

## OBITUARIES

### RALPH HYDE

1939–2015

Life is fragile. We have recently learned how painfully true this saying is: Ralph Hyde is gone. It is still hard to believe it, but Ralph passed away in London at his home on 2 June 2015. The worlds of panoramians and early visual culture researchers and collectors have lost one of their most loved, outstanding and enthusiastic masters. Ralph left us suddenly, in full command of his enormous knowledge and very special skills, his head full of projects to come. There is no one to take his place; personalities like Ralph simply do not appear any longer. What we have are the many precious memories, and of course his published works, which will shine a bright light into the distant future.

In 1965 Ralph began working at the Guildhall Library. He started as Assistant Librarian, became Assistant Keeper (1970–75) and finally Keeper of Prints & Maps, a position he held until his retirement in 1999. He lectured and wrote extensively on London images, early town plans and prospects. He also prepared many publications for the London Topographical Society, including its all-time bestseller, *The Rhinebeck Panorama of London* (1981). It was based on an outstanding bird's-eye view of London from the earlier 19th century, which Hyde had rediscovered and identified.

Ralph's interest in panoramas as a medium was a natural outgrowth of his work. His many publications on panorama-related subjects included books on the Regent's Park Colosseum, a facsimile of the Barkers' panorama from the roof of Albion Mills, and the panoramas of Samuel and Nathaniel Buck. He also curated two exhibitions on panorama-related subjects: 'Gilded Scenes and Shining Prospects' (Yale Center for British Art, 1985) and 'Panoromania!' (Barbican Art Gallery, 1988–89). In his meticulous way, both were accompanied by substantial books/catalogues. *Panoromania! The Art and Entertainment of the 'All-Embracing' View* (London: Trefoil Publications & Barbican Art Gallery, 1988) is still considered one of the most authoritative books on the subject.

Ralph was a long-standing member of The Magic Lantern Society. He gave a presentation to the Society in April of this year, introducing his latest publication, a book on paper peepshows from the Jacqueline and Jonathan Gestetner Collection. Though presented



Photograph of Ralph Hyde taken in 1984 in front of an image used for the cover of his book *London As It Might Have Been*, 1984



Ralph Hyde at the Panorama of Thun, March 2015

with characteristic modesty, this beautifully produced book was a herculean task, the product on many years of work. There are many who will be missing him, but Ralph's final masterwork will be an inspiration for researchers and collectors of the future and a glorious part of his legacy.

Adapted from an obituary by Erkki Huhtamo. A full version is available through the website of the International Panorama Council.



### RALPH SHAPE

1936–2015

It is with great sadness that we have to report that Ralph died on 21 June 2015. As well as being one of our longest serving international members, Ralph was Secretary/Treasurer of the MLS of US and Canada from 1996 to 2000 and President from 2000 to 2004. He also wrote several articles for the *Magic Lantern Gazette*, including a regular column under the heading 'President's Corner'. There are a number of touching reminiscences and tributes in the August issue of the MLS of US and Canada e-publication. Ralph attended many of our conventions and was a staunch supporter of all Society activities. He will be greatly missed.

Mike Smith