

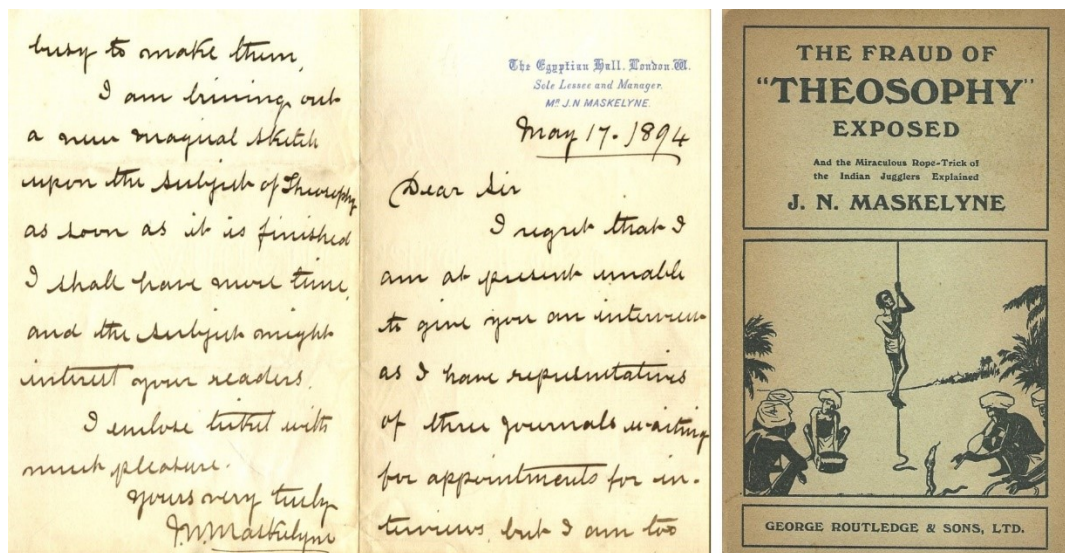


The Season's Greetings and welcome to e-news #8, December 2020

In my last e-news I asked if anyone knew how to upload a photograph of Walter R Booth, magician and pioneer of early cinema, onto his Wikipedia page. James Green came to the rescue and it's good to report that this photograph, and another one from the Davenport Collection, will now be available to a much wider audience. Thanks, James. Click [here](#) if you'd like to check out Booth's Wiki page.

Here's hoping that 2021 will bring to all readers safer and happier times than we have had in 2020.

What kept John Nevil Maskelyne busy in 1894?



One downside of being a well-known entertainer is that everyone wants to interview you. We have a letter from 17 May 1894 in JN's hand explaining to an enquirer that he already has a queue of three journals waiting for an interview, but he's too busy to make appointments. The reason he gives is a new magical sketch on the subject of Theosophy. The sketch was *Modern Witchery* first produced in August 1894.

An Egyptian Hall programme around this time makes it very clear that JN believes that the Theosophy doctrine is "sufficiently absurd for an amusing sketch". JN was so appalled by the nonsense of the doctrine that he also wrote *The Fraud of Theosophy Exposed*, published by George Routledge & Sons Ltd.

Of buses and bookplates



Ex libris Steve Beam

You wait a long time for a bus, and then several come along together. It would appear that this example of *Sod's Law* can also apply to bookplates. To understand this, you need to read the excellent article in the Articles section by Steve Beam entitled [Marking My Territory – The Bookplate Story](#).

Have you ever thought about having your own bookplate? Steve did, for a long time. Then he decided he would make it happen. He now has 6 bookplates (or 8, depending on how you count). His article tells you about his experience and then what you need to know to avoid false starts. Even if the desire to have your own bookplate has not yet overwhelmed you, you'll like Steve's quirky insight into the strange, driven world of collecting. Check it out.

Space-efficient collections

You would be right in thinking that the Davenport Collection has little experience of owning a small-volume collection! True, but we know of excellent collections that focus on small items such as postcards or bookplates. The key to a really interesting collection is not so much the item itself, but the item together with the story behind it. For example, consider the space-efficient models below consisting of a Sliding Die Box, Hippyity Hop Rabbits, a magic wand and a Vanishing Tear Apart Box.



They are beautifully made and take up little space, but the pleasure in owning them is enhanced by the story behind them. These were a gift in 2004 from

Serge Piacentino, a well-respected miniature model maker in France. Serge said that, when he used to make full size apparatus for magicians, he would also make a gift of the same item in miniature. These items were a few of the miniature models which were left over.

So, the message is don't be dismayed if your collection is not large. Focus on learning more about the items in it and your pleasure will increase.

Lewis Davenport's travels in Europe



Lewis Davenport was not one of those magicians who toured the world, despite his tours of South Africa in 1926 and South America in 1927. In the 1920s and 1930s most of his bookings were at theatres in Great Britain. However, he also accepted bookings on continental Europe, which he no doubt tried to tie in with visits to his important suppliers based particularly in Germany. Lewis and his wife Wynne especially enjoyed appearing at the Wintergarten, Berlin. The photograph, above left, shows their car parked by the Brandenburg Gate, Berlin in the 1930s. The programme, above right, is for their appearance at the Drei Linden in Leipzig.

In this PDF version of Anne Goulden's talk, presented at the European Magic History Conference held in Vienna, Austria in 2019, Anne follows Lewis around Europe, pointing out the differences between UK and continental variety, as well as introducing some of the speciality acts with whom Lewis worked. Click [here](#) to join Lewis on his travels.

It's December, so here's an example of that perennial gift: the magic set

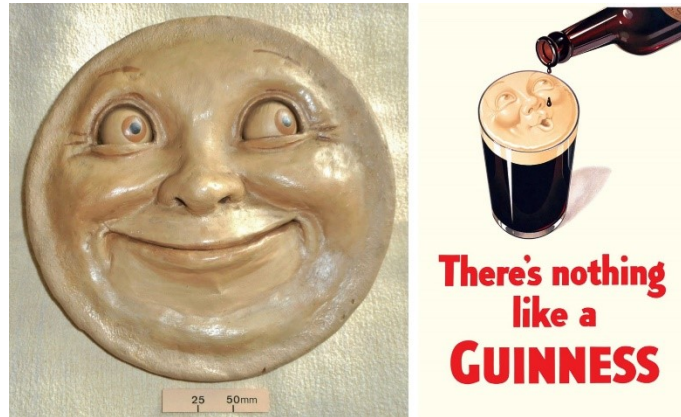


The example I've chosen is unusual for two reasons. Firstly, the tricks are all coin tricks. Secondly, they are packaged inside a large cardboard penny. The penny has fasteners around its edge and, when they are released, the penny swivels open to reveal the tricks in the shallow compartments. The package design is novel but not very practical because, when the cardboard penny is tilted, the individual tricks tend to slide out of their compartments. A Davenport catalogue

advertisement for this box can be found [here](#).

If you are keen on magic sets, you can view a selection in the Davenport Collection by clicking [here](#). The selection includes magic set related items, such as box labels.

And have you seen . . .



This ventriloquial face has eye and mouth movements. Betty Davenport recalls that the face was made by Mr Insull for an advertising company during the 1950s. It was never collected. It is most likely that the face is based on the Guinness Smiling Pint image that was used in Guinness advertising from the 1930s to the 1950s. The Guinness Archive holds no record of such a ventriloquial face being commissioned by Guinness. We wish to credit the Guinness Archive for this information and for permission to make use of the Guinness image for comparison with this item.

The Davenport Collection holds a variety of different vent heads and figures. Two may be found by using the following links. One made to order for Dennis Spicer is [here](#). Another with push button controls is [here](#).

Take care and stay safe

John

John Davenport curator of www.davenportcollection.co.uk

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