

THE QUEEN ON SCREEN

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The 200th birthday of Queen Victoria in May of this year was an opportunity to think again about this most familiar and yet somehow enigmatic figure. The outline of her life is well known: a childhood she later described as 'rather melancholy', her accession to the throne at 18, her personification of Victorian family life, the Great Exhibition, her tragic widowhood, her corpulent later years and the PR triumph of the Golden and Diamond Jubilees in 1887 and 1897.

This litany of 'significant events' can make her seem somehow passive, as if all these things just happened to her, but recent scholarship has revealed a more interesting and forceful personality behind this public persona. A conference at Kensington Palace held on 20-21 May, *Victoria's Self-Fashioning: Curating Royal Image for Dynasty, Nation and Empire*, explored the ways Victoria controlled how she was portrayed both at home and abroad, deliberately constructing an image for 19th-century monarchy. In an

age which saw the invention of photography, mass print journalism and cinematography, Victoria was everywhere. Painted and sculpted images dominated public spaces on every continent and within the British Empire every coin spent and every letter sent was authenticated with her likeness.

The reign of Queen Victoria also coincided with the rise and fall of the magic lantern as a medium for mass entertainment. Of course, this statement requires some qualification. By the time Victoria came to the throne in 1837 the magic lantern had already been around for nearly 200 years. It also survived the birth of cinema, flourishing in the period to WWI and continuing in one form or another until the present day. However, it was the introduction of gas lighting in the late 1830s that allowed its use in large public halls and by 1901, when Victoria died, the kinds of large-scale entertainments epitomised by the Royal Polytechnic Institution or lantern showmen like Benjamin Malden and Edmund Wilkie were in steep decline.

By the 1880s the magic lantern was familiar to all, rich or poor, and this was probably the medium through which most people would



1. Young Queen Victoria and Prince Albert (1819-1861, also 200th birthday this year) from wood-framed slides (courtesy of Juliette Harcourt)

encounter their monarch. They could study her likeness not as a formal sculpture or portrait but almost as a living figure, seen 'up close and personal' – larger-than-life and often in full colour.

HAND PAINTED AND PANORAMIC SLIDES

With this in mind, it is striking how few lantern slide depictions of Queen Victoria survive from the first 50 years of her reign. Only with the Golden Jubilee in 1887 do we begin to see the large-scale manufacture of slides, often multiple-slide sets, representing key events of her life.

There are some early hand-painted long slides depicting events like the Coronation in 1838 or the opening of the Great Exhibition in 1851, but these are rare. Subjects like these were chosen for their topical interest and could only be shown for a year or so, making them less attractive to the casual exhibitor. It is likely that these were generally painted to order for a particular performer, who could see the possibility of a quick return on his or her investment.

'Lord' George Sanger recalled in his memoir *Seventy Years a Showman* how the death of Wellington in 1852 had created just such an opportunity. He bought two lanterns and commissioned 16 slides of the funeral procession which he exhibited with appropriately solemn music on a screen 20 feet square. It is easy to imagine that once their topical value was exhausted such slides might be discarded.

PHOTOGRAPHS OF STATE EVENTS

From the time of the Golden Jubilee, images of Queen Victoria became increasingly common. Sometimes these were rather like newsreels – to be enjoyed later both by those who were there and those who were unable to attend in person. We can see a direct link between these



Wood-framed slide of Queen Victoria presenting a Bible (courtesy of Juliette Harcourt)



2. The Diamond Jubilee in 1897, outside St Paul's Cathedral (far left)

3. Slide of 1871 statue by Sir Joseph Edgar Boehm, 1st Baronet (1834-90) (left)

4. The Royal Family – Prince Albert holding Alfred (b. 1844), the Prince of Wales (b. 1841), Alice (b. 1843), Queen Victoria holding Helena (b. 1846), Victoria (b. 1840), suggesting that the slide dates to between 1846 and 1848 (courtesy of David Cozens) (below)



photographs and earlier long slides, where the movement of the image on the screen represents the point of view of the observer as the procession passes by.

STATUES

Statuary provided another popular class of lantern slide, whether showing a statue *in situ* in a location or isolated against a black-painted background (Fig. 3). These were often projected using coloured filters to suggest the artistic play of light over the surface and perhaps also to suggest a degree of three dimensionality.

PORTRAITS AND MOTTOES

Amongst the most beautiful of these photographic slides are single portraits of the Queen and these were often produced to a very high standard. It is likely that most showpeople ended their shows with patriotic displays of this kind, and their frequency of use would justify the outlay for expensively produced images. It is easy to forget how the National Anthem was once sung at the end of almost any form of entertainment. Indeed, it was only in November 1997 that BBC One dropped this tradition at the close of each evening's TV programming.

Related to this, we find patriotic messages and mottoes addressed to, and even occasionally received from, the Queen.

THE LIFE OF QUEEN VICTORIA

Another important class of lantern slide were multi-slide set representing the life of Queen Victoria, sometimes running to 100 slides or more. Clearly, this would have represented almost an entire evening's programme. These sets were generally issued to tie in with a particular event – one of her Jubilees in 1887 and 1897 or her funeral in 1901.



8. Family portraits. (a) From 'Life of Gladstone' set (top left). (b) Woodbury type from the official Diamond Jubilee portraits by Gunn & Stewart (1897) (top right). (c) 'The Four Generations, White Lodge, Richmond 16 July 1894' (bottom right). (d) Albert Edward, Prince of Wales, age 7, after Franz Xaver Winterhalter

images of Queen Victoria, helping to create a sense of the monarchy which persisted into the 20th century. In this way, it helped secure the dynastic status of the Royal Family and establish the role of the monarch as the personification of nationhood and empire.



5. 'Rule Britannia' with coloured photograph by Bassano (courtesy of Lester Smith) (above left)



6. Young Victoria with 'view on Windsor Castle Terrace Eastern Front' (courtesy of John Hyett) (above)

7. The Queen surrounded by famous men of the day (courtesy of David and Lesley Evans) (left)

Sets of this nature became increasingly popular, with production peaking in the early years of the 20th century. The Lucerna website identifies just three sets relating to the Golden Jubilee in 1887: the lecture *Fifty years' reign of Queen Victoria* (E.G. Wood, 64 slides, 1886) and two multiple-slide sets depicting aspects of the commemorations. The list of subjects for 1897 is substantially longer and includes the lectures *The glorious reign of Queen Victoria: its events, inventions, and progress* (Walter Tyler, 60 slides, 1897) and *The record reign of Her Majesty Queen Victoria* (York & Son, 60 slides, 1897) in addition to at least seven slide sets representing events connected to the Jubilee itself. The vast majority, however, were produced after Victoria's death in 1901. Some of these showed scenes from the funeral, but most were depictions of her life and their quality varied from skilfully hand coloured photographs to humble transfer slides aimed at a domestic market. These are often difficult to date precisely but even in 1913 Newton & Co. considered it worthwhile to produce *The personal history of Queen Victoria* with no fewer than 130 slides!

The magic lantern played a significant role in disseminating



9. (a) A message to the nation and (b) the National Anthem with four-part harmony

(continued on page 10)

ABSENT FRIENDS: TWO NEW MAGIC LANTERN AWARDS

In late 2017 the magic lantern world lost two of its leading lights: Mervyn Heard and Dick Balzer. Internationally respected as scholars, collectors and performers, they were also notable for their openness to new ideas and new ways of working with the subjects they knew and loved. In memory of Dick and Mervyn, the Magic Lantern Society is pleased to announce two new awards to support original work related to the magic lantern, lantern slides and optical projection.

- The **Mervyn Heard Award** for any written work, archival research programme or smaller-scale digitisation project. The winner would be expected to publish a description or version of their work in *The Magic Lantern* and/or give a presentation at a Society meeting.
- The **Dick Balzer Award** for any work using the magic lantern or lantern slides in a performance or work of art. The winner would produce an original or reworked artwork or performance, provide something to publish via the Society website (for example photographs, a video or animation) and/or give a presentation at a Society meeting.

Each award comprises a direct payment of £300 to the winner, plus a book of the winner's choice from the Society's catalogue of available publications. Closing date for submissions: **17 November 2019**.

Entry is open to both members and non-members of the Society, from all backgrounds, with or without affiliation to any academic institution. Revised versions of existing works or projects may be submitted, although the awards are not primarily intended to recognise or reward work completed or published more than a year before the closing date. Ongoing projects and work in progress, if expected to be finished within six months after the closing date, would be welcome.

There are no more specific criteria for either award, but the judges will be looking for originality, practicality and relevance to the field. All submissions must be made in English, but please don't worry if this is



Mervyn Heard



Dick Balzer

not your first language. The judges will assess the quality and appeal of your ideas rather than your written English. Submissions should consist of a single-page outline of the work or project, explaining clearly why it is original and how it contributes to knowledge, understanding or enjoyment of the field, plus a single-page *curriculum vitae* of each person making the submission. Submissions may include links to online supporting resources (e.g. publications, performance video, etc.), but please do not submit any other items as separate files.

All submissions must be made either by email to awards@magiclantern.org.uk, or by post to Magic Lantern Society Awards, 17 Dean Street, Exeter EX2 4HH, UK, to be received no later than 17 November 2019. Make any enquiries about the awards to the same addresses.

The winners will be judged by a panel selected from the Committee of the Magic Lantern Society. The decision of the judges will be final and the judges reserve the right to make shared awards or no awards, as they see fit, based on the submissions received. Members of the MLS Committee are not eligible for the awards.

Winners will be notified by 15 December 2019. The winning projects will be announced in the December 2019 issue of *The Magic Lantern* and at the Society's AGM in January 2020. The winners will be invited to present their work at an MLS meeting in the UK during 2020.

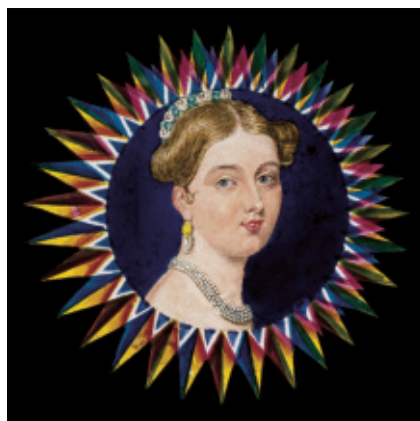
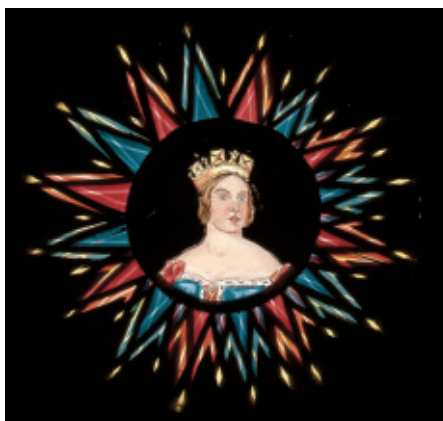
(from page 9)



10. (a) Title slide from a 'life of' set.
(b) A popular image of the Royal Family from a transfer set



11. Multiple images of Queen Victoria as seen through a 'beetle's eye' (courtesy of Lester Smith)



A CONUNDRUM

These are two chromatropes featuring Queen Victoria – or are they? The one on the left (courtesy of David and Lesley Evans) definitely is her. The one on the right (courtesy of Jeremy Brooker) appears to be from the line of the neck, the pearl necklace, mouth shape, etc. (compare with Fig. 8(a) on page 9) but the hair is markedly different. What do you think?