

THE METAMORPHOSER LANTERN

Richard Rigby

In the virtual MLS meeting on 25 April (see p.20) Richard Rigby and his dog Molly showed us his first lantern, a pre-1900 Optimus manufactured by Perken, Son & Rayment, and then three special lanterns from his collection:

- *A mahogany Metamorphoser*
- *A top of the range Archer Ideal Lecturer's Lantern*
- *Newton side-by-side double lantern set – preserved for posterity because a water tank was placed in front of the cupboard where it was stored in a Baptist church.*

Here Richard tells us more about the first of these, the Metamorphoser.

The Metamorphoser lantern was originally made by W.C. Hughes in about 1888 but the mechanism was patented (British patent 15,440) and then licensed to other manufacturers. My lantern was made by John Wrench & Son and it appears in their 1906 catalogue with a price tag of £9 12s 6d.

The lantern is taller than most single lanterns but in many ways it is very conventional – a single lamp, a single condenser, a single objective



2. *The Metamorphoser lantern in the lowered position*



1. *The Metamorphoser lantern in the raised position*

with a single control. Where it differs is in having a double slide stage, one above the other. This enables you, for example, to have a standard slide carrier on top and a chromatrope on the bottom. By operating a simple lever at the front you can switch between the two stages and change the slide or slide carrier in the one not being projected. Figs 1 and 2 show a standard slide carrier in the top stage and a long slide in the bottom. In the raised position (Fig. 1) you can change the slides in the slide carrier (note the lever is horizontal) and in the lowered position (Fig. 2) you can change the long slide (note the lever is vertical).

This mechanism has a major benefit when projecting a story set of wooden framed slides. You can mount slides in both stages and move from slide to slide much more quickly and easily than is possible with a single lantern. Curiously, if you use a Beard Eclipse carrier, this will only go in the top slot, not the bottom, by a matter of half a millimetre, and you cannot trim it because the mechanism comes right to the surface. Of course you can have a standard slide carrier in either or both slots.

For the single-handed lanternist, the Metamorphoser is very convenient, having some of the advantages of a biunial without the bulk and need for additional operators.

See Richard's presentation in full in the 'Past events' section of the MLS website, www.magiclantern.org.uk/events/search.php (see also page 20).