

'AT HOME' WITH THE EDWARDSSES

On Saturday 12 October several members of the MLS and some friends gathered at the home of **Ian and Margery Edwards** in Bentleigh East, Melbourne, Australia for an informal gathering and sharing of some of our current interests in the art of the magic lantern.

After a welcoming cup of tea or coffee we were entertained by a PowerPoint presentation by **Antony Catrice** and **Ian Edwards** of some of the items from Werner Nekes' *Eyes Lies and Illusions* exhibition, held at the Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI) in Melbourne between November 2006 and February 2007.

Those who have seen any of Ian's presentations will recall the musical accompaniment on a mouth organ by Margery. Ian presented her with a boxed set of mouth organs all in different keys in appreciation of her support over the years. He then presented *The Rev. Percy Edwards – His Life and Times in Victoria* a tribute to his grandfather, it being 121 years since the Reverend first used a magic lantern in his work as a Church of England minister in his various appointments around Victoria.



The Rev. Percy Edwards (c.1851-1940)

Following a light lunch prepared by Margery we were entertained by several Victorian era classic tales including *Curfew Shall Not Ring Tonight* and *Gulliver's Travels* skilfully projected by **Roger Pierson** and recited by Ian. Then **Daniel Edwards**, Ian's grandson, projected classic funny slides some of which dated back to his great-great-grandfather, the Rev. Percy Edwards. It is to be hoped that he will keep the tradition alive for many years and continue the long held

family involvement. After an inspection of the various lighting apparatus used in lanterns over the years **John Semmens** presented his set of slides of the 'Soudan War' by an unknown maker which he is still researching. **John Hyett** then presented a few phantasmagorical slides, for two of which he had made frames and had the slipping section made and painted. He then showed a few slides which he has scanned, printed and framed. Next **Elizabeth Hartrick** spoke of some of the issues she had in producing her book *The Magic Lantern in Colonial Australia and New Zealand*. This was followed by evening refreshments and a chat before the participants wended their way homewards after an enjoyable day.



Great-great-grandson Daniel (with Percy looking on)

John Hyett

AUTUMN MEETING OF THE MAGIC LANTERN SOCIETY

BIRMINGHAM AND MIDLAND INSTITUTE

Saturday 19 October 2019

The BMI was founded in 1854 for the "diffusion and advancement of science, literature and art" and the Magic Lantern Society took this to heart with a science theme at its Autumn Meeting – a day when we came to expect the unexpected. We must thank **Lester Smith** and **Martin Gilbert**, in particular, for redefining the art of the possible.

After an introduction from our Chairman, **Jeremy Brooker**, **Peter Gillies** set the scene by drawing 'Welcome' before our eyes on a soot-covered slide. He then showed more of his Lawson Wood slides (see p.17). **Lester Smith** took over to demonstrate first his cycloidotrope – the Spirograph of the magic lantern world. The mechanism was patented by Alfred Pumphrey of Birmingham on 19 October 1885 and Professor Pepper of the Royal Polytechnic was one of the first to use it. Lester took great care not to scratch the soot surface as he loaded the device. The stylus drew intricate lines, with seven revolutions completing the pattern. Once Lester had located his screwdriver, a small adjustment added a further pattern closer to the centre and a second adjustment brought another closer still. The finished slide was amazing. Two of these plates can be used to create a chromatrope effect, which Lester demonstrated later in the day.



Next he drew on a soot slide using a parallel-movement stylus – the pantograph principle – and an entirely recognisable portrait of Queen Victoria emerged, complete with earrings. This device was a 'portrait limner', devised in 1879 and also used by Professor Pepper. Lester had copied the drawing from a portrait-drawing mechanical clown! Then he fitted a lens assembly for projecting microscopic slides. The first, a flea, proved elusive but eventually Lester found it and focussed in to give us "fleas the size of elephants". This was followed by a series of miniature images (just 2mm diameter) made by J.B. Dancer (1812-1887) of Manchester, including Landseer's Queen Victoria and children, David Livingstone (we presume) and all the kings and queens of England from 1066 to Queen Victoria. With another major change to



The BMI – 'then' and 'now'