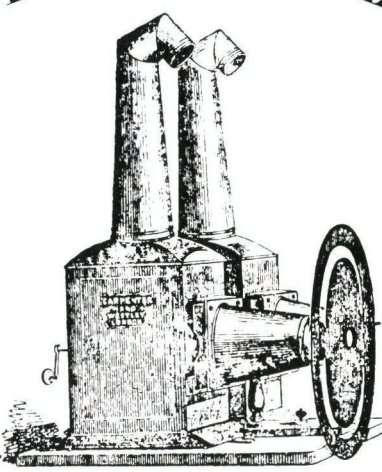
Select Humorous Subjects, in 12 sliders (a number which was subsequently increased), each containing four.

According to an advertisement in the book, the slides could be obtained from the Manufactory or from Mr. Joseph Cox, optician, no. 5 Barbican and from most other opticians in London; also from Messrs. Bywater & Co., Liverpool. This practice of supplying slides wholesale probably accounts for the fact that Carpenter's name seldom appears on them and why we often find them marked with the names of other opticians. Even so, it is still possible to identify Carpenter's slides for they are generally marked with the words 'Copper-plate Slider', either on a printed label, or with a die-stamp impression. Thus by cross-checking with the description in the manual already mentioned, it is possible to identify them with reasonable certainty.

Another outstanding feature of Carpenter's slides was the manner in which they were mounted. Each slide consisted of from three to eight subjects on glass discs  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches in diameter, which were recessed in the wood frame and held in place by a round wire spring. There was no cover glass as the surface of the painting was reasonably well protected by being seated below the surface of the frame. The advantage of framing them in this way, as Carpenter himself pointed out, was that the subjects could be arranged in any desired order and if accidentally broken could be replaced singularly without having to purchase the complete slide.

Unfortunately, Carpenter does not describe in any detail the method used in preparing the slides except to say that the outlines of the subjects 'are

# CARPENTER AND WESTLEY'S



## DISSOLVING VIEWS.

### AMUSEMENT AND INSTRUCTION

BY MEANS OF

## Carpenter and Westley's Phantasmagoria Lanterns,

WITH THE

## CHROMATROPE AND DISSOLVING VIEWS,

AND EVERY POSSIBLE VARIETY OF SLIDERS

INCLUDING

### NATURAL HISTORY,

### COMIC, LEVER, MOVEABLE RACKWORK & PLAIN ASTRONOMICAL DIAGRAMS,

### VIEWS IN THE HOLY LAND,

### SCRIPTURAL SUBJECTS, PORTRAITS OF EMINENT PERSONS, &c.

No. 1 Lantern, with Argand Lamp, in a Box, £2 12s. 6d.; No. 2 Ditto, of a larger size, £4 14s. 6d.

#### A PAIR OF DISSOLVING VIEW LANTERNS,

No. 2, with Apparatus, £12 6s. The above are supplied with a Lucernal Microscope and 7 Sliders, at 31s. extra. The Lamp for the No. 2 Lanterns is very superior.

The Drawing represents the Apparatus arranged for the Dissolving process, for which two Lanterns are requisite. The No. 2 Lantern is peculiarly adapted for India, the body of this instrument being constructed with double tin-work to prevent excess of heat. N.B.—The above prices do not include Sliders for the Lanterns, so that when an order is given it will be better for the purchaser to specify the amount to be expended. A good assortment of Sliders for DISSOLVING VIEWS may be obtained for £20 or £30. When these goods are required for Educational purposes, Messrs. C. and W. make a deduction from the above prices.

Any Special Subjects painted to order, if Prints, Drawings, &c. are supplied.

#### LISTS OF SLIDERS & PRICES FORWARDED UPON APPLICATION.

## CARPENTER & WESTLEY, OPTICIANS,

### 24, REGENT STREET, WATERLOO PLACE, LONDON. S.W.

printed on glass, from copper-plates, engraved for the purpose, and burnt in.' This would imply that some form of etching was used to obtain a permanent outline. The slide was then passed to the artist for colouring. It could be wrong to suppose that the outline was merely 'coloured' in the manner of contemporary engraved prints; instead, the skeleton impression was completely transformed into a miniature painting which varied in quality according to the skill of the artist employed, and no two pictures are ever alike.

The success accorded Carpenter's Phantasmagoria Lantern and Copper-plate Sliders must have been the determining factor that induced him to leave Birmingham for the Capital. In July 1826 he removed to 24 Regent Street, on the corner of Jermyn Street, where the department store of Lillywhites now stands. In the meantime, the Birmingham business in New Street was continued till 1837, when it was transferred to a Mr. R. Field.

Philip Carpenter died at Regent Street on 30 April, 1833, but the business was continued by his sister Mary, in partnership with William Westley. Mary too was a remarkable person and carried on the business for a number of years. She and her brother Philip were the subject of a small volume

printed 'In Memory of Mary Carpenter, of 24, Regent Street, London', by R. L. Carpenter. The date of the publication has not been determined and neither have I been able to locate a copy. Extracts of the work were published in the *Birmingham Weekly Post*, date unknown, but probably during January or February 1895, as a report appeared in *The Optician* for 7 February of that year, pages 295-296.

An illustration of the Regent Street establishment was published in the *Magic Lantern Society's Journal* (vol 3, no 1), and the Westminster Public Library at Victoria has two photographs of the premises taken in 1902 (D.135, Regent St. 253-260). Probably all that remains of the old premises is a portion of a wooden screen which formed part of the shop fittings for displaying examples of dissolving-view paintings. It came into the possession of Lionel S. Day, the brother of Will Day, the noted collector of early cinematographic equipment, and was eventually purchased by the Barnes Museum of Cinematography.

1 David Brewster, *A Treatise on the Kaleidoscope*, Edinburgh, 1819.

Our illustrations show the 3rd and 4th editions of Philip Carpenter's book, and an advertisement from the Post Office London Directory for 1858 (a somewhat similar advertisement appeared in the directory for the previous year).