

SOME LESSER-KNOWN LIFE MODEL SLIDE MAKERS

No. 4 – G. Miles Mason of Southampton

Richard Crangle

Mason of Southampton, like most of the slide makers touched on in this series of articles, was a small business with a large reach. Never more than a family business, which did not extend beyond two generations (possibly really only one and a half), Mason's output of slides was considerable and their work is regularly found in modern collections. But they did not advertise in the trade press, did not identify themselves on their slides, seem not to have engaged in the main trade networks (their sets are not in the catalogues of most of the major dealers), and, apart from the surviving slides and readings, have left little trace of their activities.¹

George Miles Mason (Fig. 1) was born on 3 February 1860 in Southampton, the most important commercial port city on the south coast of England, the eldest son of William and Mary Mason.² His father was then a 'chair and umbrella maker', and this appears to have been his first trade: in the 1881 Census, aged 21, he can be found as an 'umbrella maker' at Ryde, Isle of Wight, with his younger sister Kate in the same occupation. Presumably this was a branch of the main business, farmed out to the eldest son on completion of his apprenticeship. A little later the same year, back in Southampton, he married Rosetta Toms (1861-1943), the daughter of a former sailor from nearby Portsea. Mason's father died in 1884, and perhaps around that time he returned more permanently to his native city and took over the family business.

But in the later 1880s he somehow found his way into the magic lantern trade. In the 1885 Southampton street directory the business was still listed as an 'umbrella manufacturer' at 5 Hanover Buildings, but in the 1889 edition it was under 'opticians' and as a 'magic lantern depot' at the same address. Evidently the optical trade held more commercial prospects than rain protection, or at least was something that was closer to George's heart and interests. In the 1891 Census he professed to be an 'artist' and was living with his wife, four children and a domestic servant at 3 South Front, a relatively prosperous street north-east of the city centre.

In 1895 or early 1896 Mason relocated to 35 Bellevue Road, about half a mile further away from the city centre, and was then described as 'Lantern Slide Manufacturer' in the Southampton street directories.³ This description continued for the rest of his life, and seems to have been quite specific, rather than a general photography business with a sideline in slide making: in the 1901 Census he was 'Photographic



2. Bellevue Road and Dorset Street on an 1888 street map of Southampton. Fig. 7 was taken from just above the final 'T' of 'Dorset St.', looking north. Reproduced from *OpenStreetMap* (www.openstreetmap.org), copyright © 2019 *OpenStreetMap* contributors

Lantern Slide Maker & Colourer', with two of his children 'learning' the same trade, and in 1911 he was a 'Photographic Lantern Slide Maker'. At his accidental death on 25 May 1938 (due to shock, after falling while trying to board a moving tram) he was still described as a 'Lantern Slide Maker'. Since he appears to have still been working at the age of 78, perhaps the long-lasting lantern slide business was not profitable enough to allow him a conventional retirement. Several archival sources also refer to him as an optician and astronomer,

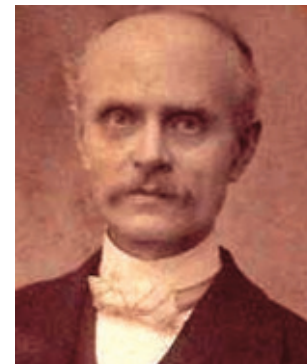
though it is unclear whether those were business activities or amateur pursuits.

There was another change of address to 28 Dorset Street (literally just around the corner from the previous premises – see Fig. 2), between 1898 and 1901. Without detailed knowledge of both addresses it is now hard to judge whether this indicates a move 'up' or 'down' in prosperity, but most of the buildings in Dorset Street, as seen in the background of several Mason slides, do appear smaller than those in Bellevue Road. In the early 1920s the family moved from Dorset Street to 1 Osborne Road in Portswood, a northern suburb of Southampton, and the business continued to operate from there. By then, however, it seems likely that their slide production had reduced considerably.

Genealogical records show that the Mason slide business was a true family concern: at various times George's daughter Susie (1882-1979), sons Ernest ('Ernie', 1885-1979) and Alfred ('Alf', 1892-1963), and his wife Rosetta were all involved to some degree or other. In particular it seems probable that the children, along with two other sisters, Rosetta (1884-1971) and Amy Eva (1887-1978), featured as models in the Life Model slides. The business continued for at least a year or two after its founder's demise – in September 1939 the Osborne Road address was occupied by the widow Rosetta ('Lantern Slide Manufacturer'), Susie ('Lantern Slide Maker's Assistant') and Ernie ('Photographic Lantern Slide Manufr./ Optical Projection Apparatus'). By this period the business was more likely to be offering a service making slides from photographers' own negatives than publishing its own original slide sets.

Alf did not stay in the slide business, becoming a pharmacist and moving to London. He had a somewhat chequered career, including a spell in prison after a dubious conviction in 1917.⁴ He returned to work with his father and brother in the 1930s, before going back to London, and eventually returned to Southampton in 1954 after his wife's death. Alf lived with Ernie at Osborne Road until his own death in 1963. A local newspaper report from that year describes the brothers living in "a crumbling, decaying, war-blitzed Victorian mansion ... littered with transformers, glass, tools, bulbs and wires, and a thousand bits and pieces of clutter", with a self-built observatory and Rosicrucian chapel in the garden. The reporter asked if the two brothers considered themselves eccentric. "'You could call us that,' admitted Alfred. 'We don't give a damn for anybody.'"⁵

G.M. Mason and his business should not be confused with another George Mason, who was in business in the 1890s and 1900s at Buchanan Street and Sauchiehall Street in central Glasgow. All references found so far give the Southampton business name as 'G. Miles Mason' or 'G.M. Mason', whereas the Scottish company was 'George Mason & Co.' The Glasgow Mason did produce some slide sets, in



1. George Miles Mason, a portrait photo from later in life ('Wheeldon Family Tree' at ancestry.co.uk)



3. Cover of the 1920s Mason slide catalogue – the original is now in the Nicholas Hiley Collection



4. Precise colouring, with at least eight different shades visible including some tiny details – slide 18 of Davy's Sacrifice



5. Precise, though not very lively, colouring – slide 18 of Little Faith. The apparently 1920s interior is possibly the parlour of 1 Osborne Rd

the form of Bible stories and other religious subjects from drawings, but was far less prolific than his English namesake and probably mainly traded as a general optical dealer rather than a slide manufacturer *per se*.

MASON SLIDE PRODUCTION

Unlike some of the other Life Model slide makers dealt with in this series of articles, Mason was a fairly large-scale general slide maker whose output covered a wide range of subjects beyond the standard Life Model fare of stories, songs and recitations. A contemporary catalogue (Fig. 3) exists, probably from the 1920s as it gives the Osborne Road address. Hardly any slides recognisably by Mason have yet been found that are not in this catalogue, suggesting that it may give a more or less definitive list of their entire production from the 1880s onwards.⁶

The Mason catalogue details 342 sets totalling some 8,987 slides, including many photographic lecture sets, comic stories and religious subjects from drawings, and long lists of 'miscellaneous' photographs covering all parts of the world. Their output included a series (*Mason's Lectures for the Lantern*) of at least 55 lecture sets of around 40-60 slides, accompanied by printed reading pamphlets of around 16 pages, suggesting a well-organised and professional operation.

Most of Mason's known Life Model slides are probably from the 1890s and 1900s, very much the high point of the popularity of this type of image. In total 103 sets are known, comprising some 1,549 slides (roughly 17% of Mason's total output), which makes Mason one of the three most prolific British Life Model producers.⁷ The Life Model sets (Table 1) mainly cover the familiar topics of religious redemption, morality and temperance, though about one-third of the titles in the list are popular songs. Set lengths follow the typical pattern seen with other makers: the 33 song sets have between five and ten slides, with an average length of seven, while the 70 stories and services of song range between five and 42, averaging 19.

Very little of Mason's output can yet be accurately dated, partly because they did not deal with the larger slide distributors whose catalogues were

often arranged in chronological order. It seems likely that they started producing slides in the late 1880s and that almost all their sets were produced before around 1920, but beyond that general range little precise information is available. A few sets include clues in their content – the 'Temperance story of the War' *Was It For This We Gave Our Lives?* has a reference to the 1916 Battle of Jutland – but more work is needed to establish a proper chronology of Mason's production.

VISUAL STYLE: HOW TO SPOT A MASON SLIDE

Slide mounts and labelling

Mason's identified slides have two common distinctive features, seen in most of the slides illustrated here. Firstly, the image mount or mask is usually of white paper (sometimes cream or off-white, which may be just due to ageing), and secondly, slide titles often appear on the front of the slide near the top edge, in the form of a printed label cut from the set listing in Mason's slide catalogue.⁸ The title labels are mainly attached to the mount itself, under the cover glass, but occasionally pasted on the outside of the slide. Slide set titles sometimes appear on the mount below the slide image, either typed on a pasted label or handwritten directly on the mount – this would suggest small-scale production, in that although there was a ready supply of printed labels for slide titles (using the common practice of cutting and pasting from catalogue lists), there was not enough business to make it worthwhile to print the titles of the slide sets.

Of course other manufacturers, particularly G.W. Wilson and James Valentine, also used white or off-white mounts, but only Mason's production regularly combined this feature with the printed title labels (their lecture sets follow the same pattern). No slides have been found identifying Mason by name, and they don't appear to have followed the practice of titling the slides on the top edge. Neither have any Mason slides been found with other dealers' labels under the cover glass, suggesting that they did not make slides to order for other dealers to sell on as their own production.

Colouring

Mason offered slides both 'plain' and hand-tinted; over 80% of those digitised in the Lucerna Magic Lantern Web Resource are the latter. The colouring is generally very well done, with fine details picked out exactly in a range of different shades. Apart from a bright blue sky in some exterior views the colours are often quite muted, even perhaps drab, with dull greens, pinks, blues and browns often in evidence (Figs 4 and 5).

Title slides

Few of Mason's Life Model sets have been found with an opening title as part of the image sequence: of the 103 sets known, only 20 included a title slide, all but two of those being popular songs. Only four examples have so far been illustrated in Lucerna, and these are quite crudely done, with the words painted onto the photographic image by hand (Fig. 6), rather than a more elaborate or specifically created introductory design as found in several other manufacturers' output.

Image locations

A higher than average proportion of Mason's Life Model images were photographed in places other than their studio. Of the 367 such images illustrated in Lucerna, 164 (45%) were taken in exterior locations, with 61 (17%) in 'real' interior locations and 142 (38%) against studio backgrounds and sets.⁹ Most of the exterior



6. A rare Mason title slide, displaying a slightly crude composition and execution – slide 1 of The River of Years



7. Midway between two of Mason's addresses – slide 20 of Meg and Her Lodger.



8. A typical Life Model drunkard propped up by the railings of an identifiable building – slide 2 of A True Story of Two Yorkshire Lads



9. Father pawns the family goods to fund his drink habit – slide 5 of That Hateful Scar. The location is about ten minutes' walk from Dorset Street

views are 'genuine' Life Model images, as opposed to stock photos to establish a location, often showing the models in street scenes in Southampton city centre or the neighbourhood of Mason's addresses in Bellevue Road and Dorset Street (Fig. 7). In Fig. 7, the background is Bellevue Road (no. 35 was just out of shot, beyond the two shop signs), while the model is walking along Dorset Street (no. 28 was a short distance behind the camera position).

Although, like much of the city, that area was damaged by bombing in the Second World War, its basic layout changed little until the 1960s when redevelopment of the road system altered it completely. There is still a street named Dorset Street, but as a modern dual-carriageway road it bears no resemblance to the shops and terraced houses of Mason's time. Bellevue Road still exists with some original buildings, but number 35 disappeared under the new Dorset Street. Mason's exterior location views, therefore, probably represent one of the few records of the streets and life of this area at the turn of the twentieth century.

Some of the views are fairly generic and impossible to identify, but many images show enough circumstantial details for a bit of detective work to



10. Hang up sheets to make a 'wall' of hanging sheets, add a few basic items, and that makes a 'poor household' – slide 1 of That Hateful Scar ...



11. ... but add wallpaper, table (and especially tablecloth), decorations and ornaments, and it's far more 'respectable' – slide 5 of Ted's Tattered Jacket



12. A borrowed 'real world' interior location standing in for a fictional location of the same type – slide 16 of Jessica's First Prayer



13. (Possibly) a portrait of the artist as a slightly younger man – slide 7 of Buy Your Own Cherries. Compare with the portrait of G.M. Mason in Fig. 1

establish the exact location. For example, the slide in Fig. 8 accidentally captures a business name and noticeboard of the London and North Western Railway's office, which contemporary street directories reveal to have been at 12 Oriental Place, Canute Road. Similarly Fig. 9 shows the exterior of a pawnbroker's shop, which the 1902 *Kelly's Directory* suggests was that of Nathan Cohen at 7 Bevois Valley Road – other Life Model producers might have created a 'pawnshop' backcloth or dressed a studio set, rather than seeking out a real-life example of the right business.

Where Mason slides do use studio sets they tend to be basic interiors, with little or no painted background scenery – sometimes the evocation of a 'wall' is as crude as a hanging sheet of fabric or paper. The two common set-ups are a 'poor house' (Fig. 10) with plain walls and sparse furnishings, and a 'respectable house' (Fig. 11) which has wallpaper (often the typical flowery designs of the period, and often, in coloured versions of the slides, tinted green) along with slightly more upmarket moveables. There are some three-dimensional 'dressing' items of the typical Life Model style, such as prefabricated fireplaces, paintings, calendars or other random wall decorations, but it does appear that both studio space and the stock of props were quite limited. While individual props and furniture do reappear in different Mason sets, this is perhaps a less useful identifier of the maker than in some other cases.

For more elaborate interior scenes, particularly locations other than generic domestic rooms (for example church interiors, meeting rooms, or places with a specific function like a church vestry), Mason tended to use actual locations rather than studio recreations. These can often be detected by bits of random detail like reflections in mirrors or adjacent rooms glimpsed through doorways (Fig. 12), or the rather uneven lighting and slightly harsher image contrast created by 'available light' photography, as opposed to the more even and planned illumination possible in a planned studio image.

Models

Mason's use of Life Model figures follows the same pattern as other makers, mainly using anonymous ordinary people to pose in the required roles, with varying degrees of skill and convincing naturalism. These people are very probably neighbours and friends from the area around Mason's studio. Few of them are particularly distinctive, and rather like the figures in Piggott's Life Model work discussed in the previous article in this series (see TML 19), this may possibly be deliberate – by using people who 'could be anyone' to represent the characters, the story might be expected to have a wider appeal or effect.

However a few recognisable figures appear more regularly, and these are quite likely to be members of Mason's immediate family. There are even a few possible appearances by G.M. Mason himself, though it is difficult to be conclusive. For example the protagonist of Mason's version of *Buy Your Own Cherries* (Fig. 13), which (because of a legible newspaper appearing in several slides in the set) can be dated confidently to 1906 when 'GMM' was 46 years old, bears some resemblance to the man seen in Fig. 1 – the jawline and shape of the head seem similar, though the life model (as seen in other slides in the set) still has a more luxuriant coiffure than the older balding gentleman in the portrait photo.

It would take more work to begin attempting to match the many generic boy and girl models who appear across different Mason slide sets, especially given the rapidly changing

appearance of children as they grow, and no childhood photos of the Mason offspring have yet come to light for comparison. But there seem to be enough common features to allow that analysis to begin, and given that Life Model makers almost always relied on those people nearest to them for a source of cheap and ready labour, perhaps there is a latent Mason 'family album' lurking within the slides. To end on a more general suggestion of future work, it would be worth starting to look more closely at the people in Life Model slides, rather than treating them (as we tend to all too easily) just as parts of the image composition.

Table 1. *Life Model slide sets known to have been produced by G. Miles Mason, 1880s-1920s*

Lucerna ID	Set title	Main usage	No. of slides
3003972	<i>Abide with me</i>	song	9
3003760	<i>Another day</i>	song	6
3003968	<i>Babylon</i>	song	8
3003876	<i>Betsy Trollope's jug</i>	story	14
3003828	<i>Bob the shoeblack: or honesty the best policy</i>	story	24
3003747	<i>The bonnie banks of Loch Lomond</i>	song	7
3003967	<i>A boy wanted: or, Jack the honest errand boy</i>	story	28
3003778	<i>Buy your own cherries</i>	story	22
3003852	<i>Caged!: a gaol bird story</i>	story	22
3003857	<i>Children of the city</i>	story	30
3003775	<i>The children's home</i>	song	8
3003991	<i>Christie's old organ: or home, sweet home</i>	story	30
3003766	<i>Consider the lilies</i>	song	6
3004095	<i>Cripple Tom: or 'knowing is loving and loving is doing'</i>	story	17
3003970	<i>Crossing the bar</i>	song	6
3003764	<i>Daddy</i>	song	7
3003859	<i>Davy's sacrifice</i>	service of song	24
3003965	<i>Depends on where you put it</i>	story	9
3003992	<i>Dick and his donkey: or how to pay the rent</i>	story	30
3003864	<i>The drunken father</i>	story	8
3003848	<i>Engine Bill: a true temperance story</i>	story	21
3003809	<i>Esmeralda</i>	story	15
3003850	<i>Father smokes, why shouldn't I?</i>	story	5
3003765	<i>Five o'clock tea</i>	song	10
3003975	<i>The flight of ages</i>	song	9
3003790	<i>The flower stall and the toy stall</i>	story	18
3003755	<i>The gift</i>	song	7
3008396	<i>Going to market</i>	recitation	8
3003771	<i>The guiding light</i>	song	5
3003768	<i>The harbour bay</i>	song	7
3004008	<i>Harry's pint: or, threepence a day</i>	story	12
3003750	<i>The holy city</i>	song	7
3003833	<i>I don't like getting up</i>	comic	6
3003973	<i>In the chimney corner</i>	song	7
3004063	<i>Inasmuch: or Ben Lagge's guest</i>	story	42
3003977	<i>Jenny's Dick</i>	story	25
3003994	<i>Jessica's first prayer</i>	story	30
3003863	<i>Jim and his charges</i>	story	20
3004064	<i>Jimmy's box of soldiers</i>	story	20
3003865	<i>John Bruce and his resolution: or 'Brother likes ale, Father'</i>	story	7
3003772	<i>Killarney</i>	song	6
3004052	<i>The last shilling</i>	recitation	18
3004065	<i>A little drop of comfort</i>	story	24
3009882	<i>Little Faith</i>	story	30
3003851	<i>A little help is worth a deal of pity</i>	story	5
3003774	<i>The little minstrel</i>	song	5
3003756	<i>The lost chord</i>	song	6
3003843	<i>Made clear at last: story of a ten pound note</i>	story	30
3004007	<i>The man who chalked his own door</i>	story	13
3004054	<i>The man who spoiled the music</i>	story	24
3003763	<i>Mary</i>	song	6
3003892	<i>Meg and her lodger</i>	story	26
3004005	<i>Mrs Wiggs of the cabbage patch</i>	story	30
3003971	<i>The Nazarene</i>	song	7
3003866	<i>Ned's helper</i>	story	12
3003794	<i>The New Year's guests: and the change they brought</i>	story	12
3003133	<i>No surrender</i>	service of song	22
3003795	<i>Old Roasty</i>	story	30
3003773	<i>Ora pro nobis</i>	song	6
3003813	<i>Our Father's care</i>	recitation	20
3003903	<i>Our two Christmas dinners</i>	story	12
3003806	<i>Over the snow</i>	service of song	18
3004062	<i>Paddle your own canoe: or Harry Bray's disappointment</i>	story	24
3003907	<i>The pearly way</i>	story	13
3003769	<i>The promise of life</i>	song	6
3003149	<i>Ralph's favourite story: or, the wanderer's welcome</i>	service of song	30
3003749	<i>The river of years</i>	song	10
3003860	<i>The river singers</i>	service of song	30
3003974	<i>Roses</i>	song	6
3004009	<i>Rough Will, the miner</i>	story	12
3003792	<i>Ruth Weston's Christmas</i>	story	10
3003808	<i>The single bell</i>	story	14
3003976	<i>The snowdrop's story</i>	story	14
3003748	<i>The star of Bethlehem</i>	song	9
3003798	<i>The stolen shirt</i>	story	18
3003810	<i>Susan Brook's basket</i>	story	12
3003757	<i>The swallows</i>	song	5
3003770	<i>Tatters</i>	song	5
3003858	<i>Ted's tattered jacket</i>	story	14
3003845	<i>That hateful scar</i>	story	12
3004006	<i>That little bonnet</i>	service of song	24
3003107	<i>There's help at hand</i>	service of song	36
3003873	<i>Tied to his wife's apron strings</i>	story	12
3003137	<i>Timothy Crab: or, fighting the drink fiend</i>	service of song	13
3004061	<i>Tina's white dress</i>	story	20
3003759	<i>Tit for tat</i>	song	7
3003846	<i>A true story of two Yorkshire lads</i>	story	12
3003849	<i>Try it!: a Christmas story</i>	story	21
3004021	<i>The two half-sovereigns: or good beginnings make good endings</i>	story	22
3003824	<i>The two sovereigns</i>	story	18
3003761	<i>Two to a bargain</i>	song	6
3003791	<i>Twopence a day: and what it accomplished</i>	story	14
3004072	<i>Until: or love unfaltering</i>	story	30
3003969	<i>The valley by the sea</i>	song	8
3003807	<i>'Violets, sweet violets'</i>	service of song	16
3003758	<i>Waiting for the king</i>	song	6
3004086	<i>'Was it for this we gave our lives?': or the strange experience of Mr Job Brown</i>	story	18
3003762	<i>When Jack and I were children</i>	song	5
3003797	<i>Where's your goose: a humorous temperance tale</i>	story	10
3003844	<i>Why Santa Claus didn't come</i>	story	12
3003799	<i>Why she gave up her porter</i>	story	8
3003918	<i>Willie's new boots</i>	story	5
3003752	<i>The young potato-roasters</i>	story	24

NOTES

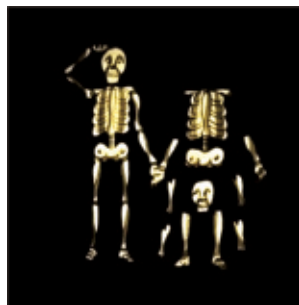
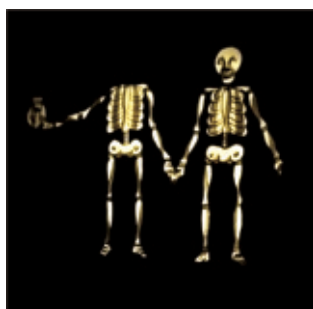
All slide images are from the Lucerna Magic Lantern Web Resource, reproduced by permission, and are all from the Nicholas Hiley Collection except Fig. 4 (Mervyn Heard Collection). All photos except Figs 1 and 2 are by the author.

1. No Mason sets have been identified in the hire or retail catalogues of Josiah Chapman, J. Lizars, Onward Publishing Office, Riley Brothers, UK Band of Hope Union, W. Watson & Sons, E.G. Wood or Wrench & Son. They do appear, albeit in small numbers, in the stock of the Church Army, J.W. Butcher (Wesleyan Methodist Sunday School Union), William Lane, Nicholson & Sons and some smaller local distributors. This would suggest that Mason had some less conventional means of distributing their products, but no contemporary advertisements or other clues as to their business practice are known.
2. Most of the Mason family history here, including the portrait, is drawn from information at ancestry.co.uk, particularly research by Chloë and the late Deirdre Mason (great-granddaughters of G.M. Mason) and Jennifer Neary, for which many thanks. I am also grateful for the generous help of Nicholas Hiley, a source of useful enlightenment as always. References for the archive sources referred to can be found in the Lucerna record for G.M. Mason (Lucerna item 6002168) and links from there to his relatives.
3. 35 Bellevue Road was occupied by someone else in the 1895 *Kelly's Directory*, but Mason gave that address when registering *Jim and His Charges* for copyright at Stationer's Hall on 5 May 1896 (National Archives, COPY 1/424/709).
4. The conviction, together with his wife Winnie Wheeldon and her mother Alice, was for conspiracy to murder the Prime Minister (David Lloyd George), for which Alf was alleged to have supplied poison. This episode is well explained in a website created by Chloë and Deirdre Mason as part of an ongoing campaign to have the convictions quashed – see <http://alicewheeldon.org>.
5. Tom Bargate, 'They Don't Much Care About What Happens – But Meanwhile...', *Southern Evening Echo*, 9 November 1963. I owe this reference to Nicholas Hiley, whose attention was drawn to it by Deirdre Mason.
6. Only one Life Model set, *Little Faith* (see Fig. 5), has so far been found which is not in the Mason catalogue; the clothing and vehicles in its images suggest it is from the 1920s. The elderly main male character bears some resemblance to G.M. Mason himself, which would correlate with his age at that time.
7. Only Bamforth (921 sets) and York (193) are known to have made more Life Model sets than Mason. The next most prolific is Piggott with 52, although there are at least 150 sets whose maker is not yet identified which might change these relative figures.
8. A few slides are known with black mounts (as in Fig. 12), though there is no obvious reason for this variation.
9. For comparative figures for other Life Model makers see the previous parts of this series in *TML* 14, 17 and 19, particularly Note 6 of the first article (*TML* 14, p. 10).



(left) A slide from *Pussy's Road to Ruin* – a similar set is in the Rouse Hill House and Farm collection

(below) A mechanical slide projected at the meeting



HERITAGE IN THE LIMELIGHT: THE MAGIC LANTERN IN AUSTRALIA AND THE WORLD

Sydney Performance

Martyn Jolly

On the evening of 4 October 2019, in a sandstone gaol built by New South Wales convicts in the 1830s, a 30-minute magic lantern dissolving view show was staged by the Australian Research Council Project *Heritage in the Limelight* in collaboration with the National Art School, The Power Institute Foundation for Art and Visual Culture, and Sydney Living Museums.

Produced as the closing event for a symposium on 'The Australian Object', the show responded to the collection of one of the historic houses managed by Sydney Living Museums – Rouse Hill House and Farm, situated 40km northwest of Sydney. In 1860 the wealthy pastoralist Edwin Rouse, who was styling himself as a local squire, purchased a music box from the Sydney clock makers Walker & Jones. A few years later Major Thomas Wingate purchased a Newton & Co. 'improved phantasmagoria' magic lantern, complete with a typical collection of slides from the period including a chromatrope, several sets of story slides including *John Gilpin's Ride*, *Pussy's Road to Ruin* and *The Tale of the Tiger and the Tub*, exotic view slides and comic mechanical slides. Wingate, a retired British Army officer and keen amateur photographer and artist who had married into the family, may have purchased the lantern and slides from Newton & Co.'s Fleet Street shop when he returned to London with his wife to exhibit a photographic panorama of Sydney Harbour at the International Exhibition of 1862, or they may have been purchased from a Sydney importer. The lantern and slides entertained school children from the local district in 1866, and were vigorously played with by successive generations of children at the house, where they remain to this day. Many have been broken, but some are still in good condition. In the 1960s John Terry, the sixth generation of the Rouse family, even incorporated the 100-year-old lantern and slides into some of his experimental psychedelic music performances. Further information about Sydney Living Museums, Rouse Hill House and Farm, its magic lantern and slides, and John Terry's psychedelia can be found at sydneylivingmuseums.com.au.

Our magic lantern show was not held at Rouse Hill, but at the site of one of Terry's 1960s psychedelic performances, the Cell Block Theatre, which had been converted from the colonial gaol into an inner-city theatre in the 1950s. Our musician Alexander Hunter and vocalist Heather Keens provided music, electronics, vocals and sound effects and Martyn Jolly and Elisa deCourcy operated the magic lanterns. We did not use the Rouse Hill lantern or slides but instead we projected equivalent slides from the same era in the *Heritage in the Limelight* collection through a pair of dissolving lanterns with a 'batwing' dissolver manufactured by James Steward in the 1880s.

We started with several original chromatropes accompanied by electronically modified recordings from the actual Rouse Hill music box. Next came the popular children's story *Pussy's Road to Ruin* using equivalent slides to those at Rouse Hill and accompanied by a reading from the original script along with improvised vocalisations, sound effects and music. We followed that with various comic slides in the same style as those at Rouse Hill, accompanied by improvised vocalisation, sound effects and music. We concluded with 20 different slides from the 1860s to the 1890s incorporated into a single story of sea voyage, storm and shipwreck. For this epic the contemporary artist Waratah Lahy painted a contemporary 'effect slide' for us, a 2cm by 1cm image of a tropical paradise which we dissolved over a nineteenth century slide of a dockside – a key location of many 19th-century imperial narratives. As can be experienced in the video documentation, our vocalist Heather Keens and musician Alexander Hunter made good use of the