

SOME LESSER-KNOWN LIFE MODEL SLIDE MAKERS

No.1 – T. T. Wing of Cambridgeshire

Richard Crangle

In 2009 Robert Macdonald and I compiled the Society's *Illustrated Bamforth Slide Catalogue* DVD, setting an ambitious target of listing all 20,000 slides known to be by the Bamforth company of Holmfirth, Yorkshire, and illustrating as many as we could find. In the course of that project it became clear that there were a couple of common misunderstandings about both Bamforth and the Life Model slides for which they were most widely known:

- all British Life Model slides were made either by Bamforth or by York & Son of London
- all Bamforth's production consisted of Life Model slides.

Neither is true, but I'll only deal with the first here – the fair proportion of Bamforth slides based on drawings or documentary photographs will have to wait for another time.

One thing is evident in a large-scale study of British Life Model slides: they don't all look the same. Many aspects differ quite widely – the visual style of the image, the quality of photography and colouring, the regular appearance of distinctive models or studio sets, the style of labelling and other inscriptions. Along with additional evidence like advertisements in the trade press, this all points to a number of different makers, some more active than others. But who were they all?

The Lucerna Magic Lantern Web Resource now includes almost 6,000 Life Model slide images, representing (parts of) 537 different sets. By analysing the aspects just mentioned, it is possible to begin identifying the style and production values of various businesses. So far, at least 15 Life Model makers have been identified in the British market, as well as the ubiquitous Bamforth and York. This occasional series of articles will identify some of these manufacturers and point out ways of identifying their slides.

T. T. WING OF CAMBRIDGESHIRE

Like many lantern slide businesses, T. T. Wing was a very small family operation, corresponding closely to the career of its founder who probably operated as a 'sole trader'. Wing seems to have traded from the early 1890s to the 1910s or 1920s, making Life Model slides mainly in the early years.

Thomas Thurley Wing was born in the summer of 1870, in the small Cambridgeshire village of Bassingbourn, just north of the market town of Royston. He was the fourth of six children of George Wing (1821–96) and his wife Elizabeth (1837–1905). In the 1871 Census his father was listed as a "Chelsea Pensioner [ie an ex-soldier] and Carpenter", although by 1881 his occupation was "Night Watchman in Brewery".

No detail is known of Thomas Wing's early life, but his first recorded occupation (in the 1891 Census, when he was approaching 21 years of age and still living with his parents) was "Photographer and Lantern Slide Colourist", shown as an employee.¹ This is the same description as another Bassingbourn resident, one Frank R. Hinkins, and it's worth digressing for a moment to outline his career as well.

Hinkins was born in 1852 at Therfield, another village near Royston, and was recorded as a "Decorator" in 1871 and a "Plumber and Decorator – Master/Junior Partner" in 1881. This business seems to have failed shortly afterwards – a private family tree mentions his being declared bankrupt in 1883. His next Census return has him as a "Photographer and Lantern Slide Maker, Artist", resident like Wing in Bassingbourn.² This career probably lasted for the rest of his working life. He contributed



7. 'Lifelike' posing and 'realistic' set decoration – slide 20 of Jack of the ferry (Kirklees Museums and Galleries, photo: Ludwig Vogl-Bienek)



8. Harsh contrast and more 'lifelike' posing (the blue tint indicates 'night') – slide 9 of Little Jim (Nicholas Hiley Collection)

COLOURING, &c. LANTERN SLIDES Artistically Coloured in Oils from 4/6 doz. SLIDES carefully prepared from Negatives, Photos, Engravings, &c. C. de V. tinted 4/6 doz., Cabs. 9/- doz., 1/4 pl. views 6d., 1/4 pl. 1/3, 1/4 pl. 2/- each.

T. T. WING, HIGH STREET. CHATTERIS, CAMBS.

1. OMLJ, July 1892, page iii

SLIDE MAKING
From Negatives, Photos, Engravings, &c.,
Colouring in an Artistic and Effective Manner.
T. T. WING, CHATTERIS, CAMBS.

2. OMLJ, September 1893, page xv

IMPORTANT TO LANTERNISTS.
BEAUTIFULLY COLOURED SLIDES
in sets of twelve. 2s. 6d. per set.

NEW TEMPERANCE SLIDES FROM LIFE MODELS.

Hundreds of Hymns, Bible Pictures, &c.

NEW COMIC SETS specially prepared this season, Slipping, Skipping, and Rackwork Slides, Mottoes and Curtains. Slides on Hire 1s. per doz.

Good Serviceable Lantern with 4in. condenser and 3 (2in.) wick Lamp, complete in stained Travelling Case **24s.**

SLIDE MAKING AND COLOURING FOR TRADE OR PRIVATE CUSTOMERS.
LISTS GRATIS AND POST FREE.

T. T. WING, Chatteris, Cambs.

3. OMLJ, October 1894, page xvii

NEW LANTERN SLIDES.
Our new Photographic Slides include Temperance stories, Bible pictures, comic sets, hymns, &c., &c. Chromo-litho slides, 3 1/2 x 3 1/2 in sets of 12. Every Lanternist should try these slides, they are beautifully coloured, and are sold complete with reading for 4s. set. This series includes: British and Foreign scenery, historical, biblical, temperance and scores of other popular stories. A few slides with no reading can be supplied at 2/6 doz. Comic slipping slides in mahogany frames, 6/6 doz. Slides made and coloured for trade or private customers. Lists free.

T. T. WING, Chatteris, Cambs.

4. OMLJ, October 1895, page xii

CLEARANCE Sale of lantern slides, including life model sets, hymns, mottoes, comic sets, bible pictures, etc., etc. Great bargains for dealers and lecturers, lists free.—T. T. Wing, Chatteris, Cambs. Special slides made and painted from negatives, photos, etc.

5. OMLJ, February 1897, page ix

"IN HIS STEPS, OR WHAT WOULD JESUS DO?"
THE SET OF THE SEASON. FOR SALE OR HIRE.

A Large Quantity of Good Coloured Second-hand Slides to clear, Cheap. Slides made from Drawings, etc.
CUSTOMERS' OWN SLIDES COLOURED. LISTS FREE.

T. T. WING, Chatteris, Cambs.

6. OMLJ, October 1899, page v

three letters to the *Optical Magic Lantern Journal* [OMLJ] in the 1890s, advertised there as a "lantern slide manufacturer" in 1896, and was still professing to be a "Photographic Artist" in 1911, although by then living in Lyndhurst, Hampshire, many miles from Wing.

It seems unlikely there were two lantern slide making businesses in a small village at the same time, so it's reasonable to assume that Wing and Hinkins worked together. Given the 20-year difference in their ages, the obvious conclusion is that Wing worked for Hinkins, before setting up independently in the early 1890s. One scenario is that Wing was formally apprenticed to Hinkins, but Hinkins was a relative newcomer to the photography business himself so this may be less likely.

In any event, between April 1891 (the Census date) and the spring of 1892, Wing moved from Bassingbourn and set up in his own name, offering to make or colour slides for other photographers and (presumably) creating his own slides and other photographs. His first advertisement for



9. Typical Wing title slide – slide 1 of The chorister's song (Nicholas Hiley Collection)



10. The Red Lion pub, Chatteris, with Ann Donougho's name over the door. Slide 12 of Roger's ghost (Hecht Collection, Screen Archive South East, photo: Ludwig Vogl-Bienek)



11. Church Street, Chesterton, with St Andrew's Church in the background – slide 19 of Mother's last words (private collection)



12. Chapel Street, Chesterton – slide 23 of Mother's last words (private collection).

"lantern slides artistically coloured in oils" appeared in *OMLJ* in June 1892, giving his address as High Street, Chatteris. Chatteris is a small market town about 35 miles (55km) from Bassingbourn on the other side of the county town, Cambridge. There is no clear family reason why Wing would have set up there, so possibly he acquired an existing photography business.

Wing remained in Chatteris for at least ten years, changing address to London Road before the 1901 Census. In 1898 he married Maude Brown and they had one son, born in Chatteris in 1899. In the early 1900s the business moved to Maude's birthplace Chesterton, a village then becoming absorbed as a suburb of Cambridge. The last known record of Wing's business is at 12 High Street, Chesterton, in a 1913 street directory, and he died in 1930 at the same address, leaving an estate of £257 (roughly equivalent to £15,000 in present-day value).³

This type of data-gathering gives a very patchy record of the progress of a business like Wing's. Census records for small locations like Chatteris tend not to give precise addresses, so we don't know where on High Street or London Road he was and so can't judge whether he was moving to larger or smaller premises, which would give some idea of the success or otherwise of his business.

Wing's *OMLJ* advertisements (Figs 1–6) provide most of what we know about his activities. In 1892 they were small and simple, offering "lantern slides artistically coloured in oils". Throughout the 'lantern season' of 1893–94 he advertised "slides made and coloured", perhaps offering a service to others more than creating his own products. In autumn 1894 he advertised "new life model temperance slides, comic slides, etc.", and again in 1895 "new photographic slides, temperance and religious subjects". After 1896 Wing's advertising declined noticeably: in 1896–97 a series of small adverts for "slides for sale or hire" ended in February 1897 with a "clearance sale of lantern slides", followed by a similar offer in June 1900. Only two other specific adverts appeared after 1897 – a "new slide set" of *In His Steps: or What Would Jesus Do?* and a couple of mentions of "Queen Slides" as an attempt to cash in after Queen Victoria's death in early 1901.

No contemporary catalogues issued by Wing have yet been found, so the full extent of his slide production is impossible to estimate. Based on analysis of the Lucerna resource, at least fourteen sets totalling 239 slides are known to be by Wing (Table 1, page 11), and some of the 153 other Life Model sets still marked as 'manufacturer unknown' are probably his as well.

Most of these sets are of the typical moralistic genres that make up so much Life Model material: recitations, stories and services of song. At least four of Wing's sets were advertised by the 'Onward' evangelical organisation based in Manchester.⁴ Their regular advertisements in *OMLJ* suggest they mainly dealt with Tyler and Bamforth in the early 1890s. The sets they bought from Wing might correspond to his "new life model temperance slides" from 1894 and after. It's also possible that some of the unidentified Life Model sets in Onward's stock were by Wing – if anyone knows any of these, comparing them with some of Wing's known work would be useful.⁵

VISUAL STYLE AND QUALITY: HOW TO SPOT A WING SLIDE

Wing's photography is not of the same standard as some other Life Model makers (particularly York and the later work of Bamforth). The images (see Figs 7–9) often appear slightly rough – not all perfectly focussed, with a harsh contrast between dark and light areas, and sometimes rather hastily composed. The models themselves often look somewhat awkward in their poses, though of course that is a common feature among the amateur performers in this genre. Where the images are tinted, the application of colour is sometimes equally unrefined – large blocks of the same colour used where other makers might be more subtle, and so on. Their sets often include a title slide, sometimes showing a portrait of the main protagonist and/or a crude hand-painted title.

Locations

Like many smaller Life Model makers, Wing made use of the local environment for location work – perhaps indicating that (unlike Bamforth and York) their studio premises were quite small and their scenery and props limited. Of the slides identified, 33% show exterior locations, against 22% of Bamforth's work and only 1% of York's.⁶ Finding these locations has so far been the main way of starting to identify Wing sets, though it can take some painstaking research and a degree of luck.

As mentioned earlier, after leaving Bassingbourn, Wing worked first in Chatteris and later in Chesterton. So it's reasonable to conclude that slides showing scenes in those small communities are almost certainly by Wing. This also helps with dating Wing's slides, at least to before or after the move from Chatteris to Chesterton. But how can such views be identified when they often show generic street scenes with few identifiable landmarks?

In all image research, the answer lies in the details. For example, slide 12 of *Roger's Ghost* (Fig 10) shows a pub in the background, luckily with the name of the licensee displayed over the door as required by English law. Some Life Model producers would hide or change these local details, painting them over in the negatives and/or renaming the establishment to suit the set's narrative. However Wing didn't usually bother, and with the help of online genealogical resources (and ideally a distinctive name to search for) that gives us a way in. In this case, a street directory of Cambridgeshire shows that Ann Donougho was proprietor of the Red Lion pub in London Road, Chatteris, confirmed by the 1891 Census where she is a "Publican and Butcher".⁷

Knowing some likely places to look, it's also possible to guess where a location might be, and try to confirm this from Google Street View. A set of *Mother's Last Words* (Figs 11 and 12) had me puzzled for some time, despite including several distinctive locations. Something about the visual style was reminiscent of Wing's work, but with no further clues it remained stubbornly 'manufacturer unknown' for several years – the church shown is quite different from any in Chatteris, and there never seems to have been a



13. A comfortable parlour, though the 'staircase' is painted and the 'window' hung like a painting – slide 3 of Adam's fall (Nicholas Hiley Collection)



14. Bare walls and basic furnishings, with a 'tropical' landscape seen through the 'window' – slide 6 of A life story (Nicholas Hiley Collection)



15. A typical bar scene, with advert on the wall for Lindsells, a brewery based in Chatteris – slide 10 of Jack of the ferry (Kirklees Museums, photo: Ludwig Vogl-Bienek)



16. The elderly female model is also in Fig. 13 and appears in other Wing sets – slide 7 of Cripple Robbie (Nicholas Hiley Collection)

Chapel Street there. But since Wing also operated in Chesterton, it was worth having a 'virtual walk' around there, starting at the church, and then exploring to find a Chapel Street.⁸ Sure enough the locations matched (though the slide's view of the church is now obscured by trees), and it was then possible to identify other Chesterton locations used in the set.

Of course only a minority of slides give such clues. However once a set has been identified, there are probably other distinctive elements that can help to identify other sets. Most smaller Life Model makers only used a limited number of studio backgrounds and props, and with a bit of time and patience it's possible to find these being 'recycled'.

Studio sets (Figs 13–15)

Compared to the elaborate painted backgrounds and 'dressing' of scenes used by some other Life Model makers, Wing's studio sets were basic, mostly consisting of generic interiors like bars, parlours and bedrooms. Walls are mostly represented by a couple of flat surfaces, maybe with wallpaper but more usually plain. Windows are usually fake – a painted board simply hung on the 'wall' – and fireplaces are similarly fabricated. Props and furnishings – again, with less variety than larger producers – include distinctive round-backed chairs, pictures, or wall-hung beer advertisements (another clue – many of the placards in Wing's bar scenes advertise the wares of breweries local to Chatteris and Cambridge). Some of these items, once committed to visual memory, can be useful in identifying other slides from the pool of 'manufacturer unknown' images.

Models

It's well known that Life Model producers used family members, neighbours and others from their communities as their models, and that the models tend to reappear in different slide sets. Adults are perhaps easier to spot than children, because children's appearances change – though (as with the Bamforth children's appearances as models) sometimes the growth of an identified child can help with dating slide sets relative to each other. This is strangely less obvious in Wing's work, perhaps because so far relatively few

sets have been identified, but there are a few familiar faces who make several appearances, like the elderly woman in Figs 13 and 16.

It's tempting to wonder whether any of these are Wing himself – no identified portraits are known to exist.⁹ But perhaps this gentleman (Fig. 17), who appears in several sets, might be our man.

Labelling

Even where the slide image itself gives no clues, the labelling or captioning of slides can help with identification. Wing didn't use a trademark, but among the slides identified there are a few recurring label styles. There is less consistency of labelling than for some of the larger makers (perhaps to be expected – fewer slides made means shorter print runs for labels), but the two most common styles are set titles in capitals on printed labels at the top of the slide, sometimes with the slide number on the right-hand end of the same label (as in Fig. 9), and set titles on thin labels diagonally across the top left corner, with slide numbers printed on paper discs applied at the top right corner (as in Fig. 14).



17. A recurring male model who also appears in Fig. 8 and is possibly T.T. Wing – slide 1 of A little mistake (Hecht Collection, Screen Archive SE, photo: Ludwig Vogl-Bienek)

This short account does not claim to be a definitive guide to Wing or his work – and may raise more questions than it answers. Even if many more slides are identified, he will remain a minor producer, making slides on a small scale compared to the major manufacturers. However – as I hope to show in subsequent articles – this type of producer played an influential role in British Life Model production, and is worth paying attention to. If nothing else, 'one man band' producers like Wing illustrate the small and parochial nature of much slide manufacture even at the height of commercial production.

NOTES

All slide images are from the Lucerna Magic Lantern Web Resource, reproduced by permission. Photographs are by the author except as credited.

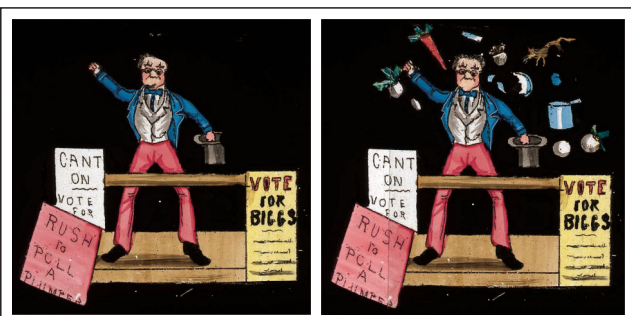
- 1891 Census of England and Wales, RG12/1103.60.13. The references for the family in the 1871 and 1881 Censuses are RG10/1361.81.13 and RG11/1413.72.12 respectively.
- 1891 Census of England and Wales, RG12/1103.56.6.
- National Probate Calendar of Wills and Administrations, 1930 T-Z, p.450.
- The slides in question have the Onward logo (an arrow passing through the word 'ONWARD', with 'Trade Mark' above) on a paper label under the cover glass, suggesting that they were applied during manufacture and therefore made to order. There is similar evidence of collaboration between Wing and the Church Army – an example of the Wing set *Adam's fall* has the Church Army's set number LM255 handwritten on the slide mounts, though the slides could also have been rebound after manufacture.
- Wing's sets in the Onward stock are *The chorister's song*; *Cripple Robbie*; *Jack of the ferry*; and *A mother's atonement*. The unidentified sets that could be by Wing are *Daisy's influence*; *Eva's kiss*; *Father's a drunkard*; *Father, won't*

you try?; *The hymn that bore him home*; *A life history in four scenes* [possibly the Wing set *A life story*]; *Little Flo*; *Little Nan*; *Netta's rabbit*; *No one cares for me*; and *Poor Bob's prayer*. Records for all these are available in Lucerna.

- Of the 239 slides known to be by Wing, Lucerna currently contains digital images for 200. Of these 66 (33%) show exterior locations, 9 (5%) interior locations and 109 (55%) studio sets. For comparison, the equivalent figures for York (722 slides digitised) are 7 exteriors (1%), only 1 interior (0%), 654 studio (91%); and for Bamforth (3,950 digitised) 879 exteriors (22%), 49 interiors (1%), 2,683 (68%) studio. In each case the remaining slides consist of titles, drawings and other images that are not Life Models.
- Kelly's Directory of Cambridgeshire*, 1892 edition, p.68; 1891 Census, RG12/1300.91.10.
- Google Street View, retrieved December 2017 – the search terms used were 'St Andrews Church Chesterton Cambridgeshire' and 'Chapel Street Chesterton Cambridgeshire'.
- Unlike for many lantern-trade figures, there are no privately-compiled family trees for Wing in the genealogical websites, suggesting a lack of interested descendants (who might have family photos).

Lucerna ID	Set title	No. of slides	Main usage	Locations identified
3004176	<i>Adam's fall</i>	13	story	Chatteris
3004179	<i>The chorister's song</i>	10	story	Chatteris
3003342	<i>Cripple Robbie</i>	34-37	service of song	Chatteris(?)
3004234	<i>Enter not the dram shop</i>	6	story	Chatteris
3004232	<i>Grizzie and Jim</i>	22	service of song	Chatteris
3003482	<i>Jack of the ferry</i>	22	service of song	Chatteris
3010063	<i>A life story</i>	6	story	–
3009881	<i>Little Jim, the collier boy</i>	10	recitation	–
3004233	<i>A little mistake</i>	10	recitation	Chatteris
3004180	<i>A mother's atonement</i>	21	story	Chatteris
3006785	<i>Mother's last words</i>	40	recitation	Chesterton
3010028	<i>Mr Potts and the mouse</i>	12	story	Chesterton
3006777	<i>Reported missing</i>	12	recitation	Chatteris
3004229	<i>Roger's ghost</i>	18	story	Chatteris

Table 1. *Life Model slides known to be by Wing of Cambridgeshire, 1890s–1900s*



CALLING ALL MEMBERS WITH STORIES ABOUT WOMEN AND THE MAGIC LANTERN

We are sure you will be aware that this year marks the centenary of some women getting the vote in the UK. Later this year *The Magic Lantern* would like to mark this by focussing on the role of women in the magic lantern's history from its earliest days to the modern era. They may be projectionists, performers, painters, etc. Please send us your contribution (editor@magiclantern.org.uk).

Mary Ann and Gwen

FROM THE IVORY TOWER OF PROJECTS AND CEPHALOPODS

Lydia Jakobs

Among the sad news in this issue, let me try to be the bearer of some good news from the research community. I am happy to share with you that a research project focused on the history of the magic lantern and the art of projection in Belgium has recently secured substantial funding. *B-Magic*, a collaboration of scholars from Flemish and French-speaking universities, will spend the next four years investigating "The Magic Lantern and its Cultural Impact as Visual Mass Medium in Belgium." Researchers at universities in both Belgium and the Netherlands are set to explore untapped slide collections in Belgian university and museum collections. You can find more information at <https://www.uantwerpen.be/en/projects/b-magic/>.

The Australian Research Council project *Heritage in the Limelight* is hosting an interdisciplinary conference on *The Magic Lantern in Australia and the World* at the University of Canberra and the National Film and Sound Archive. The conference invites presentations from a broad range of topics in connection with the magic lantern and the historical art of projection ranging from cinema to photography and phantasmagoria to animation. It will take place from 4 to 6 September 2018 but hurry up, the call for papers and performances ends 30 March! The organisers invite contributions from "scholars, artists, musicians and performers" according to the website at <http://soa.anu.edu.au/heritage-limelight>, where you can find out more about the conference (see also Noticeboard, page 2).

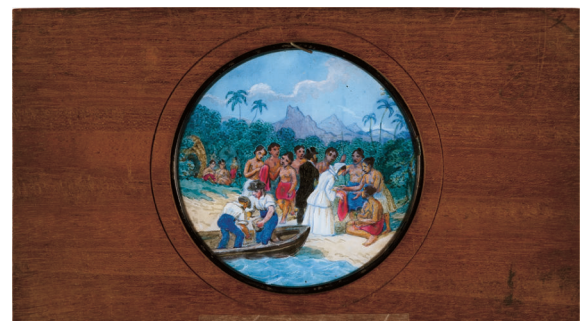
In keeping with my new tradition of sharing amusing finds from historic newspapers, here is one from the *Evening Star*, a newspaper from Dunedin on New Zealand's South Island. It comes from a wonderful digital collection (newspapers, magazines and journals, letters and Parliamentary papers) provided free by the National Library of New Zealand at <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz>. In May of 1895, right under a short note about a Mr Simms (no relation to my Mr George Sims), who apparently owned a magic lantern and a large number of slides, the *Star* reported on a 5ft (1.5m) long octopus that had climbed



on a ferry in Sydney Harbour. Where, as the paper notes rather nonchalantly, "It caught hold of a lady and gentleman, and it was ten minutes before it could be got off. It went into the water again."¹ Sadly, it appears there were no photographers on board. But I dug a little deeper and found another incident, described in an Australian newspaper (this one courtesy of the equally free digital collection of the National Library of Australia at <https://trove.nla.gov.au>). That same week, not to be outdone, apparently an amateur fisherman from Peterborough barely escaped an 8ft octopus as "he made a rush for the shore, and after a great effort succeeded in escaping the tentacles of the monster."² Needless to say neither cephalopod made it into my PhD thesis.

REFERENCES

1. *Evening Star*, Issue 9686 (2 May 1895), p.2.
2. News from Nowhere', *The Australian Workman* (4 May 1895), p.2.



Mechanical slide from *Heritage in the Limelight* project (top) and slide from the collection of the project's Martyn Jolly, Australian National University (bottom)