

'AT HOME' WITH THE EDWARDSSES

On Saturday 12 October several members of the MLS and some friends gathered at the home of **Ian and Margery Edwards** in Bentleigh East, Melbourne, Australia for an informal gathering and sharing of some of our current interests in the art of the magic lantern.

After a welcoming cup of tea or coffee we were entertained by a PowerPoint presentation by **Antony Catrice** and **Ian Edwards** of some of the items from Werner Nekes' *Eyes Lies and Illusions* exhibition, held at the Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI) in Melbourne between November 2006 and February 2007.

Those who have seen any of Ian's presentations will recall the musical accompaniment on a mouth organ by Margery. Ian presented her with a boxed set of mouth organs all in different keys in appreciation of her support over the years. He then presented *The Rev. Percy Edwards – His Life and Times in Victoria* a tribute to his grandfather, it being 121 years since the Reverend first used a magic lantern in his work as a Church of England minister in his various appointments around Victoria.



The Rev. Percy Edwards (c.1851-1940)

Following a light lunch prepared by Margery we were entertained by several Victorian era classic tales including *Curfew Shall Not Ring Tonight* and *Gulliver's Travels* skilfully projected by **Roger Pierson** and recited by Ian. Then **Daniel Edwards**, Ian's grandson, projected classic funny slides some of which dated back to his great-great-grandfather, the Rev. Percy Edwards. It is to be hoped that he will keep the tradition alive for many years and continue the long held

family involvement. After an inspection of the various lighting apparatus used in lanterns over the years **John Semmens** presented his set of slides of the 'Soudan War' by an unknown maker which he is still researching. **John Hyett** then presented a few phantasmagorical slides, for two of which he had made frames and had the slipping section made and painted. He then showed a few slides which he has scanned, printed and framed. Next **Elizabeth Hartrick** spoke of some of the issues she had in producing her book *The Magic Lantern in Colonial Australia and New Zealand*. This was followed by evening refreshments and a chat before the participants wended their way homewards after an enjoyable day.



Great-great-grandson Daniel (with Percy looking on)

John Hyett

AUTUMN MEETING OF THE MAGIC LANTERN SOCIETY

BIRMINGHAM AND MIDLAND INSTITUTE

Saturday 19 October 2019

The BMI was founded in 1854 for the "diffusion and advancement of science, literature and art" and the Magic Lantern Society took this to heart with a science theme at its Autumn Meeting – a day when we came to expect the unexpected. We must thank **Lester Smith** and **Martin Gilbert**, in particular, for redefining the art of the possible.

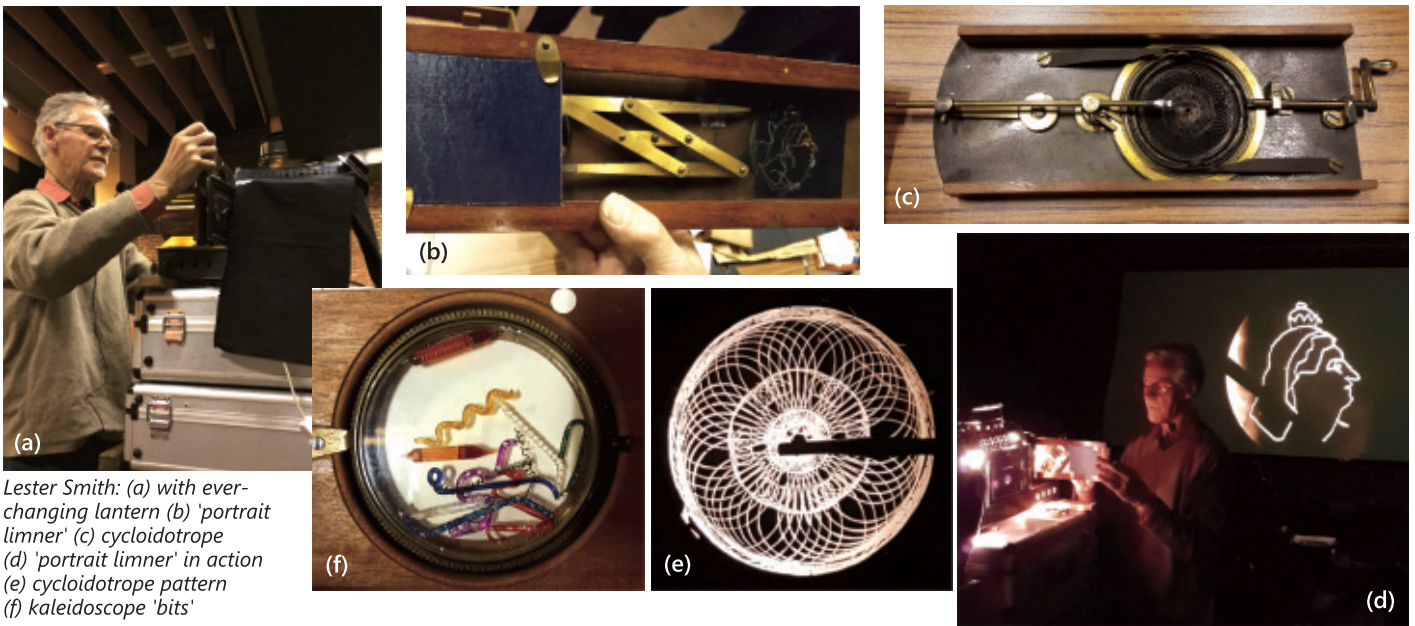
After an introduction from our Chairman, **Jeremy Brooker**, **Peter Gillies** set the scene by drawing 'Welcome' before our eyes on a soot-covered slide. He then showed more of his Lawson Wood slides (see p.17). **Lester Smith** took over to demonstrate first his cycloidotrope – the Spirograph of the magic lantern world. The mechanism was patented by Alfred Pumphrey of Birmingham on 19 October 1885 and Professor Pepper of the Royal Polytechnic was one of the first to use it. Lester took great care not to scratch the soot surface as he loaded the device. The stylus drew intricate lines, with seven revolutions completing the pattern. Once Lester had located his screwdriver, a small adjustment added a further pattern closer to the centre and a second adjustment brought another closer still. The finished slide was amazing. Two of these plates can be used to create a chromatrope effect, which Lester demonstrated later in the day.



Next he drew on a soot slide using a parallel-movement stylus – the pantograph principle – and an entirely recognisable portrait of Queen Victoria emerged, complete with earrings. This device was a 'portrait limner', devised in 1879 and also used by Professor Pepper. Lester had copied the drawing from a portrait-drawing mechanical clown! Then he fitted a lens assembly for projecting microscopic slides. The first, a flea, proved elusive but eventually Lester found it and focussed in to give us "fleas the size of elephants". This was followed by a series of miniature images (just 2mm diameter) made by J.B. Dancer (1812-1887) of Manchester, including Landseer's Queen Victoria and children, David Livingstone (we presume) and all the kings and queens of England from 1066 to Queen Victoria. With another major change to



The BMI – 'then' and 'now'



Lester Smith: (a) with ever-changing lantern (b) 'portrait limner' (c) cycloidtrope (d) 'portrait limner' in action (e) cycloidtrope pattern (f) kaleidoscope 'bits'

the lantern, Lester brought us the Darker Kaleidoscope as demonstrated by Professor Pepper during Christmas 1864. This was difficult to illuminate but we saw the effect, particularly using one image made up by Lester himself using coloured glass phials.

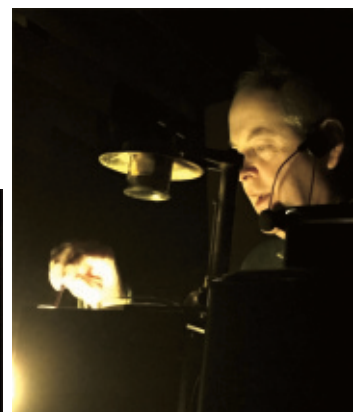
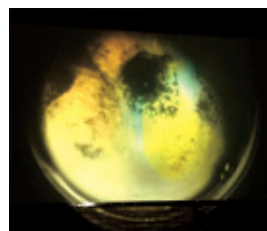
After lunch **Martin Gilbert** showed us images from BMI photographic exhibitions at the very end of the 19th century. One bore an uncanny resemblance to the 2019 set-up, including the same three colour lantern Martin had brought (of which more later). **Jeremy Brooker** gave us a brief history of the science lantern including an image of Michael Faraday using a lantern during his 1846 lecture at the Royal Institution. Jeremy highlighted two 'game changers': first, the oxy-hydrogen microscope in the 1830s which was able to provide enough light to project the tiny images and second, two innovations of the 1850s – photographic slides and the very bright *lanterne photogénique* that could also be used as a vertical projector enabling flat experiments to be projected (still in use in the 20th century). The most spectacular science lectures of all were given by Henry Morton in North America who regularly filled the 3,500 seat opera house in Philadelphia. He also devised a science lantern of his own, the 'college lantern', which was widely used. Jeremy showed diagrams of various elaborate British lanterns designed to achieve the same but nobody owned up to ever seeing one. Jeremy then showed some slides and effects including frogs (drawn, dead and X-rayed), fine gratings giving interference patterns, surface tension in a projected water bath, dyes mixing in the water ... and the 'volcano' effect of adding Alka-Seltzer. This was followed by a 'bouncing raisin' in a bath of lemonade and then, for a wonderful grand finale, he took the lens system off and projected green, blue and red light on a room full of real bubbles.

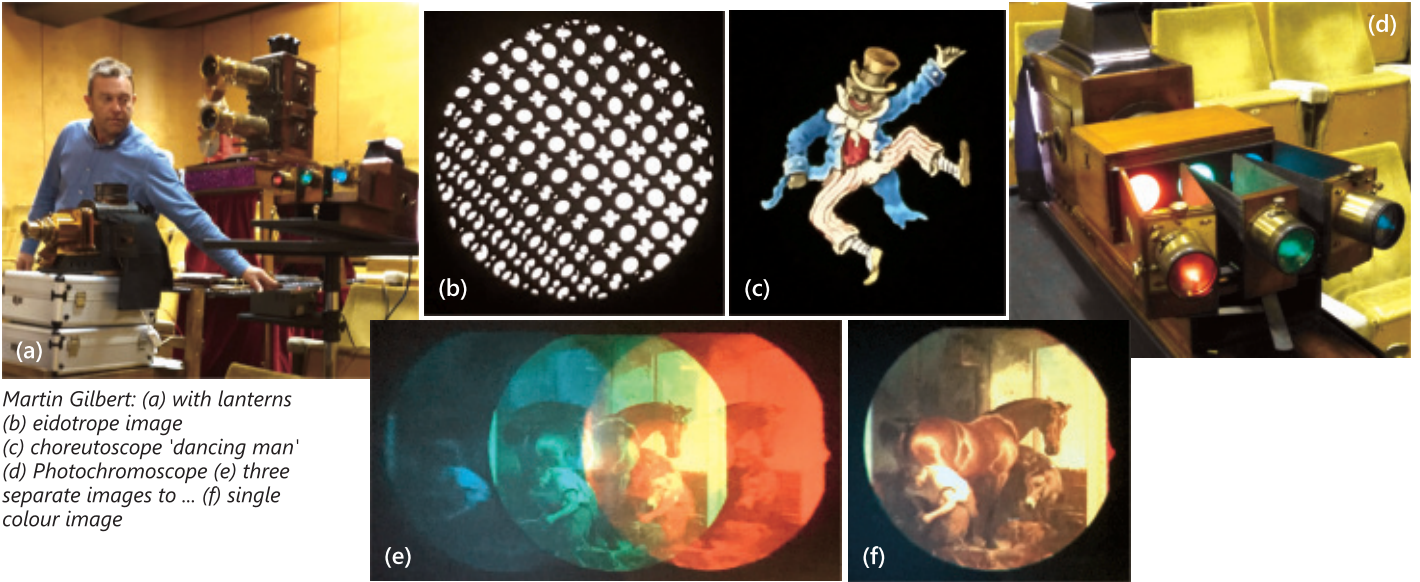
Martin Gilbert demonstrated a unique collection of eidotropes – pierced discs that revolve in opposite directions to give a variety of effects, devised in 1867 by Charles Wheatstone (1802-1875). The first was an unusual version with diamond holes, followed by quatrefoils and different sized circles. We then moved on to the 'wheel of life' that works using rotating slots of light and discs with sequential movement. Martin started with the earliest from 1867/68, based on a zoetrope strip – passing a head (five heads and six bodies). Some of the others he demonstrated were also based on zoetrope strips including two Muybridge strips – a somersaulting man and a horse galloping. Next came a selection of choreutoscopes beginning with two beautiful examples from the USA (T.H. McAllister) of a dancing sailor and skeleton. A slightly more temperamental British one by Beale (the inventor) showed eight images of a clown. A later version had six images of a man dancing with a top hat and then 'Friday and the bear' which would have been superimposed on a *Robinson Crusoe* slide. Declaring "that's it for animation" Martin moved on to the three-lens, three-colour (red, green, blue – RGB, see photo on p.20) projector – the Photochromoscope of 1896. Using three side-by-side black and white images originally photographed with appropriately coloured filters, Martin smoothly merged the images with the lantern to produce, magically, a perfect colour image. We saw Hampton Court Gardens, a blacksmith shoeing a horse and a bowl of cherries among others.

Next **David Burder** demonstrated a more modern musical kaleidoscope where the sound created the movement. At the bottom was a loudspeaker facing upwards, then a collection of bits of tin, wire and 'junk', then the kaleidoscope looking down and an old security camera above that which fed into a laptop. Using a jazz track, we



Jeremy Brooker 'experimenting' – with bubbles (left) and coloured dyes (below)





Martin Gilbert: (a) with lanterns
 (b) eidotrope image
 (c) choreutoscope 'dancing man'
 (d) Photochromoscope (e) three separate images to ... (f) single colour image

enjoyed the therapeutic effect of the device as the patterns changed in time to the music.

At the 'bring and show' session Jeremy showed us an animated tuning fork plus longitudinal waves and **Aileen Butler** presented examples from her hair follicle slide collection. **Peter Gillies** showed a 'chromoeidotrope' using coloured discs like a conventional chromatrope but with tiny dots painted on to create an additional eidotrope effect. **Robin Palmer** produced a rainbow using a projected slit with prism and then a modern projection 'lantern' – price: two for £1!

Lester Smith returned with a well-illuminated Newton kaleidoscope and demonstrated patterns using a door key, fingers and holes. He then added colour and increased the segments from eight to 16. Next Lester produced 'living silhouettes' via moiré effect animation using parallel lines. For the images he enlarged paper strips from a 1924 edition of *The Children's Newspaper*. These included a coach and horses, underwater creatures and a cowboy lassoing a bison. He finished with a 'changing faces' slide of 'Mr Grumpy' the gardener with a bluebottle on his nose.

Finally the **Spencer family** – Peter, Pat and Michael, with **Phil Henderson** on the ivories – gave us a more traditional show with songs, based around their home city of Birmingham. The songs included 'Round

and round Spaghetti Junction' to the tune of the 'Battle Hymn of the Republic'. We saw glimpses of Birmingham industry – blacksmiths, glassblowers, chainmakers and barges on the canals (more there than in Venice). We met skipping policemen with reference to *Peaky Blinders* and, although 60 miles from the sea, we went whaling off Greenland with disastrous results. A flower sequence (to 'Come into the Garden, Maud') celebrated the 190-year-old botanical gardens in Edgbaston. A working watermill, Sarehole Mill, highlighted the close association with J.R.R. Tolkien who lived nearby as a child. Following some circus acts, a Cadbury's lady appropriately wished us all 'Goodnight'. Altogether a fascinating day but you definitely had to be there to appreciate the skill of some MLS members and wonder at the ingenuity of our Victorian forebears.



The Spencer troupe (above) and two of their slides – whaling off Greenland and 'Birmingham' blacksmiths



Photographs in this article courtesy of Monique Wezenberg, Anastasia Kerameos, David Burder and Mary Ann Auckland

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