



Volume 1—Number 2

THE NEW MAGIC LANTERN JOURNAL

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EDITORIAL

The production team is delighted to present this second issue of the New Magic Lantern Journal, still the only publication in the world to our knowledge specialising in the magic lantern, slides, optical toys and related material. This, our first issue of 1979, continues our policy of combining research material with out-of-print items and even surpasses, we think, the amazing quality achieved by the contributors to Volume 1, Number 1 (copies of which are still available if you rush your order to the editor). Although we have a wealth of goodies ready for future issues all contributions will be gratefully received and considered, although lack of space may prevent the inclusion of all items. We are especially pleased to inaugurate our centrefold series with Mike Smith's astonishing Tri-unial lantern, together with his own diligent research. It is our hope that this section of the journal will attract further extraordinary pieces for future publications.

In addition to fulfilling its function as the official publication of the Magic Lantern Society of Great Britain, and thus making available material to which there might not otherwise be access, there are several other fringe benefits which the editor has enjoyed! Perhaps the most rewarding of these has been the opportunity of meeting and corresponding with so many 'new' enthusiasts. Almost each week we hear of or meet someone from afar (and sometimes not so far) who has an interest in the lantern, the optical toy or early cinematography. More often than not the new faces are introduced from outside the ranks of

the Lantern Society — having heard of the journal either through a friend or from one of our still too few stockists. (Memo to our sales force to increase their efforts!) However this is something that has led the editorial team to reflect a little on the activities of the Lantern Society generally.

Every three months the Magic Lantern Society holds a day long Saturday meeting, usually in London. Wonderful sessions they are — typical of those held by any fraternity of half crazed collectors getting together with their own kind. Doesn't matter what their enthusiasm might be — magic lanterns, fly fishing, architecture, old cars, rubber mackintoshes or stamp collecting — there is this day long wallowing in the jargon of the subject. The delight in showing off the latest acquisition (always obtained at a bargain price), swapping tall stories, airing new knowledge and gleaming information of all shapes and sizes. Wonderful. And that is why collectors gather together and that is why there should be a Lantern Society.

Unfortunately the tendency is to have the meeting and not to worry too much about the longer term potential or needs of the society. Let the committee worry about that. As editors of the Journal however, our problem is always the next issue and how it might be financed. We have ideas about the next one, and also as to how it might be funded, but we cannot ignore the fact that it is a worry. After two years of regular activities it might be time to reconsider the pattern of the Society's meetings and to consider both an expansion and alteration of its pattern of meetings in order to attract a wider audience and participation.

Would it not be possible one wonders, for meetings to take place monthly in the evening instead of quarterly on Saturday. This way visiting firemen who are only here for a few days would stand more of a chance of sharing their knowledge with fellow collectors on the London scene. Too often we hear of someone whose contribution would be invaluable but who is never around on the Saturday in question. Usually such people have their own network of collectors both in the UK and abroad who have never heard of the Lantern Society. The participation of this wider range of people can do the collecting world nothing but good.

Similarly, perhaps the time has come to emulate the phonograph, wireless, advertising and ephemera enthusiasts and to see about staging a major exhibition at one of London's museums. The wallet groans at the thought of the impact such a show would have on our bargain price purchases, but what better way of bringing out of the woodwork all those collectors whom we haven't yet met? Think too of all those

hoarders who have magic lantern material tucked away, waiting for the right time to sell. With luck the market will be swamped with a variety of optical goodies that all of us would like to own but almost never see.

Which brings me to another thought. Where are all those pieces we never see? Even if we assume that between them the Science, Kodak and Barnes Museums own half of all the good things in the world, where are the rest? What has happened to the tri-unials, the Phantasmagoria lanterns, the Photorotoscopes, cycloidotropes and the choreutoscopes? How many tri-unials were ever made and what happened to them? Unlike glass slides and cheap tin lanterns the tri-unials (and bi-unials often) were well-made examples of the cabinet makers craft. Not the kind of thing that is normally thrown into the chicken run — although we have heard of a splendid bi-unial reputedly in daily use as a plant pot somewhere in the Portsmouth area. But where are the rest?

Finally by a combination of bad management, too many demands placed on our time by inconsiderate families at Christmas, and perhaps a little sloth, we failed to publish this issue in time for the New Year. Thus our carefully selected Happy New Year slide which was to have featured on page one has been tossed to the cutting room floor. Instead the Magic Lantern Journal is proud to publish its 1805 Valentine card — courtesy of B. & D. Henry — and to say to our millions of readers throughout the world that we love you all madly. Happy Valentine's Day.

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Cupid's magic lantern.