

4th BIENNIAL AUSTRALASIAN MAGIC LANTERN CONVENTION

John Hyett



Fifteen people (six members and nine guests) gathered at the Coal Creek Community Park and Museum, Korumburra, Victoria, Australia on Saturday 22 October for our fourth Convention. The Convention was held in the old Kardella South Mechanics Institute, originally built in the 1920s and since relocated in the park. The venue was provided free of charge by the park management, which was much appreciated.

After a reviving cup of coffee the organiser, **John Hyett**, welcomed everybody, and passed on fraternal greetings and best wishes for the event from **Jeremy Brooker**, Chairman of the Magic Lantern Society. It is good to know that the broader magic lantern community is aware of the small but enthusiastic band of members in the Antipodes. John recited a ballad found amongst his great grandfather's papers, *My Grand Dissolving Views*, possibly dating to around 1875 and illustrating how lantern slides were seen to be related to social conditions at the time.

The first presentation of the day was of two slide sets produced by the Salvation Army in Melbourne in the late 1800s or early 1900s. The Salvation Army, under Commandant Herbert Booth, was the largest manufacturer of lantern slides in the southern hemisphere at the time. A very dramatic and stirring reading of *The Martyrdom of Perpetua* and *The Blind Man of Siloam* was given by **Lindsay Cox**, the Territorial Archivist at the Salvation Army Heritage Centre, Melbourne.

Dr Martyn Jolly then gave a short introduction to his research program *Heritage in the Limelight – the magic lantern in Australia and the world* (<http://soa.anu.edu.au/heritage-limelight>) and invited audience members to send a copy of their favourite slide for posting on the website.

Elizabeth Hartrick followed with a talk entitled *Revolving Vice and Gas Bags*, based on her upcoming book about the paraphernalia associated with the magic lantern industry in Australia and New Zealand drawing on an intensive study of trade journals of the time.

The story of emigration from England to Australia, *Farewell to Old England Forever*, was presented by **Professor Ian Edwards**, with musical accompaniment by **Marg Edwards** and with **Roger Pierson** operating the Newton biunial lantern. Ian followed this by taking the audience on a journey to Pompeii and Mount Vesuvius using a Bausch & Lomb automatic lantern. The day continued with a series of historical photographic slides presented by **Marcel Safier** – many by the Queensland photographer William Henry Mobsby.

John Hyett then presented a talk on *The Life and Loves of an Australian Lanternist*. This concerned Pastor (or Professor) Albert James Abbott who, over a forty-year period, survived several scandals relating to his dealings with his young lady parishioners and an attack by a woman with an umbrella during a church service. He lectured, often with limelight views, on ministering spirits, phrenology, and British Israelism, and worked for several years with a Christian clairvoyant and herbalist and made several interesting claims about himself over the years. An article is in preparation for *The Magic Lantern*!

Using a pair of Steward lanterns from the 1880s, along with a batwing dissolver, **Martyn Jolly** demonstrated the technique of dissolving slides and some of the difficulties associated with this. The final presentation was a purported lecture on *Healthy Living* by the infamous 'Professor' **Murgatroyd**. After showing two virtually impossible exercises for keeping fit (see slipper slides) he then had the audience sit through an audio presentation on three of the major causes of ill health *Cigaretts and Whisky and Wild Wild Women* (sic), illustrating these with a series of LED views showing the effects of these items, including a temperance slide set pointing out how just one drink will set a person on the path to ruin. Some of the audience then headed for the local hotel bar! The following day several members presented short lantern shows to members of the public, introducing them to the joys of the magic lantern.