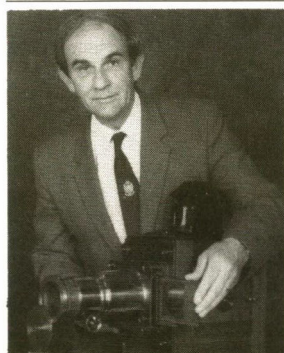
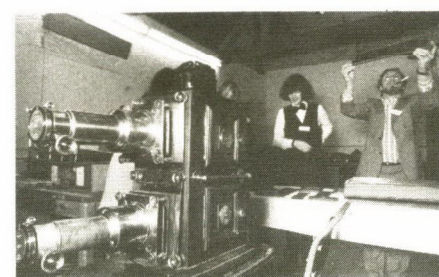
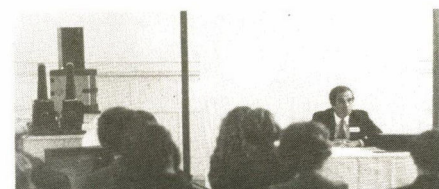




THE FIRST 10 YEARS

Of The Magic Lantern Society of Great Britain

The history of the first ten years of the Society would be incomplete without a contribution from Roger Orme and I am delighted to include this within my article. Roger was instrumental in bringing together known collectors for the purpose of forming a Society and without his initiative The Magic Lantern Society of Great Britain may never have been born. The inaugural gathering at Corsham Court in Wiltshire on 23rd October 1976 was attended by twenty prospective members; the Society now has a membership of two hundred and fifty and is embarking upon a second major International Convention. Between these two vastly contrasting events lies the very reasons for success – a body of magic lantern enthusiasts which has grown steadily, thereby preserving a friendly informal atmosphere, directed by a Committee through whose hard work and endeavours the aspirations of the membership have been translated into reality.



Founding The Magic Lantern Society on Saturday, 23rd October, 1976, has turned out to be one of the better things that I have done. In sporting terms, I now reflect that I was merely the player who threw the ball in from 'touch' so that others more gifted could go on to score. And score the Society most certainly has, to be now celebrating its tenth birthday.

Everyone knows that the initial enthusiasm and expectancy that go with the creation of a new Society has to be sustained long after the early euphoria has subsided. To this effect, I'm sure there must be someone's Law somewhere that would reason that if an enterprise is to succeed and endure, it has to first reach and pass a point in time. With capable guidance and leadership from the Committee, together with active response from the membership, the Society has indeed endured and prospered and there seems little to deter its progress in the years ahead.

The Magic Lantern Society just *had* to be founded. If it hadn't been me to do it, someone else would have done. As a magic lanternist, I have always been committed to the task of perpetuating the memory of the magic lantern age for posterity – as a fitting testimony and tribute to the ingenuity and devotion of so many unknown craftsmen whose efforts brought so much joy into so many otherwise uncolourful lives. Experience during the last ten years has shown what fine collections of slides and equipment still exist, together with a vast knowledge and expertise of many of the members, past and present.

The formation of the Society has had the effect of embracing a number of fine collections and collectors and neatly tying these up together into a corporate body – known to each other by their activities and publications. There are not that great a number of Magic Lanternists about, which in itself assists in perfecting the near totality of the Society's work. There is now a much greater public awareness of the magic lantern, a fact for which the Society must take its share of the credit.

Prior to the Society's formation, I had long felt the need to communicate with others of similar interest. Here in the West Country, I knew a few lanternists but there had to be more and there were! With the formation of a Society in mind, I wrote to every lanternist I knew and by word of mouth others soon contacted me. Then a letter published in *Amateur Photographer*, which was the extent of my reading matter at that time, announced the founding meeting to take place in the Barn Studio at Corsham Court, near Bath.

At 2pm, we met. Prospective members of varied professions and backgrounds came from far and wide that day. David Brooke from Massachusetts and John Jones from Leeds travelled the furthest. One early task was to sort out the Society's title. My speculative first title was 'The British Magic Lantern Society' but most favoured 'The Magic Lantern Society of Great Britain', which was duly carried. My invitation had stated, 'bring your most unusual slides', and when I saw what were displayed under this category, I knew there and then that the Society was destined for success. George Pollock took the photographs (reproduced here), plans for future meetings were made and a good old-fashioned chat between members ensued before we sat down to our inaugural dinner at The Methuen Arms Hotel, Corsham. From memory, about eighteen people turned up to this first meeting and the Society was thus well and truly launched.

Almost inevitably, (says he from the West Country), subsequent meetings were held in London to suit the convenience of the majority of members. I have pleasant memories of Saturday meetings at the Stanhope Institute and The National Film Theatre.

Membership went from strength to strength, attracting a blend of seasoned lanternists and more modest collectors. Later magic lantern tours which I made in the United States echoed the Society's success in England when I met a number of Americans who appeared to know as much about the activities of our Magic Lantern Society as I did. It must be a source of great satisfaction for all to know that like-minded enthusiasts in other countries have since formed their own societies and groups – all as a direct result of our formation at Corsham Court.

Although my own membership of the Society was fairly short-lived, I have nothing but praise for the committee and membership for the proud achievement of reaching the Society's Tenth Birthday and I offer my sincere congratulations to all concerned.

Roger Orme

It's magic

Can looking at the past help us today? More and more people seem to be finding a fascination in times long gone (and in those recently gone). There is plenty of opportunity to see old films, not only on TV but at the National Film Theatre or in clubs. This study can be very rewarding; firstly just as entertainment, because although we may not react to an old movie in the same way that its original audience did, we can find excitement or amusement in it from the very fact of looking at it through modern eyes; secondly as a unique item of history which lets us see an epoch exactly as it was, or at least as somebody imagined it to be. And if we are interested in technique, we can also discover the evolution of the motion-picture as it liberates itself from the static and theatrical style of the early days by means of the first attempts at close-ups, cutting, trick effects and montage.

It is not often realised that long before the discovery of the cinematograph, elaborate programmes of projected pictures, quite often with a sound accompaniment, were presented — in the home and in large halls, where they were a popular form of entertainment. Before the cinematograph? Much farther back than that: before the invention of photography!

Because the earliest slides were hand drawn and coloured, and very attractive, many of them are still around today. In Victorian times many "inspirational" themes were in vogue, but some slides were merely made to amuse, their comic effects being occasionally accentuated by a to-and-fro movement brought about by a hinged frame. Visual effects known as *dissolving*

views were already in use, thanks to double or multiple projection by specially-designed "bi-unial" and "tri-unial" lanterns. Lighting was by gas.

All these wonders and delights, never completely forgotten in Britain, are back in the news. On Oct 23 a new society was formed which aims to perpetuate them and, hopefully, to bring forth from the dust of countless attics the treasures that possibly still linger there. Its inaugural meeting took place near Bath, at the Barn Studio, Corsham Court, which Lord Methuen had lent for the occasion. The organiser was Roger Orme, a collector and magic-lantern showman.

The programme began with a series of dissolving-view slides presented by Janet Tamblin and Jeremy Brooker, using a bi-unial lantern of authentic vintage, but adapted to electricity, with dimmer switches on the bulbs. Then John Jones, senior lecturer in art at Leeds University spoke on his researches into the dating of lantern slides. The earliest of his own collection shows a Coronation scene which seems to be that of King George III or possibly Queen Anne; there is a strong likelihood that the slide itself is of the 18th century. Remarkable, certainly — until it is recalled that Samuel Pepys bought a "Magick Lanthorn" . . . and he died in 1703!

The link between modern and ancient techniques was provided by Sir George Pollock FRPS who projected *Transformations*, the slide/tape feature he produced in conjunction with Michael Tickner FRPS (on 35mm film, not on 3in square glass plates). This production, sub-titled *A Short History of Projection and Dissolving Views*, is based on the research of John Barnes and the material in the Barnes Museum of Cinematography in Cornwall.

The meeting discussed the formation

of a Society, tentatively called *The British Magic Lantern Society*. Doubts about the name centred on the word "magic" since in 19th-century terms this relates to shows such as the *Phantasmagoria* as opposed to more serious programmes put on with the Optical Lantern.

It was decided that an attempt should be made to give the new society an entirely independent existence. A steering committee was appointed, with David Francis as Chairman, Roger Orme as Secretary, and Michael Smith as Treasurer.

The last Magic Lantern Society was formed in 1890. The cinema was officially born five years later, and nobody seems to know how long the society survived. Today the situation is very different, and with slide shows once more reaching the heights of popularity, we should welcome a society which aims to remind us of these ancestors who were, without doubt, the first great showmen of the screen.

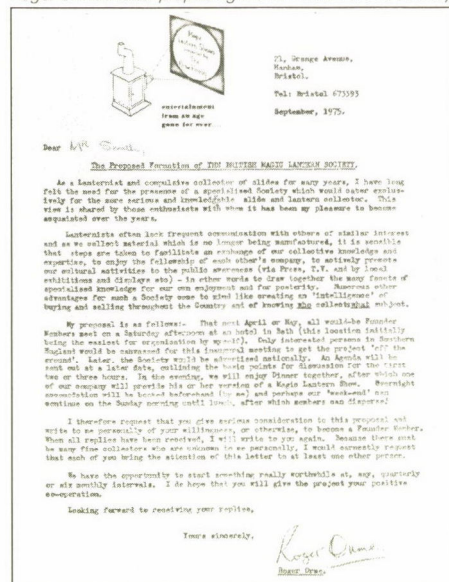


A learned and enthusiastic audience looks at a selection of Victorian — and even earlier — hand-painted magic lantern slides.

Amateur Photographer, December 29 1976

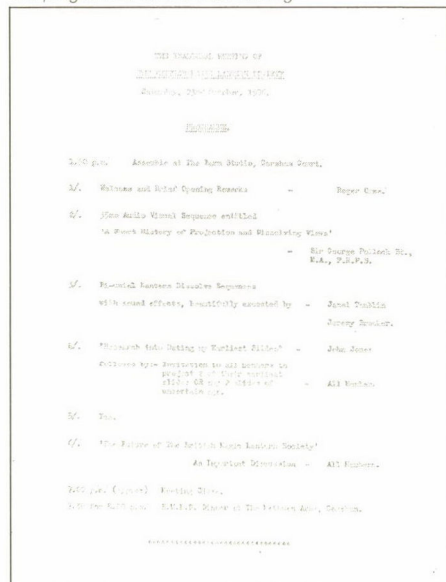
Whilst the prime purpose of that meeting ten years ago in Corsham was to discuss the formation of a Society, a little entertainment was incorporated into the programme. A full resume of the day's events was recorded in the reproduced article which appeared in the *Amateur Photographer* on 29th December 1976. The second meeting was held in January 1977 at the Stanhope Institute in London for the express purpose of producing a formal constitution and determining the frequency and format of future meetings. From that meeting emerged the pattern of quarterly events and a decision was reached to produce a *Society Journal*.

Roger Orme's letter proposing the formation of the Society



It is appropriate to dwell for a moment on the enormous success of this publication and the part it has played in establishing the credibility and reputation of the Society. Whilst only nine issues have appeared to date, the first one appearing in April 1978, the *Journal* has proved to be the flagship of the Society and is now distributed to the major libraries and institutions worldwide with an interest in the archaeology of the cinema. There is little doubt that through the *Journal*, the Society's name has spread far and wide and it has been a major factor towards expanding the membership base. Synonymous with the *Journal* are the names

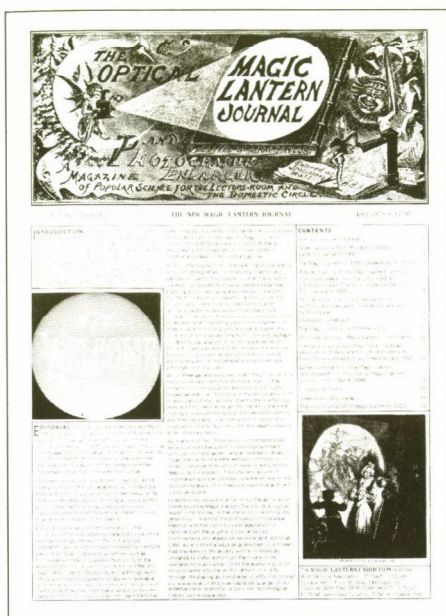
The programme for the first meeting



of Tony Dugdale, the editor of the first six issues, David Henry, who took over from him in 1983, together with Dennis Crompton and his technical staff at the Architectural Association. The *Journal* is of an amazing standard both in terms of content and design and has faithfully stuck to the original objectives of providing a forum for the activities of members of the Society and filling the gap in the literature concerning the lantern by combining the publication of historical research with the reprinting and adaptation of material from original sources. The quality of the *Journal* is even more incredible considering the size of the Society and the limited financial resources available, more particularly in the early years of publication. Indeed the first journal was subsidised by the Architectural Association as a token of appreciation for the Society mounting an exhibition to complement one of the courses being run at that time. I know that the entire membership, and I include the *Journal* Editor and the technical back-up team, would like to see more *Journals* being issued, but it has to be recognised that each edition involves considerable research by the contributors and many, many hours of editorial and production time — all given freely and willingly. I continue to be delighted at the consistently high standards which are achieved and I must place on record thanks on behalf of the Society to all those who have contributed over the years and particularly to all involved on the production side. Keep up the good work — I look forward to each issue no matter how infrequently it appears. Quality is far more important than quantity.

At the end of the January 1977 meeting The Magic Lantern Society of Great Britain was truly launched and further meetings were held in April, June and October that year thereby establishing the pattern of quarterly meetings which exists to this day.



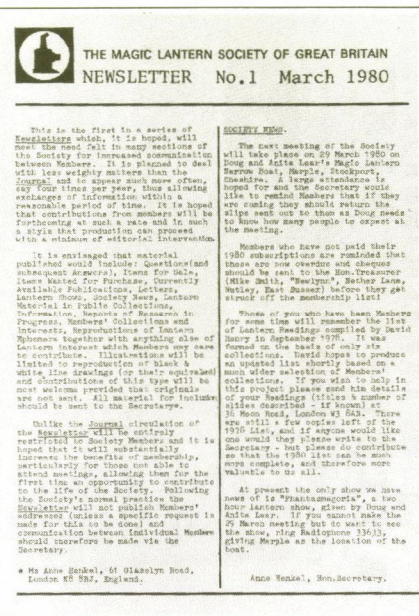
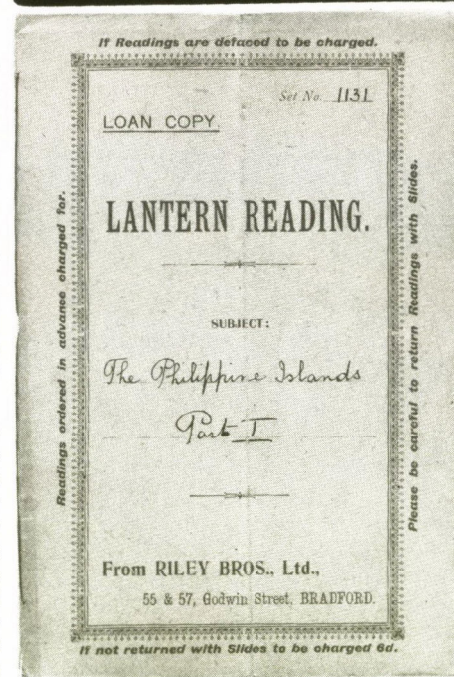


Vol.1 No.1 of The New Magic Lantern Journal

Worthy of recalling during 1977 was the purchase by John Jones and myself of the remnants of the slide library of Riley Brothers Limited of Bradford. This consisted of 30,000 slides which were discovered in the basement of a Bradford mill which was due to be demolished and which were bought by an antique dealer from Leeds. I saw this collection advertised in *Exchange & Mart* and following protracted negotiations John and I bought the entire lot early in the year. I spent many happy hours at John's home in Leeds rough sorting the mountains of slides and readings and eventually brought them to my home in Sussex where Elizabeth, my wife, spent the summer months cataloguing each set with a view to holding an auction later in the year for Society members only. This auction took place at my home on 4th September 1977 and was held in the garden on the most delightful of summer Sundays with John undertaking the role of auctioneer. If memory serves me right, some 15,000 slides were sold that day and I can vividly remember members sitting on the lawn and perched on the rocky bidding for lots and having a thoroughly enjoyable time. Of the other 15,000 slides several thousand were damaged by damp beyond resurrection and despatched to the dustbin, some were sold at the April 1977 meeting and John and I kept one or two sets for ourselves. In all it was the most successful of exercises – the membership had the opportunity of participating in the acquisition of this massive library and John and I recouped our original substantial investment.

At the October meeting that year it was a delight to welcome two charming people from Seattle, USA – Joe and Alice Koch. Encouraged by what they saw in England they returned home and shortly thereafter The Magic Lantern Society of US and Canada was formed. To this day our two Societies maintain very close links and indeed many members subscribe to both. It is most fitting for the US Society to make a contribution to this publication. At this meeting the first Society auction was held. This has now become an established feature on our calendar and I know it is eagerly anticipated by many. As well as providing a market-place for the exchange of material it also provides a valuable source of income for the Society.

By the end of 1977 the Society was beginning to take shape and membership started to expand as word of a Society in England spread around the collecting world. 1978 saw the start of our summer meetings with the emphasis being on a family occasion with a garden party atmosphere. This was achieved through the kind offices of David Francis who placed the house and gardens of the National Film Archive at Berkhamsted in Hertfordshire at our disposal. This venue was used for six successive summer meetings until numbers dictated that an



The first issue of the Newsletter

alternative venue was needed and David Salomons House near Tunbridge Wells in Kent was discovered.

This is perhaps an opportune moment formally to acknowledge those members who have generously provided venues for meetings over the years, often at little or no expense to the Society. This has been of immeasurable financial benefit, particularly during the formative years when resources were limited. I refer in particular here to Ron Morris who in his capacity as Principal of the Stanhope Institute (now the Central Institute) made the Society most welcome for a number of years, David Francis for arranging venues at both the National Film Theatre and The National Film Archive, and Dennis Crompton, Head of the Communications Unit at the Architectural Association, who in latter years has provided the Society with a semi-permanent home. As mentioned earlier, 1978 saw the launch of the Society journal and the first attempt to produce a complete list of readings owned by members. The response to this latter project was disappointing with only six members contributing. I cannot believe that the remainder of the membership do not have any readings but until they surface and details are forwarded the list produced in 1978 remains the most up-to-date one available. I have found this service of immense benefit and many a set has been brought to life with the addition of a few appropriate verses.

By the end of 1979 membership had grown to eighty six – more than four times the size of the original membership three years earlier, although attendance at the quarterly meetings seldom exceeded twenty five.

March 1980 saw the emergence of the Society *Newsletter* – a less scholarly publication than the *Journal* but fulfilling the need felt by many for a vehicle for informal communication between members. Whilst it was originally envisaged that this would be a quarterly publication, in reality it appears at irregular intervals as and when material is submitted. Members' contributions are supplemented from time to time by the *Newsletter* editors who have skilfully complemented contributions with copies of some delightful original material and rare ephemera. Twelve issues of the *Newsletter* have now appeared with the editorial role having passed through the hands of Anne Henkel (now Anne Trevillion) to David and Barbara Henry, and now to Jeremy Fisher who has undertaken this role for the last three years. A delightful feature of several of the later issues has been the Derek Jones cartoons which so vividly capture the rich imagination and eccentricity of the magic lantern collector. Like the *Journal*, the *Newsletter* has grown in stature with each issue and our congratulations are extended to all those who have been involved over the last six years.



Lanterns as far as the eye could see at the 1983 Convention Exhibition



'They came from near and far...'



Mervyn Heard v. biunial (Mervyn won!)



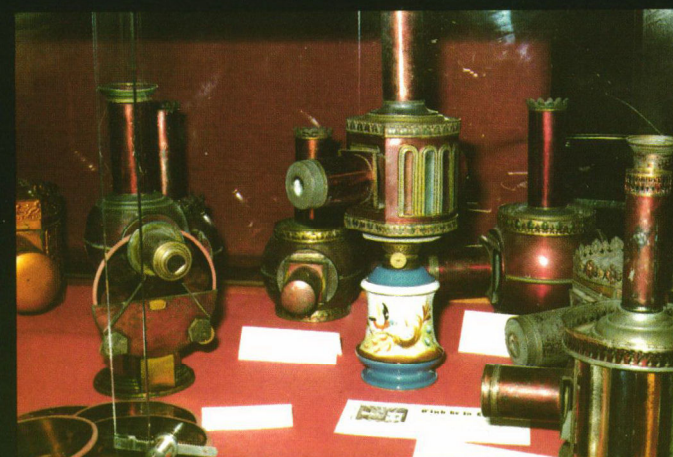
Some Albert Smith panoramic long (and tall) slides from Mike Simkin's collection



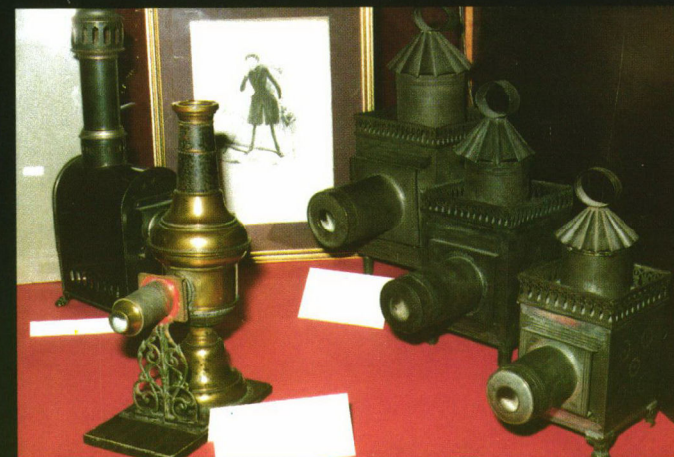
The 'Family Bartley'



Possibly the only edible biunial ever to have existed



Toy polychrome lampscopes from Alain Gardeur's collection seen in Paris



More lanterns at the exhibition organised by the Club de la Lanterne de Deuil-la-Barre
Photos by Lester Smith

Photographs by Beryl Vosburgh

The Society meeting in Leeds



The facsimile Journal

[illegible]

	
PROGRAMME <small>1983 - 1984</small>	
TUESDAY <small>18.00-19.00: Conference introduction 19.00-20.00: Magic Lanterns from the past and the future</small>	
WEDNESDAY <small>09.00-10.00: The History of Magic Lanterns 10.00-11.00: Magic Lanterns from the past and the future 11.00-12.00: Coffee</small>	
THURSDAY <small>09.00-10.00: The History of Magic Lanterns 10.00-11.00: Magic Lanterns from the past and the future 11.00-12.00: Coffee</small>	
FRIDAY <small>09.00-10.00: The History of Magic Lanterns 10.00-11.00: Magic Lanterns from the past and the future 11.00-12.00: Coffee</small>	
EXHIBITION <small>10.00-12.00: The History of Magic Lanterns 12.00-13.00: Magic Lanterns from the past and the future 13.00-14.00: Coffee</small>	
SAUNDERS <small>10.00-12.00: The History of Magic Lanterns 12.00-13.00: Magic Lanterns from the past and the future 13.00-14.00: Coffee</small>	
1983 <small>10.00-12.00: The History of Magic Lanterns 12.00-13.00: Magic Lanterns from the past and the future 13.00-14.00: Coffee</small>	



got back on his feet from a serious illness it was a remarkable achievement. It is sad that the economic climate forced a premature end of this venture but fortunately Mike and Janet continue to practice the art of the lanternist travelling to wherever they find an audience.

At that meeting a facsimile copy of one edition of the original *Magic Lantern Journal* was handed out and this is now becoming a regular feature in our expanding list of publications. This has been the most successful of ventures and of immense benefit to all those members interested in the forerunner of our current *Journal* and particularly for those who do not have their own complete set of originals. To date three issues have been reproduced.

There is no doubt that 1983 was a high spot in the short life of the Society and it was expected that the substantial increase in membership resulting from the Convention would prove to be shortlived. This was not the case and to this day our numbers continue to increase year to year. On reflection the 1983 Convention was a major milestone for the Society – the time when the transition was made from being a Society for the enthusiastic collector

to a professional body with credibility in the outside world and a reputation to maintain. Almost overnight our quarterly meetings took on a different meaning – numbers attending rose substantially and expectations of the programme became more demanding. The Committee were quick to recognise these changing circumstances and restructured in an attempt to continue to manage the Society in accordance with the wishes of the membership. I believe this has been successful but there is little doubt that further changes will be inevitable as more ambitious projects are undertaken and expansion of the membership base gathers momentum. However here is not the place to speculate about the future – I have left this to our Chairman as the introduction to this publication.

In October 1985 the Society was invited to Paris by Club de la Lanterne to participate in the annual photographic fair held at Deuil-la-Barre. Our Chairman's linguistic skills stood him in good stead during this four day indulgence and on the basis that he fully understood all that went on I was only too happy to accept his kind offer to document the events of that memorable long weekend.

COOO, COOO... BRRR, BRRR..

Being an account of
The Society Trip to Paris

Friday, October 11th, 1985... 4.00am...

Philip Banham steered the big Peugeot estate out of his sleeping Warwickshire village and set the automatic pilot on a course for London.

Up in Leicester John Finney shivered, closed the front door and headed south.

One hour later in Massachusetts the Balzers started to prepare for a drive to Logan, Boston's airport, and a flight to Paris. All over Europe lantern collectors were stirring and packing suitcases.

In Maidstone a smartly-dressed Scottish coach driver pulled himself together for a scheduled commuter run to London.

8.30am outside the Architectural Association in London. Twenty four intrepid collectors climb aboard their chartered coach for Paris. Bags were stowed, boxes of slides, optical and lantern goodies were safe in the boot. First stop, New Cross in South London, where our driver to Paris was to join us after completing his first job of the day. 'Good morning everybody, my name's Andy', says a broad Glaswegian voice... 'I drew the short straw so I've got you lot for the next four days...!'

Instant relaxation, an abusive driver with a sense of humour... it's going to be alright after all.

Twenty four on the bus, another fifteen or so making their own travel arrangements, and The Magic Lantern Society was on the move to Paris. More precisely, to Deuil-la-Barre, a northern suburb, for the eighth annual *Festival Photo Cinema* organised by Sonima under the presidency of Alain Gardeur. On our itinerary a day's travel, accommodation in a small conference centre, a magic lantern exhibition,



a photo/cine/lantern market, a lantern show, a visit to the Musée du Cinema, and what promised to be a memorable banquet and a day travelling home.

In the unfamiliar surroundings of the coach the lantern mob was strangely subdued. Despite the smooth motion of the coach and the Indian Summer weather it took at least one and a half minutes before the dealing and swapping started... the tone was set for the week-end.

Deuil-la-Barre is to Paris as Ponders End is to London, and was found by Andy about as easily. However we arrived about 6.30pm to find assorted Americans scattered around the Town Hall car park. 'What the ... kept you lot?' was one friendly welcome. Grace Frederick and Ann Harris expressed a similar sentiment but with several gallons more of sophistication *appliqué*. However, the peace was made, Alain Gardeur greeted us warmly, distributed fistfuls of lantern ephemera including instructions, hotel rooms, programmes and so on and there we all were in Paris...

Nobody had much to report by way of magic lantern activity between bedtime and breakfast, although I did hear rumours that Lester Smith's impromptu lantern show out of his bedroom window was interrupted around 2am by a non lantern collector who suggested that the time was more appropriate for sleep rather than play... *c'est la vie je guess*.

By ten the next morning we were in the market hall which was packed with photo, cine and lantern type stalls. Our quartet who had rented stalls were finding their linguistic skills taxed by the Dutch, German and French requests for prices, whilst out



'The Society party on their visit to Paris'

treasurer had quietly assumed his natural position behind a stall and was efficiently accepting money in return for society publications. Still more Magic Lantern Society members arrived and the whole thing was starting to look like the market hall at our last Convention. The Honeggers came from Switzerland, Nora Raphael and team from Holland, Ernst Hrabalek from Vienna and of course, efficiently snapping up bargains in Leslie Cole's wake, Herman Bollaert from Belgium.

The exhibition opened in the Town Hall at eleven thirty – a really first class showing based on Alain Gardeur's collection of high-quality polychrome French lanterns, Desch type slides and super ephemera. By mid-day the mayor had opened the exhibition, the bar staff had done the same with the wine and we were meeting what seemed like the entire population of Deuil-la-Barre (pop. 17,000). The annual photo fair is an important local event and lasts for a fortnight. The programme includes viewing and debating films, photographic competitions and other related events of which our week-end was the first part. Clearly as deputy mayor Alain had a convenient and appropriate location for his exhibition. Of all the interesting items my own favourite was a mint-condition Lapierre Lampascope on its original ornamental and painted porcelain base. By the end of the afternoon those with the biggest smiles were our stallholders, all of them doing their best imitations of the Cheshire Cat as they sat behind empty stalls...

The French had asked us to provide a lantern show which we did in the shape of Lear's Magical Lanterns. Scheduled for Saturday evening at 8.30 the show started promptly in the best traditions of The Magic Lantern Society. Unfortunately we were not informed that in France 8.30pm means 9.00pm. At the start therefore Dugdale and Alain Gardeur were still out in the street welcoming everyone to the show and awaiting the arrival of the mayor at quarter to! No matter. With nimble Gallic flair, which left me speechless with admiration, A. Gardeur deputised your English chairman as a one man welcoming committee whose job was to stay outside, alone, in the cold, whilst he rapidly vanished inside to watch the show.

We needn't have worried about the late start. The Lears were superb... *un succès fou!* Dissolves followed short stories, ships foundered on the Eddystone Rock and the movie was cranked away by hand. Tension mounted as two splendid men o'war faced each other on the screen, one sporting the Union Jack and the other, yes, you've guessed it, had the Tricolour fluttering proudly from the top of its main mast. The music grew louder and louder and we watched with awful fascination. They wouldn't, they couldn't. Then at a given signal balloons burst all over the hall with a deafening explosion as a broadside of cannon fire raked the Frenchman all along its side and flames spread rapidly along the stricken vessel. Quickly and finally, in front of the mayor, our hosts and all the civic dignitaries of Deuil-la-Barre, Anita Lear dissolved the French ship below the waves and down into D. Jones's locker. *Quelle catastrophe!* Uproar. How fortunate that the *entente cordiale* had been so well-reinforced with local brew at the opening earlier on. However, friendship prevailed and despite the blunt reminder of Horatio's triumph one hundred and eighty odd years ago the Lears received a well-deserved standing ovation. A happy end to a splendid day and only improved for those half dozen of our party lucky and privileged enough to be

invited to stay as the guests of local families overnight.

Sunday at 10.00am and it was off to the Flea Market at Clignancourt, one of the biggest anywhere. Despite the unusually high density of magic lantern collectors to be seen in the area that morning several treasures did survive the battle to end up in private hands – most notably those of American Chairman Balzer, who fielded a large painted lampascope by Lapierre. Funnily enough the rest of us were quick to point out that we would have bought it if it hadn't been so dusty... not that there was any envy in our kindly observation...

By lunch time Bill Main, visiting from New Zealand, was starting to feel quite relaxed. The carnival-like atmosphere of the visit had convinced him that the French authorities would never be able to pick him out as a New Zealander in such a crowd. To reinforce his feeling of well-being I took him and seven others to Chez Louise for lunch. If you've never been... go. The food is lousy but that is quite by the way. Doors open for Sunday lunch at midday. By 12.15 you're in the queue outside. Forewarned we took the last table for eight with two minutes to spare. Guitar and accordion music amplified the bustle of activity, the queue spilled in the open door and started to block the aisles. Counterpointing the music an elegant Edith Piaf singalike burst into *La Vie en Rose*, the haunting sound cutting through the food orders being shouted from corner to corner across the crowded room. I watched with delight as a waiter, forcing his way through the crowd by the effective technique of rushing up behind someone and loudly shouting, 'Brrr, Brrr... Brrr, Brrr...', pulled the turnups of a diners trousers on the balcony, raised his arm up high and, balancing a plate, passed the food like a juggler up to the diner, who then manoeuvred the plate up the outside of the wrought iron balcony, over the handrail and onto his table. 'Cooo, Cooo... Cooo, Cooo', a high-pitched voice trilled behind our table. Ignored. 'COOO, COOO... COOO, COOO', impatiently. Turning we see our diminutive waitress balancing all our lunches along two arms. 'Cooo, Cooo...!!!!'. After an hour of this... 'Brrr, Brrr, Cooo, Cooo' ... *Non, je ne regrette rien* from Edith Piaf and rolling accordion music, Bill Main finally conceded



'Collectors.....'

The quarterly meetings throughout 1984-1985 were well attended and now it is not uncommon to see nearly a hundred people at these regular get-togethers. The programme secretariat is still able to bring variety and style to these events and whatever is planned by way of formal proceedings is invariably supplemented by impromptu sessions. Within the overall subject of the magic lantern there are so many facets in which individuals have specialist knowledge and experience that the opportunities for future programmes seem endless.

With another AGM behind us our thoughts can now

that Auckland had nothing to match this and through a foggy wine-induced haze enquired about taking up residence in Paris.

Next, to the Musée du Cinéma. Closed for building work but especially opened to us for a private visit. How pleasant to wander through this excellent museum without a guide. The covers were off some of the cabinets and again we felt really welcomed. A must for anyone visiting Paris and worth a write-up all on its own.

Finally, back to the hotel. Fifteen minutes to change and then with the coach to the banquet and another discovery. Despite 8.30 meaning 9.00 on Saturday night, when the French say 7.30 on Sunday to eat that is exactly what they mean. Arriving smugly at 7.45 we find our hosts already in place – all forty of them. Quickly seated, the women were presented with fresh roses and the men with a souvenir bottle of local wine. The finale had begun. A menu of six alcoholic courses laced with food soon had all the French singing their hearts out in ritual choruses. The chef came out of the kitchen and sang us two unaccompanied solo ballads and your Chairman struggled through a speech of thanks delivered in Yorkshire-accented French. Dugdale, Smith, The Lears and Balzer were presented with the coats of arms of Deuil-la-Barre and then, as if that were not enough, I finally had to hand it to my friend Dick Balzer. Speaking not a word of French he walked unsteadily to the middle of the room, gave the best speech of the evening and to my astonishment and glee pulled a huge medallion from under his lanternists pullover and presented it to Alain Gardeur. Not only from himself mind you, but also on behalf of the entire American Nation, the Senate, AND the President of the USA. *Extraordinaire...*



As the coach headed back towards England through the Monday morning sunshine I chuckled to myself in memory of the rich moments so generously organised for us. Perhaps the most lasting image, and one which summarised the warm friendship shown to us, came from Beryl Vosburgh concerning the French family with whom she stayed on Saturday night. On hearing how tired she was from the travel to Paris and the rigours of a night spent in our hotel annexe, they offered her the luxury of a long hot bath. Not only was the bath filled for her, not only were the deep foaming bubbles added for her, but a thermometer was produced, the temperature of the water taken and the question seriously put, 'Is the temperature how you like it?' Cooo, Cooo... Brrr, Brrr. When's the next one Alain?

Tony Dugdale



and Showmen.....'

turn to the 1986 Convention. Plans for this event have been going on for well in excess of twelve months with behind the scenes planning gathering momentum as each month passed by. The Convention Committee have put in many, many hours of hard work to ensure this major occasion will be a complete success. I hope when you return home on Sunday you will be a little better informed, perhaps have acquired one or two treasures, but above all, renewed old acquaintances and found new friends with whom you have enjoyed the magic of the occasion.

Mike Smith