



Greetings and welcome to e-news #17, March 2023

The website is now in its 8th year and I have only just scratched the surface of the collection, despite there being 2,700 entries already. Work continues!

The main activities over the last three months have been adding items to the Magic Category and publishing Peter Brunning's excellent article on George Cooke. Anyone who has an interest in Maskelyne and Cooke should read this.

Our Instagram site now has over 40 postings and the number of followers exceeds 200. You can join them here if you wish: [Davenport Instagram Collection](#).

De Biere, The Sculptor's Vision postcard



Magicians use all sorts of tactics to attract an audience, sometimes employing optical illusions or surprising optical effects. The front of this postcard, on the left, is artistic but otherwise ordinary. The note on the address side of the card says 'Hold this card to a very bright light, to bring the "Sculptor's Vision" in sight. Also nightly at Empress Theatre, Brixton. Monday. March 23, 1914, for one week.' The photograph on the right shows the vision which appears when the card is backlit. Item [N1758](#).

De Biere would use this card for his appearances at other theatres. For example, item [N1759](#) shows his card printed for his appearance in Torquay.

At last the story is told: George Cooke of Maskelyne and Cooke



Maskelyne and Cooke's entertainments at the Egyptian Hall on Piccadilly were a feature of the London scene for over thirty years. During that time a great deal was written about them in newspapers and magazines.

The publicity invariably focused on J.N. Maskelyne, who was sole proprietor of Maskelyne and Cooke's. Virtually nothing was written about his stage partner, George Cooke. This was an injustice because Maskelyne's success would have been impossible without Cooke's talent, loyalty and hard work.

This article by Peter Brunning brings George Cooke into the spotlight by telling the story of his life. Peter has unravelled Cooke's unconventional private life as well as identifying his important contribution to the popularity of the Maskelyne and Cooke entertainments. Read Peter's article [here](#).

The Pea House Plot



The plot is rather well known: in the hands of the magician, the pea stays in or falls from the house at will, as illustrated in the Davenport advertisement. It is an excellent little trick which can be presented as a catch. The spectator can never make the pea stay in the house when it is turned upside down

Dealers suggest patter lines which make it possible to involve the spectator and turn the pea house into more than just a mere puzzle. For example, in the instructions supplied with 'Mr P' from Jack Hughes there is an amusing patter line in which the 'gentleman' pea will only come out of the house to meet a 'lady' pea. The 'lady' pea may be held in a spectator's hand, so involving the audience in the entertainment.

Three versions of the trick are shown here:

- 'Mr. P.' by Jack Hughes. This is the green house. [N2390](#)
- "Drop-Out" by Supreme Magic. This is the aluminium bottle with a ball bearing. [N2389](#)
- Demon Pea House by Davenports. [N3004](#)

A new theatre of magic for London?

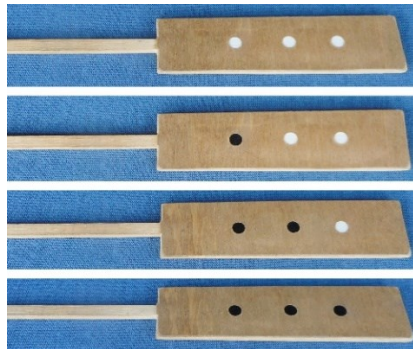


The Davenport Collection rarely purchases additional items, preferring to spend time sharing information on items already in the collection. However, when these posters came up in the Paul Daniels auction held recently by Special Auction Services, we did purchase them. This is because they featured an attempt to give London a new theatre of magic.

London lost its theatre of magic when the Maskelyne business went into administration in 1935. However, magicians' hopes were raised when Chris Charlton announced he was mounting a 1935 Christmas Season of magic at the Royalty Theatre. The early reviews, or at least the ones included in one of these posters, were

good. However, audience numbers were low and the season did not last long. It was a bold attempt, but clearly London was not ready to support a theatre of magic, not even for a Christmas season. [N3016](#), [N3017](#) and [N3018](#).

The Ju-Ju Stick by Frank Monaghan



I cannot even guess how many paddle-type tricks have been marketed over the years. The quality of the workmanship on this particular version is impressive, although the paddle itself looks remarkably ordinary, which of course is a good thing. Nothing is added and nothing is taken away (this sounds like an advertisement!) and yet the three white spots on either side change one at a time to black. Finally, they change back to white. This particular paddle was sold by Patrick Page with instructions copyright 1961. [N3039](#).

Demon Wonder Wands



Over the years many magic dealers have put out versions of the 'rattle bars pocket trick'. This well-made Davenport's version uses miniature magic wands 50mm long. Davenport's often used eye-catching packaging and this trick was sold in a smart gold box with a sliding inner sleeve. These boxes were used for various tricks from around the 1930s onwards. The boxes were supplied flat, already printed, and they had to be assembled. The task was not difficult – well within the capability of a young John Davenport.

The advertisement says that the three wands are handed out for close examination. Readers who know how this trick works will not be surprised to learn that the instructions do not tell you how this should be accomplished. [N2986](#).

All the very best

John

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