

OBITUARY

DAVID ELSBURY

1935–2015



Many Society members will know that David died earlier this year – on 19 March just three months before his 80th birthday. He had pursued many varied interests throughout his life but it is through involvement in the magic lantern that most of us first got to know him and his wife, Eunice. Going under the name of 'Century Image', they gave shows for more than a quarter of a century and were always keen to develop and extend knowledge of lantern history and projection to a wider audience. In addition to 'An Evening of Lantern Entertainment', there were Christmas shows with Charles Dickens, highly successful presentations for schools focusing on Victorian childhood, and 'Songs of Praise' which featured well-known hymns and the people who wrote them. David was a founder member of that exclusive club, 'The West Country Splinter Group', comprising five couples from in and around the city of Bristol. With his supreme organisational skills, the group were able to produce 'Magic Lantern Spectaculars', shows with three biunial lanterns projecting simultaneously onto a bank of screens – a feat that perhaps may never be repeated and which was a great deal of fun to do. David was unfailingly patient, always willing to share his knowledge and wide experience, and had a terrific sense of humour. He never lost his enthusiasm for meeting people who shared his interests, and a few years ago he inaugurated the immensely popular 'At Home' days, which were held every September. They will long be remembered with great fondness and it is hoped that these will continue, at least in the short-term, as a fitting tribute to his memory.

Jennifer Uttridge

SPRING MEETING OF THE SOCIETY

at the SWEDENBORG SOCIETY, Saturday 25 April 2015

Our April meeting saw a return to the Swedenborg Hall in London. Sixty-six members and guests attended and there were thirteen apologies.

As our Chairman **George Auckland** observed, if ever there was a man who should have invented the magic lantern, but didn't, it was surely the Swedish scientist, philosopher, theologian and mystic Emanuel Swedenborg.

The programme began with a fascinating talk on the history of postal communication by **Julian Stray**, curator of the Post Office Museum. This was illustrated throughout with lantern slides recently donated to our Society, brought to life by Julian's infectious enthusiasm for the subject. This was followed by a workshop led by **Richard Rigby** and **Robin Palmer** with some practical tips on lantern illumination and the binding of slides, and an interesting discussion ensued. **Gordon Casbeard** recommended a black self-adhesive tape (ProTapes 46 Crepe Paper Masking Tape, 60

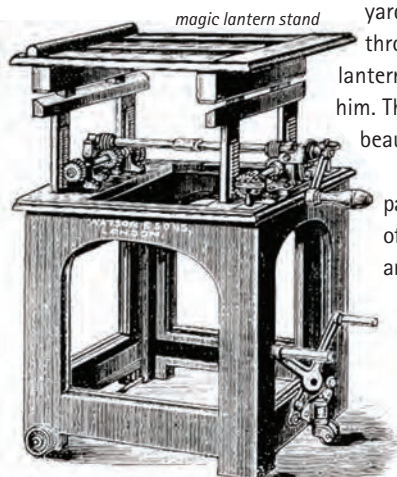
yards long x 1/2 inch wide) which he has used successfully for many years, available only through American eBay. Robin added some fascinating insights into working the triunial lantern, and the intricacies of an ingenious portable(!) lantern stand he had brought with him. The final presenter before lunch was **Ralph Hyde**, who introduced his latest book – a beautiful collection of paper peepshows, drawn mainly from the Gestetner Collection.

After the break, we returned to see a unique set of Life Model and other hand-painted slides, created by **Frog Morris** and **Nicole Mollett**. This was the culmination of a series of workshops held at the Turner Contemporary and Margate Museum, and performed by the artists at a series of Kent venues in February. This was delightful entertainment, and in rather more congenial surroundings than their premiere on the windswept shores of the Thanet coast.

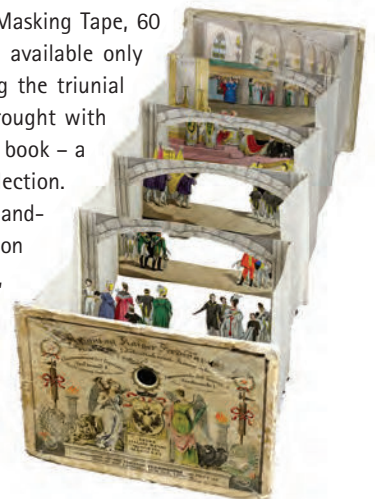
The inimitable **Mervyn Heard** next took to the floor to present another fascinating glimpse into the oft-neglected story of the magic lantern after



photos Gwern Sebus



magic lantern stand





Lantern slide by Frog Morris and Nicole Mollett

the invention of cinema. The focus of the talk was on Spiegel Motion Song Slides: ingenious moving slides on the principle of Rufus Seder's recent 'Scanimation' books. Mervyn also discussed other song slide rarities, some of which had a paper cut-out in the slide mask intended to create a spotlight for the singers during their performances!

Robin Palmer now returned to his wonderful triple lantern to present a programme of exquisite

slides of Switzerland by Edmund Wilkie, set to an appropriate Swiss-themed sound track – the William Tell Overture and, yes, a fair quantity of Alpine horns and yodelling. It was interesting to note that interspersed with Wilkie's own hand-painted images were commercially produced slides by Carpenter & Westley. Clearly, these marked changes of painting style within a single programme were quite acceptable to our Victorian forebears.

The day ended with a special treat from Juliette Harcourt in the guise of Mrs Zenobia Haskin-Davies. Singing a capella from the lantern, she led us through a series of familiar and unfamiliar song slides from the Victorian and Edwardian eras. This was Juliette's first formal presentation to the Society, and it is hoped it will prove to be the first of many. Congratulations, as always, to Lester Smith for devising such a varied and entertaining programme.

Jeremy Brooker



photos Gwen Sebus + Robin Palmer

SPECIAL MEETING OF THE SOCIETY at the CINEMATEK, BRUSSELS, 9-10 May 2015

This was one of the Society's occasional excursions outside the UK, this time as guests of the Cinematek in Brussels who generously hosted the event. Forty-two members and guests attended. Special thanks to Hilde Delabie who attended the meeting and made such efforts to make this a highly enjoyable and memorable weekend. Thanks also to Mike Smith who made all the arrangements.

One of the highlights was Bernd Scholze's unique set of slides once used by the German lanternist Professor Boettcher. Though his name is unfamiliar today, Boettcher was once described in the British press as 'the greatest lantern exhibitor in Europe'. Bernd was fortunate enough to acquire a large number of his hand-painted slides at auction, and he has since undertaken some fascinating research. The presentation was split into two parts and full of beautiful images, but perhaps the most remarkable were a set of slides first shown at the Royal Tragedy Theatre in Berlin in January 1871 to mark the birthday of Prince Friedrich Wilhelm.

The second item on the programme was a presentation by Roger Gonin. Sometimes, rare historical items fall into exactly the right hands, and this was a case in point. Roger discovered an ancient lantern once used by a Savoyard travelling lanternist, with five slides and lacking only its lenses. He has since embarked on an extraordinary voyage of discovery into a



George Auckland introduces the meeting
Hilde Delabie at the Cinematek, Brussels

Bernd Scholze

Roger Gonin

Savoyard Lantern

Françoise Levie

photos Gwen Sebus

Slides by Professor Boettcher