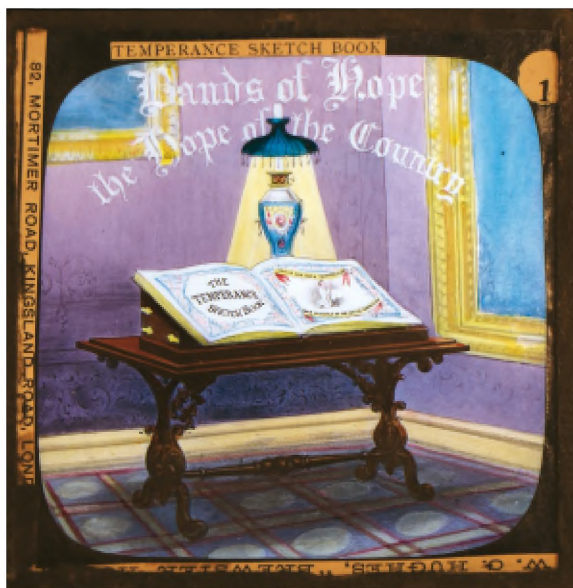


The Magic Lantern



1. The box with the set of 32 slides



3. The title slide (slide 1)

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SLIDES WITH A STORY

THE TEMPERANCE SKETCH BOOK

Trevor Beattie

In recent issues of *The Magic Lantern* we have been asked to share news of our lockdown finds. The lockdown has given me greater time to study my own collection, so my best 'finds' have been made at home, amongst slides I have owned for many years. I have enjoyed piecing together the history of battered, neglected and previously overlooked items.

Lantern slides are not historic relics caught and fixed at a point in time but elements of a living medium that carry their history with them. The scars of that history are unique and revealing, like the burn marks on a lantern from a disastrous failure to regulate the lime in a long forgotten show, or the inky amendments to a reading that reveal a Victorian lanternist's prejudices or pruderies.¹

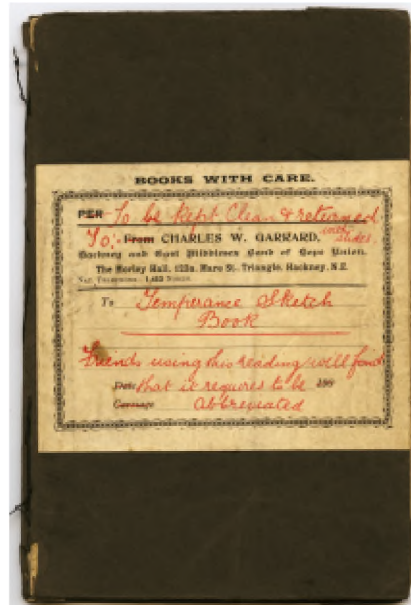
My lockdown discovery is an unremarkable set of 32 slides called *The Temperance Sketch Book*. They were produced by York & Sons and the set has been well coloured and retailed by W. C. Hughes, whose labels it bears. It comes in a finely dovetailed and varnished wooden box with brass clips and a leather retaining strap (Fig. 1). It was clearly a loan set that has travelled many miles and has seen many lanterns. Each slide is time worn, bearing patches, scratches, re-bindings. There are also several labels marking the date a slide was cracked. The set was obviously used to urge audiences to 'sign the pledge' over many years and was enjoyed by many hundreds, or even thousands, of people.

The accompanying reading refers to Band of Hope membership numbers in 1887 and the set appears in a catalogue of 1888, so it can be precisely dated to the beginning of 1888. The cover of the reading suggests, however, that my particular slides were acquired by the Hackney and East Middlesex Band of Hope Union in about 1900. There is heartfelt advice in red ink that we can all sympathise with: "friends using this reading will find that it requires to be abbreviated" (Fig. 2). The tortuous 36-page reading reveals that this is a considerable understatement.

Two slides are marked as cracked on 14 January 1910 (must have been a tough show!) and two are marked "cracked 1935", revealing that the set was in active use for at least 35 years from its purchase in about 1900 – or 47 years after its first production. This is the equivalent of trying to entertain a modern audience with a public showing of *The Towering Inferno* (the highest grossing film of 1974). This illustrates the longevity of lantern shows, but I can't imagine that an audience of 1935 would have been much moved by the cumbersome Victorian imagery, fashions and morality of the *Sketch Book*.

The author of the reading is Frederic Smith (1841-1919), a prominent campaigner for abstinence and an officer of the Band of Hope.² The narrative can be summarised as: the Bible opposes strong drink, and many of its chief figures were abstainers; the fruits of the earth should be enjoyed, not abused by being turned into alcohol, yet that is what the breweries do, and weak humanity pays the price in both health and wealth – so sign the pledge now!

It is ironic that, in pursuing this argument, Smith devotes nearly half the reading to detailed and enticing descriptions of the process of making beer, wine and spirits. The story is illustrated by slides culled from other series that are book-



2. Cover of the reading, with good advice

(Continued on page 3)



4. Signing the pledge (slide 32)

ended by a title slide (Fig. 3) and a final pledge-signing scene (Fig. 4). It includes two dissolving pairs (Fig. 5).

The reading states that "additional information" can be found in two earlier United Kingdom Band of Hope Union (UKBHU) publications: *Temperance Addresses for Young and Old* and *The Trial of Sir Jasper*. The latter was a long poem of 1873 by Samuel Carter Hall which was the subject of an earlier set of 25 slides by York & Sons. This shares at least five images with the *Sketch Book*. I have not been able to locate the *Temperance Addresses* reading but I suspect it also provided slides, whilst others are drawn from the publications of Partridge & Co. So the *Sketch Book* is a compendium of earlier temperance stories and illustrations from a range of sources.

The reading records that it was originally prepared for young people so the narrative is "of a simple character". The existence of an earlier version of the reading (presumably for young people) became apparent when I used the British Newspaper Archive to map references to shows featuring *The Temperance Sketch Book* (Fig. 6). The earliest references are to "a dioramic entertainment" and to lectures "illustrated by diagrams" which may not be lantern shows. In 1875, however, there are ten references to the lecture being illustrated by "magnificent dissolving views".



5. The two dissolving pairs (slides 20 and 21, slides 3 and 4)

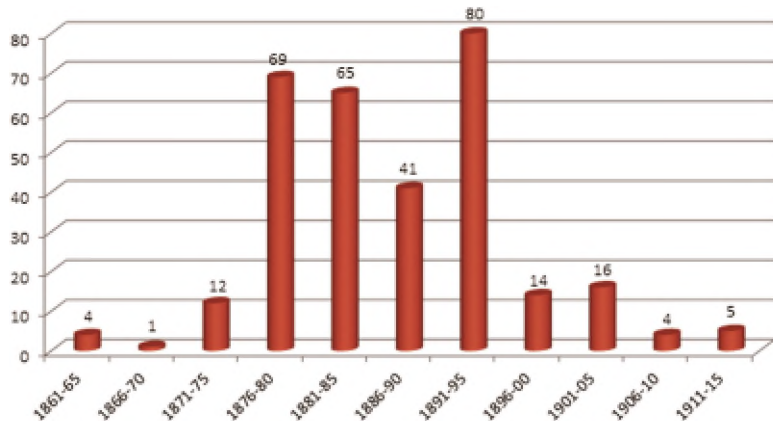
The account of the show given in the Corn Hall in Harleston on 16 March 1875 is typical: "Mr F. Smith, of the United Kingdom Band of Hope Union, delivered a very interesting and instructive lecture, the subject of which was *The Temperance Sketch Book*. It was beautifully illustrated by magnificent dissolving views, shown by first-class oxy-hydrogen lime-light apparatus. The lecture was interspersed with several temperance songs given by the Band of Hope choir; and at the close, a number of miscellaneous views were shown, including some splendid chromatropes, their ever-varying patterns and colour producing no little surprise and amusement."³ This is Frederic Smith, author of the reading, presenting the *Sketch Book* on an impressive scale 13 years before the York & Sons slides were produced.

This might point to the existence of an earlier set but I have found no trace of one. There is, however, an alternative explanation for shows before the 1888 release date of York & Sons' series. Since the *Sketch Book* is a compilation of earlier stories and images it is possible that the pre-1888 shows were not an earlier set but were made up of slides from other series under the 'wrapper' of the *Sketch Book* title. It was only in 1888 that this was formalised in the production of a tailor-made set with its own title slide and dedicated reading.

There is some support for this theory in the copy of the reading in the MLS's library which has been revised in ink to replace the term 'Sketch Book' with 'Art Gallery' and has an amended typed slide listing. In other words, the set continued to be used as a flexible resource after the official series was produced.

From 1875 onwards the newspaper references are all to lantern shows so this was probably the date of the first version of Smith's reading. The first peak relates to the earlier version and the second coincides with the release of my version in 1888, which generated the two years with the most references – 1891 and 1892 – both of which contained 24 mentions of shows featuring the *Sketch Book*. These will, of course, be only the tip of the iceberg of many shows in village halls, schools and churches right across the country.

Fig. 6 shows that the great days of popularity of the set had passed by the time the Hackney and East



6. References in newspapers to lantern shows featuring *The Temperance Sketch Book*

Middlesex Band of Hope Union purchased it in about 1900 and that the 1935 show which cracked a couple of slides was an outlier.

I like to think that some of the lantern shows in the wider London area recorded after 1900 used my set of slides to persuade their audiences to sign the pledge, but by then the appeal was dimming and the reviews are not as good. For instance, an account of a series of lantern services in Fenny Stratford in 1905 reports that when *The Temperance Sketch Book* was shown "the company was not so large"⁴

In the provinces, however, it was still packing them in. The annual report of the Hebden Bridge Band of Hope Union in 1913 reported that "During the winter good work had again been done in connection with their lantern lectures. *The Temperance Sketch Book* was the lecture chosen, and this, together with short stories, had been given at 14 different societies. At these meetings 767 persons had been present."⁵

At some time soon after 1935 the slides were returned to the Band of Hope for the last time, their task complete, and the long dark period of storage and obscurity began. Now that I have re-discovered them they have generated one final pledge. I will put them back into the lantern's beam once again when the lockdown ends, although I doubt I'll have an audience since by then everyone will have returned to the pub!

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. I have a copy of an early reading for *Pussy's Road to Ruin* where the lanternist has taken such objection to the potential immorality of the term 'ruin' that he or she has heavily blotted out every reference to the word, replacing it with 'prison'.
2. There is a photograph of Frederic Smith on slide 25 of the UKBHU set called *Band of Hope Jubilee 1897* which can be found on Lucerna (ID 5095037).
3. *Norfolk News*, Saturday 20 March 1875
4. *North Bucks Times and County Observer*, Saturday 29 April 1905
5. *Todmorden Advertiser and Hebden Bridge Newsletter*, Friday 17 October 1913

SELECTED SLIDES FROM *THE TEMPERANCE SKETCH BOOK*



15. Inside a brewery



16. The hop-garden



22. The magic of the still



23. Common incident of blighted life



24. Giles Johnson as he was [he reforms]



27. Jack and his hard lump [the expense of drink]



29. Accidental death



30. In the early winter's morn



31. Looking for father