

HARRY STANTON AND THE CASE OF THE CURIOUS ADVERT

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Victorian slides advertising lantern equipment are very rare, which is hardly surprising when most audience members had neither the money nor the inclination to mount shows of their own. The ones that do turn up, like the slipping slide shown here, are oddities worth a closer look.

This mahogany-framed slipping slide depicts a violent protest in which a man carrying a placard reading 'STANTON COMIC SLIPS' is confronted by a policeman with a drawn truncheon. The man looks nervous and when the glass is slipped he smashes the placard over the policeman's head, making him understandably very angry. The wood mount carries a printed label reading 'H.H.STANTON, 65, Barker Street, Lozells, Birmingham'. But it does seem a strangely violent way to advertise lantern slides.

Like all comic slipping slides, this one is crudely painted in bright colours – but the man who produced it had in fact been very highly trained. Harry Hand Stanton was born in Birmingham on 12 October 1843, the son of William Stanton, a 'glass cutter'.¹ He followed his father into this business at an early age and by 1854 Harry Stanton had started working for John Hardman & Co, manufacturer of 'Ecclesiastical Fittings and Ornaments', based at 166 Great Charles Street in central Birmingham. The Hardmans were

a Catholic family and had become closely associated with the Gothic Revival in church architecture and ornament through their association with the Catholic architect Augustus Pugin.

It was Pugin who had persuaded John Hardman & Co to move into stained-glass production in 1845 after the firm opened its Great Charles Street premises. This link was further strengthened in 1850 when Pugin's daughter married into the Hardman family. Pugin died two years later but John Hardman & Co continued to work in the Gothic Revival style and advertised itself as: 'Artists, Glass Painters, Church Decorators & Embellishers; Workers in Gold, Silver, Brass and Iron; Makers of all kinds of



by the following year he had set up his own business at this address, advertising himself as a 'magic lantern slide painter & mediaeval artist, church, hall, staircase, domestic window & art tile painter'.⁵ It was a strange mixture of high and low art, the sacred and the profane.

Another four children followed but the slide business seems to have prospered enough to support them all, for by the early 1890s Stanton was advertising himself as a maker of magic lantern slides, operating a shop and workshop at 262 Brearley Street but living in a terraced house at 65 Barker Street, Lozells.⁶ This seems to have marked the height of his magic lantern business and it was presumably now that he produced this slide advertising his 'Stanton Comic Strips'.

It is common for policemen to fare badly in Victorian lantern slides, in sharp contrast to firemen and lifeboatmen. But was this 'comic slip' inspired by any particular contemporary event? The figure holding the placard gives a clue, for he is dressed in the green tailcoat, gaiters and tall hat of the Victorian stereotype Irishman. It seems likely that Stanton's inspiration was thus London's infamous Bloody Sunday riot of 13 November 1887, in which 1,500 police moved in to stop 10,000 protesters from demonstrating in Trafalgar Square, attacking indiscriminately with their truncheons and seizing flags and banners. The Irish National League was one of the organisers of the protest and Stanton probably produced this comic advertising slide soon afterwards.⁷

Stanton painted and sold lantern slides in Birmingham for over forty years, and deserves to be remembered. He gave up his shop in the early 1900s and began working from home⁸ but despite failing health he continued to advertise as a 'magic lantern slide painter' until 1914.⁹ Harry Hand Stanton died in Sutton Coldfield, aged seventy-six, on 14 March 1920.



REFERENCES

- 1851 Census entry for 101 Heneage Street, Aston.
- The Dublin Builder*, 1 February 1861, p. 425, 'John Hardman and Co.' [advert].
- 1861 Census entry for 206 Will Street, Birmingham.
- See Mathé Shephard *The Stained Glass of John Hardman and Company under the leadership of John Hardman Powell from 1867 to 1895*, vols I–III (Mathé Shephard, 2010).
- White & Co's Commercial & Trades Directory of Birmingham*, Vol. II, 1875, p. 640; *1878 Post Office Directory of Birmingham*, p. 513; *1879 Post Office Directory of Birmingham*, p. 414; *1880 Kelly's Directory of Birmingham*, p. 560.
- 1890 Kelly's Directory of Birmingham*, p. 304; 1891 Census entry for 65 Barker Street; *1896 Birmingham Rate Book for 262 Brearley Street*; *Peck's Trades Directory of Birmingham*, 1896–7, p. 332.
- Birmingham Daily Post*, 14 November 1887, p. 8 cols. 4–7, 'Trafalgar Square Riots'.
- 1901 Census entry for 65 Barker Street, Lozells; *1906 Birmingham (Aston Manor) Rate Book*, showing Stanton owning and occupying 65 Barker Street, and owning and renting out 64 Barker Street.
- 1911 Census entry for 65 Barker Street, Lozells; *Bennett's Business Directory for Warwickshire*, 1914, p. 233.



Sacred Vessels, Chalices, Monstrances, Etc.²

Harry Stanton was trained by John Hardman & Co as a stained-glass painter. At the time of the 1861 Census he was aged nineteen, living close to the Great Charles Street factory and describing himself as a 'glass stainer'.³ Stanton remained with the company for twenty-one years, and must have worked on many of its major ecclesiastical commissions, such as the stained-glass windows for Birmingham's St Chad's Roman Catholic Cathedral in 1868, Lichfield Cathedral in 1870 and Gloucester Cathedral in 1872–4.⁴

Stanton married in 1864 and, by the time his third child was born in 1870, he had moved to 114 Brearley Street West, in the centre of Birmingham. His fourth child was born there in 1874 and