



Greetings and welcome to e-news #29, March 2026

I hope this e-news has something for everyone. It includes magic and entertainment items from 1846 to the present. Happy hunting!

Film of Patrick Page's magic from the 1960s



Patrick Page (1929-2010) was known and loved in magic for many reasons: as a skilful and entertaining performer, and as an inventor, teacher, consultant and, not least, author. Pat managed Davenports magic shop for over a decade and made a huge contribution. This family film, shot by Fergus Roy in the 1960s, captures an informal performance by Pat. Family members are among his greatest fans. We are grateful to Janette Page, his daughter, for permission to share this film on the Davenport Collection website. Watch the film here: [N3603](#).

In the collection we have a photograph taken by John Alborough. It shows three of the most respected people in magic. From left to right: Roy Walton, Jay Marshall and Pat Page. The location is clearly a Davenport Demon Magic stand, but we don't know where.



Impressive results from simple folds

Folding a square of paper has been taken to an art form by creative Origami experts, and Troublewit has been used for centuries to entertain audiences. Compared with Origami and Troublewit, the two examples of folding here are not complicated. Indeed, their appeal lies partly in the fact that the folds are very simple.

Novelty card advertising The Magic Circle Festival at the Scala Theatre, London in 1963



For many years The Magic Circle held their annual show at the Scala Theatre. This cleverly designed card was an excellent way to advertise the 1963 magic show. The card needed only to be printed on one side and scored. Once folded into shape, it turned into a rabbit reading how to buy tickets for the show. Item [N3676](#).

A Happy-Sad Father Christmas card




This is a Santa themed card that uses a well-known principle for making a static image appear to change shape. The flat card is shown above on the left. You make three parallel folds down the middle of the card. Then, if you tilt the hat away from you, as in the middle, Santa looks happy. If you tilt the hat towards you, as on the right, he looks sad. Item [N3675](#).

What is it?

NOW EXHIBITING

AT THE **EGYPTIAN HALL,**
PICCADILLY.



OF THE PRAIRIES;
WILD MAN

OR,

“WHAT IS IT?”

HOURS OF EXHIBITION:
From half-past 11 to 1; half-past 3 to 5; and half-past 7 to 9.
Doors Open quarter of an hour previous

Admission, - ONE SHILLING,
Children under Ten Years, Half-Price.

FRANCIS, PRINTER 25 MUSEUM STREET BLOOMSBURY

1846

The above is an expression from the Original Wood Cut

In 1846 Londoners were drawn to the Egyptian Hall to see a strange, ferocious beast. But “What is it?” It was described this way:

A large den with strong iron bars was built in one of the exhibition rooms, and in it was shown one of the most hideous and ferocious-looking animals imaginable. It was of short stature, stood on its hind legs, was covered with long, shaggy hair, and had enormous hands and claws, with which it ravenously tore raw meat and living rabbits and devoured them. Whenever anyone approached the cage, it flew at the intervening bars, shook them, and uttered the most frightful yells.

This hoax was exposed in an amusing way. The ferocious animal was a man called Harvey Leach, also known as Hervio Nano. The truth came out when someone who knew him entered the cage and offered to take him out for a meal! The story is bizarre and, as is common with such stories, there is more than one version. Leach’s story may be found on the web. Ricky Jay devotes a whole chapter to him in *Jay’s Journal of Anomalies*, first published in 2001 by Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

In an earlier incarnation, Leach was disguised as a fly and performed as ‘The Gnome Fly’. In his theatre act he would climb up a proscenium arch, along the top of it and then crawl down the other side in fly fashion. For more details see [N1995](#) and [N3637](#).

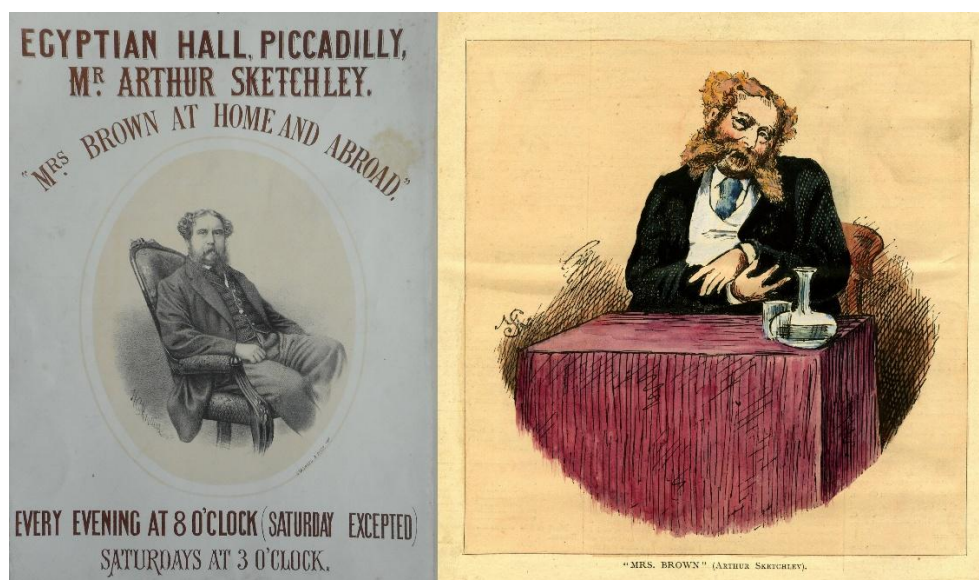
The Devil's Dream by Theodore L. DeLand Jr.



DeLand was a prolific inventor of card tricks. As shown on the front cover of the booklet, above left, the additional title of this trick is *What Science Can Do with a Pack of Cards*. Neither title gives clues as to the nature of the trick. The folded card is the secret of the trick, but the audience is not aware of its existence. The magician shows a pack of cards and allows a spectator to cut them as many times as they wish. You say that you are going into another room and the door should be locked. You ask the audience to shout out the names of a few cards once you are out of the room. On returning, you are able to give the location of the cards called out, for example "You will find the King of Spades 16 cards from the top of the pack."

The trick is copyright 1911. I cannot believe it has entertained many people since then. But it is a good example of DeLand's quirky style. Item [N3400](#).

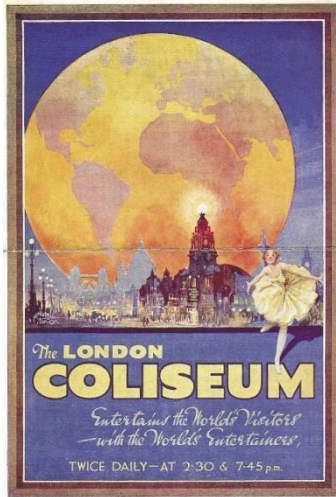
"Mrs. Brown" (Arthur Sketchley) at the Egyptian Hall in 1866



Arthur Sketchley (real name George Rose) was a journalist and a popular Victorian entertainer with his humour and impersonations. Mrs. Brown's exploits were much enjoyed at the Egyptian Hall and also spawned a range of books covering topics from her travels around the world to her views on Cleopatra's Needle. Items [N1999](#) and [N3653](#).

See also [N3654](#) for the booklet for Mr. Arthur Sketchley's entertainment "Mrs. Brown at Home and Abroad" at the Egyptian Hall.

Lewis Davenport at the London Coliseum, week beginning 26 September 1927



Top London theatres of this time would often produce a colourful handbill in addition to the programme. The one above is a folded card that opens up to reveal the show for the week. Lewis Davenport's notebook tells us that he was the second turn and his act took 11 minutes. He finished as he usually did, with De Kolta's Expanding Die illusion. He placed a small die on a low platform and it suddenly expanded. He lifted it up and there was a life size cartoon character inside. For this show, the character was John Bull. We have a photograph of my father Gus Davenport dressed as John Bull. Over the years Felix the Cat, John Bull and Mickey Mouse all appeared from the die. Changing the cartoon character was a simple way of keeping the Expanding Die up to date.

My grandmother Wynne Davenport used to say that one of the pleasures of performing was that, as you worked around the theatres, you would find yourself on the bill with acts who had previously become friends. Such was the case with this Coliseum bill. The third act was Billy Bennett "Almost a Gentleman". The family had toured round South Africa in 1926 with Bennett. He was a comedian who created laughter with parody monologies. If you would like to follow up on Bennett, an excellent source is John Fisher's book *Funny Way to be a Hero*. The second edition was published in 2013 by Preface Publishing, London – an imprint of The Random House Group Limited.

A publicity photograph of Billy Bennett is shown on the left below. The inscription is badly faded now, but can be deciphered as: "To the Davenport Troupe. In purity's name Billy Bennett." The photograph on the right was taken when the 1926 tour group visited a South African gold mine. Billy Bennett is on the right, and a young Gus Davenport is on the left of the front row.



Converting an accumulation into a collection – with help over the years

Up until the 1970s it would have been unrealistic to refer to the Davenport Collection – it was more like the Davenport Accumulation. The family has spent decades trying to convert this accumulation into a collection, with some success. It is not surprising that periodically we come across a trick which we don't recognise and which has no instructions. This is where we need to acknowledge a host of expert friends in the UK and around the world who have helped us resolve these problems. We are grateful to them all.

As an example, with the generous help of Steffen Taut, we have recently discovered the purpose of a trick which has resided in a box for many years. Unusually for a magic trick, it is embossed with both the manufacturer and name of the trick: Bartl's VULCANADOR. Steffen found the trick in a Bartl catalogue and explained the purpose of it. It was Die telepathische Röhre (The telepathic tube).

The nickelled tube (see below) has a piece of elastic running through it with a rounded cork at each end. It first appeared in a Bartl catalogue in September 1927. The tube is used for the divination of the colour of a rod placed inside the tube. The magician asks a spectator to put one of two coloured rods inside the tube and hide the other one out of sight. Despite there being no external marks on the tube which might give the contents away, the magician correctly names the colour of the rod inside. The trick may be repeated any number of times. Unfortunately we only have the tube. The coloured rods are missing. Item [N3517](#).



4277. „Vulkanador“, die telepathische Röhre.

Die beliebtesten Kunststücke sind stets diejenigen, bei denen der Künstler seine scheinbar übersinnlichen Fähigkeiten beweist. Dies geschieht meistens durch Erraten von Gegenständen, die von Zuschauern gedacht wurden. Bei unserem „Vulkanador“ jedoch wird ein Gegenstand vom Künstler erraten, der sich in einer verschlossenen, hochfein vernickelten Doppel-Röhre befindet, obgleich äußerlich keinerlei Kennzeichen vorhanden sind.

Der Künstler gibt den Zuschauern die Vulkanador-Röhre, ebenso verschiedenfarbige Stäbchen zum Untersuchen. Als dann erklärt er einem Zuschauer, daß er sich abwenden würde, damit er nichts sehen könne, indessen solle der Zuschauer einen Stab wählen, den ändern jedoch in die Tasche stecken. Den gewählten Stab solle er dann in die Röhre stecken und diese verschließen. Auf Wunsch der Zuschauer kann der Künstler auch die Bühne verlassen, um zu beweisen, daß jegliches Einverständnis ausgeschlossen ist. Sobald der Zuschauer einen Stab in die Röhre gesteckt und diese verschlossen hat, ebenso den anderen Stab in seine Tasche steckte, wird der Künstler zurückgerufen und nennt alsdann sofort die Farbe des Stabes, der in die Röhre hineingesteckt worden ist, obgleich, wie schon erwähnt, an der Röhre sowie am Stabe keine äußeren Merkmale vorhanden sind. Dieses Bühnenkunststück eignet sich auch großartig zur Vorführung im Salon etc. Die Vulkanador-Röhre ist groß und selbst in großen Theatern weithin sichtbar. Das Kunststück kann beliebig oft wiederholt werden. Dieses Kunststück ist nicht mit ähnlichen zu verwechseln, bei denen eine genaue Kontrolle unmöglich war. Vulkanador-Röhre kann beliebig oft vorgeführt werden. **Komplett.**

The ubiquitous drawer box



There can be few magicians who, at some time in their lives, have not owned a drawer box. It is a very clever principle and it's not surprising that it has been dressed up in so many ways. Our collection contains a number of examples, illustrated above:

- Top. This is an expertly made French box, decorated in Napoleon III style. In the usual drawer box trick, the magician opens the drawer to show that the box is empty. When closed and reopened, the drawer is now full of whatever the magician wishes. This box goes one step further. After the first production the magician can disassemble the box to show it is empty but when reassembled a second production can be made. We have the provenance for this item. It was purchased by John Gambling from De Vere in Paris around 1896. John Gambling sold it to Claude Perry in the 1940s. It then passed to David Cridland who gave it to John and Anne Davenport. Item [N2041](#).

- Middle. On the left is a sturdy mahogany drawer box that any magician would be proud to use. The drawer comes right out so the audience can see there is no mechanism inside the box. Item [N94](#).

On the right is a cardboard drawer box typical of those found in children's magic sets in the first half of the 20th century. This particular one comes from an Ernest Sewell magic set. Item [N1187](#).

- Bottom. On the left is a wooden, Japanese-manufactured cigarette box that uses the drawer box principle. These novelty boxes were popular in Europe around the 1930s. Item [N3020](#).

On the right is a metal cigarette box made in Germany which uses the drawer box principle. The mechanism is different from the Japanese cigarette box. Item [N2031](#).

The drawer box principle has been used for a box of chocolates, shown below. The box is cleverly designed, using nothing more than folded cardboard. The European Magic History Conference in 2025 was held in Riga, Latvia. The organisers included the box in the goodie bag given to all speakers. The product can be purchased from a shop in Riga, www.blackmagic.lv/. Item [N3575](#).



All good wishes

John Davenport, curator of www.davenportcollection.co.uk

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