

The Magic Lantern

CHRISTMAS STORIES

For at least two centuries Christmas was a wonderful time for magic lantern shows with the combination of dark evenings and festive mood – whether in the home or village hall, church or hospital, on board ships or in the workhouse. For some lucky young people, a new toy lantern or set of exotic slides may have been claimed from under the tree. Many popular stories have links to Christmas, and this year *The Magic Lantern* has asked some members to share their favourite magic lantern stories and slides.

MR PICKWICK'S CHRISTMAS

Else Flim and Adrian Kok

The audience in our Dickens Theatre in Laren, the Netherlands, always enjoys the skating experiences from *The Pickwick Papers* – Charles Dickens's first and personal favourite novel. The action takes place 'after a substantial Christmas lunch, with the agreeable items of strong beer and cherry-brandy, had been done ample justice to', when Mr Wardle proposes an hour on the ice. Everyone expects Mr Winkle, who has a reputation as a sportsman of sorts, to be a good skater and he doesn't dare to deny it. The two magic lantern slides shown here – numbers 7 and 8 in the set – turn out to be not only ours but also our audience's favourites!

This is an excerpt from the *Skating Experiences in The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club* by Charles

Dickens, adapted for stage by Else Flim, and as performed by Adrian Kok as Charles Dickens at the Dickens Theatre.

[Slide7] Mr Winkle, stooping forward, with his body half doubled up, was being assisted over the ice by Mr Weller, in a very singular and unswan-like manner, when Mr Pickwick most innocently shouted from the opposite bank – (loud) 'Sam!'

Sam: 'Sir?'

Pickwick: 'Here. I want you.'

Sam: 'Let go, Sir! Don't you hear the governor a-calling? Let go, Sir.'

With a violent effort, Mr Weller disengaged himself from the grasp of the agonised Pickwickian, and, in so doing, administered a considerable impetus to the unhappy Mr Winkle.

With an accuracy which no degree of dexterity or practice could have insured, that unfortunate gentleman bore swiftly down into the centre of the 'reel' being expertly performed by Mr Allen and Mr Sawyer at the very moment when Mr Bob Sawyer was performing a flourish of unparalleled beauty.

Mr Winkle struck wildly against him, and with a loud crash they both fell heavily down [Slide 8].

Mr Pickwick ran to the spot.

Bob Sawyer had risen to his feet, but Mr Winkle was far too wise to do anything of the kind, in skates.

CHRISTMAS IN PENNSYLVANIA

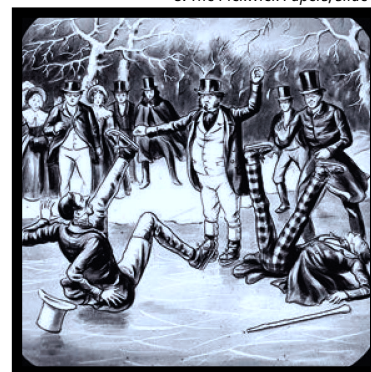
Mark Sullivan (aka Professor Phineas T. Firefly)

By the time you read this, the Plain and Fancy Theater in Bird-In-Hand, Pennsylvania, will, we hope, have given twenty-eight performances of our Christmas Show, *A Christmas Journey*, beginning the day after Thanksgiving and running two shows every Saturday. Christmas week and the week after that we are performing Tuesday through Friday, including a show on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve.

New for this year's show will be Charles Dicken's *Gabriel Grub and the Goblins*, (Fig. 5) using a vintage slide set recently obtained from our friends in the United



2. The Pickwick Papers, slide 7



3. The Pickwick Papers, slide 8

4 Professor Phineas T. Firefly



5 Gabriel Grub



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CHRISTMAS STORIES (continued from page 1)

Kingdom. These slides include dissolves as well as Life Models, all incorporated into colourful, hand-painted main images. It is believed that Dickens wrote this story approximately eight years before *A Christmas Carol* and there are some similarities. But this is not a well-known story in the United States and so we are very excited to bring it back to life.

We will continue to have the *Night Before Christmas*, *Little Breeches*, Santa's toys, the birth of Christ, *The Runaway Snowball* (an original story set to vintage slides) and *A Christmas Carol* to round off our hour-and-a-half show.

ILLUMINAGO'S FAVOURITE CHRISTMAS STORY

Karin Bienek and Ludwig Vogl-Bienek

Without doubt, the favourite magic lantern Christmas story of the magic lantern ensemble Illuminago is *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens. We found a most wonderfully painted set by Newton & Co in

possibly on the triunial lantern which the school owned.

The Christmas Tree

Another modern Christmas custom is the Christmas tree: where a natural tree of the fir tribe is decorated with flags and ornaments, loaded up with presents for the young people, and lighted with small candles which have been pinned or fastened to the branches. A large Christmas tree tastefully decorated and illum-nated with

numberless lights, is a really pretty sight. It was introduced into this country by Queen Caroline [the wife of George II although George III's wife, Queen Charlotte, is now usually given the credit] and may be called a German fashion. At any rate it is much more religiously observed in Germany than with us. Every household there has its Christmas tree, and in the Kaiser's court every member of the royal family has his or her own tree. [Fig. A9]

Bringing in the Boar's Head

This was practised in olden days in many a baronial hall; nor is the custom yet extinct. At Queens College in Oxford, it is still carried out each year ... On Christmas Day the college hall is dressed with greenery; holly, ivy and laurel are festooned from picture to picture whilst at the end over the Provost's chair, a larger garland is hung with a bunch of mistletoe. A bright fire blazes in the great open fireplace ... Soon a procession headed by the Provost followed by the Fellows makes its way up the hall and takes its place behind the high table. Outside the hall another procession is forming, consisting of the Taberdar [choral scholar] appointed to sing the carol solo, the choristers and servitors bearing the Boar's Head on its massive silver salver upon their shoulders. The trumpeter sounds a call twice to announce dinner ... the sound of the chorus 'Caput apri defero, Reddens laudes Domino' [I bear the Boar's Head, rendering praises to the Lord] is heard outside. Then making their way through the throng, the Taberdar in front, they sing the carol as they slowly walk up the hall ... The dish with the Boar's Head is placed in front of the Provost ... The Provost takes the ornaments and embellishments one by one from the head and presents them to the choirboys and visitors, the solo singer receiving the orange from the boar's mouth.



7 & 8. A Christmas ABC



6. A Christmas Carol by Newton

1988 (Fig. 6). In the winter of the same year we presented it for the first time at the Deutsches Filmmuseum in Frankfurt and the Pariser Hoftheater in Wiesbaden. In the following decades the show – and its audiences – has enjoyed several revivals. The last was in 2013 for the theatre festival *Made in Hessen/100% Theater*. Dickens's story was embedded in a Christmas show and introduces the social situation of the time alongside slides from sets such as *In the Workhouse* or *Ora Pro Nobis*. Judith Herrmann arranged a great musical score and accompanied the show at the piano. For the Christmas season of 2017/18 it will again be in the repertoire of Illuminago.

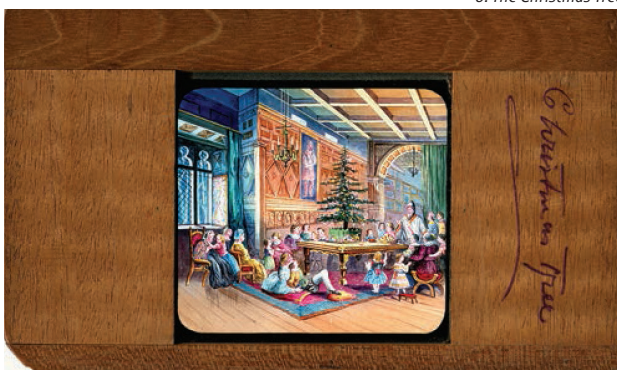
There is more information about the set on the Lucerna database (<http://slides.uni-trier.de/set/index.php?id=3005238>). Newton's catalogue of 1912 also includes a very good commentary on this set.

CHRISTMAS CUSTOMS

Lester Smith

Like many members I have a number of Christmas-related slides in my collection (see Figs 7 and 8) but I will focus on two particularly beautiful slides illustrating Christmas customs. These belonged to West Downs – a private school in Winchester for boys aged 8–13 that ran from 1897 to 1988. I believe the slides were painted by Edmund H. Wilkie (of the Royal Polytechnic, Regent Street) and with them came handwritten notes penned by an early headmaster for use when projecting the slides,

9. The Christmas Tree



10. The Boar's Head

