

MICHAEL SMITH AND HIS TRIUNIAL MAGIC LANTERN

SMITH'S TRI-UNIAL

This is the first in our series of Centrefold Features and illustrates a remarkable tri-unial lantern. Constructed of mahogany and brass, the lantern stands some three feet high and features a hand-carved decorative panel on the base. Instead of the usual multiple telescopic extensions on the lens assembly this machine features a single dramatic fifteen inch extension tube on each barrel, with alternative screw in 12" or 15" rack and pinion adjustable lenses. The illuminants consist of three limelight burners controlled by the usual rear mounted star dissolve valves on the back of the bodywork.

Although the probability is that Sandhams constructed the whole lantern and the brasswork, an intriguing note for the lantern student is the famous name W.G. Hughes stamped on one of the lung brass rods controlling the tilt of the lens plate.

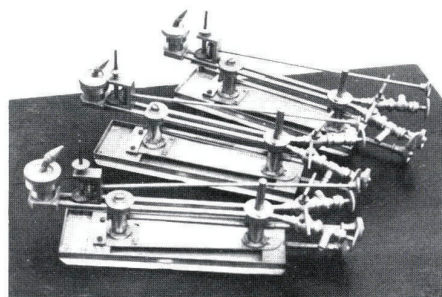
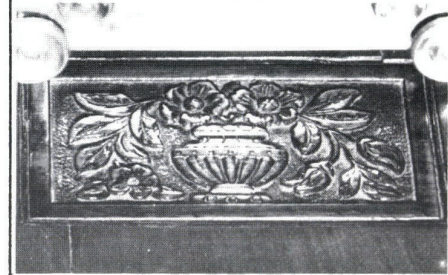
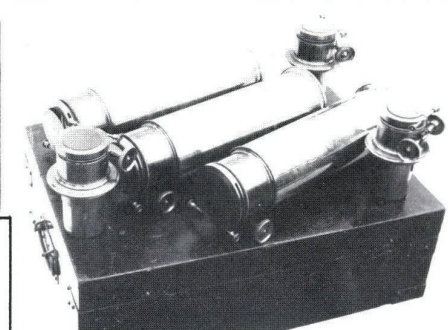
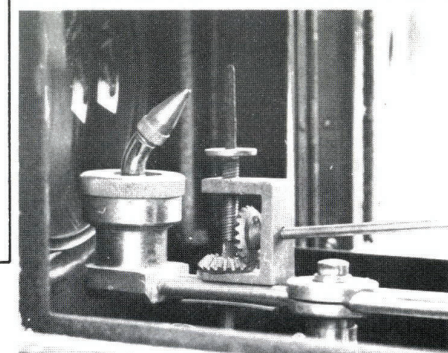
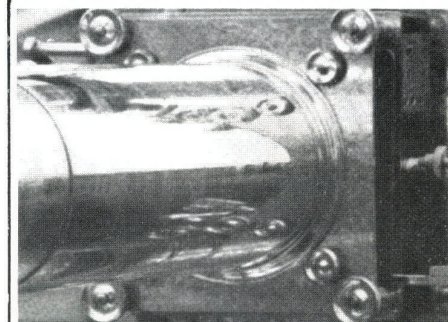
The research notes are the result of some dogged enquiries by Mike Smith in and around the Blackburn area where Sandham had his factory. This included not only searches of old newspapers but also at one stage contacting all the Sandhams in the current Blackburn telephone directory. We would like to compliment Mike on his magnificent lantern and congratulate him on his historical enquiries.

ONE OF THE LESSER KNOWN LANTERN MANUFACTURERS – SANDHAM & CO., BLACKBURN LANC'S.

This firm was founded in 1897 by George Cooper Sandham, who at the age of 25 left his previous employment, that of a brass finisher at the local foundry of Richard Ainsworth & Co., to start his own business. He was subsequently joined by his brother, John Sandham.

Until his retirement, on medical advice, in September 1933, George Sandham was established as a lanternist and photographic dealer at 92-94 Northgate, Blackburn for over 36 years. He was a craftsman as well as a tradesman and photography and everything connected with it was his hobby as well as his business. For a number of years after he started on his own account, he made nearly all the cameras and appliances he sold.

Most of his early customers were novices and he was most painstaking in teaching them the art of photography. Sandham & Co. were one of Kodak's early customers and they sold so many of their cameras that they could not remember the total. For a long period they specialised in developing, printing and enlarging.



Lantern work always interested George Sandham and he became noted for his big collection of slides, all of the best quality, which were sent all over the country. As a lanternist in connection with high class lecture work, he achieved distinction far beyond the borders of Lancashire, being especially well known in London. At one period he had three cinematographs, two triple lanterns and two double lanterns nearly always in use. For a great number of years he did all the lantern work for the Navy League. In a similar capacity he officiated at the Huntington lectures at Darwen for over 25 years; did lantern lectures and cinematograph shows for Blackburn Y.M.C.A., and was the operator at the Blackburn Public Lectures at the Town Hall and at the Public Halls, the Gilchrist Lectures at Great Harwood and at Stonyhurst College. With his wide clientele George Sandham came in contact with nearly all the best known lecturers of his time, including Sir Robert Ball F.R.G.S.; Sir Ernest Shackleton and Mr Frank Ward, Arctic explorers; Professor Lowe; Mr. Ogden, the Egyptologist and Admiral Sir Edward Evans (then Vice-Admiral) of the Broke.

These and many other lecturers paid high tribute to his skill as a lanternist. Sandham & Co. ceased manufacturing equipment around 1910 but continued as retailers until the business ceased in 1933.

George Sandham died in 1940 and his brother who assisted with the business, but playing a less predominant role, died some eleven years previously.

Research by L.M.H. Smith
Secretary of the Magic Lantern Society of Great Britain
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