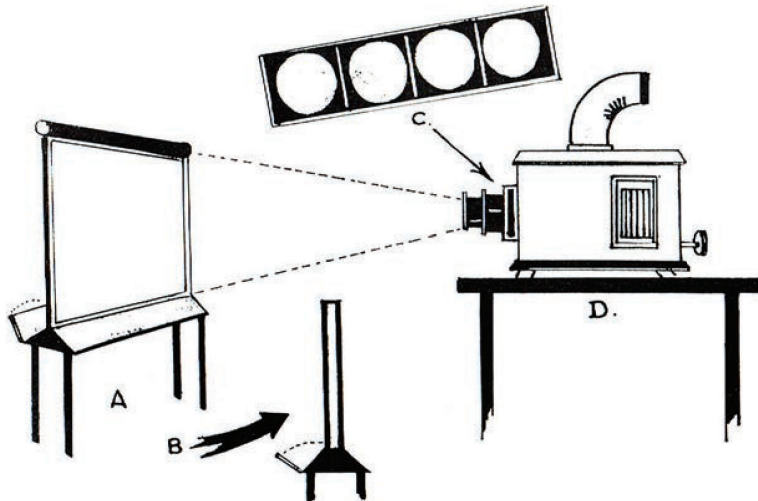


Members of the Magic Lantern Society will have learned the very sad news of Dr Mervyn Heard's death in November. With his widow Jo's permission, we are publishing this last snippet that Mervyn found and thought members would enjoy over Christmas. The Magic Lantern will be celebrating the life and contribution of this extraordinary showman, author and ambassador for the magic lantern in the next edition.

JUST LIKE THAT ...

Mervyn Herd



I came across this in a magic magazine from the 1980s – seems very late to be using a magic lantern but no earlier source is mentioned. I thought members might like to amaze their family and friends with it over Christmas, provided you can make a suitable screen.

In the diagram A represents a screen supported on a light stand. B is a side view of the screen. There is a narrow compartment which runs the length of the base and which has a hinged flap on the side at the rear of the screen. When this flap is closed, the screen can be turned around and shown to the audience. C is a lantern strip of four or five pictures with suitable carrier and D is the magic lantern.

Here the article describes the magic lantern as 'merely a body to hold the lens and slide unit and to contain an oil lamp (hence the chimney) to provide the illumination' but says a toy battery-driven child's projector inside a 'dummy' magic lantern casing made from cardboard would work as well.

The four or five images can be drawn on transparent film (acetate) and we are assured no artistic expertise is required; an outline with black drawing ink will suffice. Simple drawings of 'production' items are needed, eg a rabbit, a string of sausages, a bouquet. The real items (eg 'spring' sausages, collapsible bouquet, etc) are secreted behind the screen in the compartment with the hinged flap closed, thus hiding them until production.

The lantern and screen are displayed to the audience – the slide strip may also be passed around for examination. Then the slide strip is inserted into the carrier, the light turned on and the chosen picture projected onto the screen. 'Magic words' are spoken ... the light turned off and the magician bursts the screen by plunging his hand through it – and produces the 'solid' object that was depicted a few seconds before by an image on the screen.

This can be repeated with objects being selected by members of the audience – and then in turn produced by the magician. Even a prediction can be introduced by having cards with objects written on them. A volunteer selects one which matches a prediction in a sealed envelope (forced, of course), the object is projected onto the screen, prior to being produced from it.

THE SECRET

The screen is nothing more than a sheet of white paper such as lining paper or 'the end of "newsprint" from a local newspaper printing room' stretched over a frame. After each production a new sheet is stretched over the frame using bulldog clips or pre-stretched and fastened sheets (ie using a new frame each time). The production items are collapsed and set in a row in the compartment behind the screen at its base – the magician must remember the order so there is no fumbling to find it when the hand is pushed through the screen. As the article helpfully points out 'it's no use a volunteer selecting a picture of a rabbit, having a rabbit projected on the screen and then for the magician to produce a string of sausages or a feather bouquet!'

It also suggests you could perform this trick using 'a hand shadow act' instead of images, and various safety precautions if using a cardboard lantern and hot lamp!