

Using a hidden 'detective camera' Grimshaw was able to capture images of people in the poor areas of Liverpool without the subjects becoming aware that they were being photographed. Today we might frown on this method but Victorian photographers had no such qualms. Grimshaw's best known images are 54 magic lantern slides with descriptive titles which were sold from 1892 onwards by the Liverpool optical dealers Archer and Sons under the title *Slum Life in our Great Cities*. Archer advertised these as:

*A Fine Set of Lantern Slides, photographed direct from Life in the Slums, by means of a Special Detective Camera. Price 1s. each, plain, or well coloured 2s.*<sup>6</sup>

Unfortunately the details of the camera Grimshaw used are not known. For it to have been effective it was probably a medium-sized leather case with a hole cut in the front, holding a fixed focus lens inside the dark interior. Pre-prepared glass negative plates would have been held in position inside, with a lever allowing the release of a single plate and a trigger handle operating the shutter. Such a device would allow Grimshaw to approach a subject at close range before operating the camera. Without any viewfinder, and with the case held at the photographer's side (some models were even designed to be concealed under a coat or jacket), many failures might be expected.

Walter Grimshaw travelled up and down 'Scotty Road' (Scotland Road, a main thoroughfare and centre of a working-class area of Liverpool, north of the city centre and close to the docks) photographing groups of slum children, sellers of bundles of clothes and other local people. He gave the portraits titles such as 'Homeless', a shoeless boy in ragged oversized clothes outside a factory gate (Fig. 3), or 'A Lazy Woman', a powerful image of a lady smoking a pipe sitting on the step of a doorway covered with graffiti (Fig. 4).

Grimshaw's slide 'A Purchase' (Fig. 5) shows a seller sitting on the roadside, among a crowd of fellow traders, attempting to sell second-hand garments in 'Paddy's Market', a long-running open-air market on Great Homer Street in the same area as Scotland Road. 'Squalid Poverty'

(Fig. 6) shows a large group of young children and indicates the overcrowding of this slum area. Examples of photographs from this set have been reproduced in a number of books relating to Victorian photography.

Whereas a number of well-known writers (Henry Mayhew, William Booth and, of course, Charles Dickens, to mention just a few) wrote about poor people and their quality of life, relatively few Victorian photographers thought it worth the effort to take photographs of how the majority of people in cities lived and worked. For this reason the photographs of John Thomson and Walter Grimshaw are of particular importance to gain a pictorial insight into this section of society. The details like the state of the people's clothes, their surroundings and the confident, or even defiant, expressions truly do paint more than a thousand words.

Part 2 of this article will illustrate further 'street life' slides, including work by Riley Brothers of Bradford, and discuss how photographic magic lantern slides were used in public performances to draw attention to the problems to be found in the slums.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

Photographs of slides by Richard Crangle except where credited otherwise.

1. John Thomson and Adolphe Smith, *Street Life in London*, London, 1877. Reprinted as *Victorian London Street Life in Historic Photographs*, Dover Publications, New York, 1994
2. Gail Buckland, *Reality Recorded: Early Documentary Photography*, David and Charles, Newton Abbot, 1974
3. William Sansom, *Victorian Life in Photographs*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1974
4. Roy Flukinger, *The Gernsheim Collection*, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas Press, Austin, Texas, 2010
5. Lucerna Magic Lantern Web Resource, [lucerna.exeter.ac.uk](http://lucerna.exeter.ac.uk), item 6005315 (genealogical research by Richard Crangle)
6. *Magic Lantern Society Newsletter* no.2, June 1980, p.2 – a facsimile of Archer's advertisement supplied by David Henry in response to a query by the current author. David Henry also identified Grimshaw as the photographer of *Slum Life in our Great Cities*



## OUR MOON: LONGING, ART AND SCIENCE (Der Mond. Sehnsucht, Kunst und Wissenschaft)

*Elisabeth Jegel and Felix Cikanek*

LAO- Laterna magica Theater (Elisabeth Jegel and Felix Cikanek) has recently contributed to this exhibition (*Our Moon: Longing, Art and Science*) at the NHM Vienna (Natural History Museum), open to the public from October 2019 until June 2020.

As well as celebrating the first step on the moon with the 50th anniversary of Apollo 11, the exhibition starts with a historical glance at our nearest neighbour in space. Among ancient

globes representing the moon, orreries visualising the movement of planets, romantic paintings and the famous film by Georges Méliès, there is also a magic lantern on display. This device, as well as the slides shown with it, are part of the collection of LAO – Laterna magica Theater (Elli and Felix).

We decided to include a more or less unrestored Perken and Son lantern together with slides on the subject of the moon. Dissolving views, some romantic handpainted slippers as well as astronomical rackwork slides (for example, by Newton) are shown in a short movie that runs in a loop during the exhibition opening hours.

Visit us on facebook (LAO Laterna magica Theater by Elli & Felix) and look up the exhibition at [www.nhm-wien.ac.at/en/moon](http://www.nhm-wien.ac.at/en/moon).

