

Guide to the Negatives of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society (CAS) in the Cambridgeshire Collection

1. A brief history of the CAS Recording Project

In July 1904 at their Annual General Meeting the Cambridge and District Photographic Society agreed to a joint recording project with the Cambridge Antiquarian Society.

This was part of a much wider Photographic Record and Survey Movement which had emerged in England at the end of the 19th century, covering topics such as British archaeology, geology and ethnography. The movement promoted the use of photography to create an historical record for the national good, using a volunteer workforce. Nationally the leading organisation was the National Photographic Record Association (NPRA), whose most prominent member was Sir Benjamin Stone (1838 -1914), the Birmingham industrialist and Member of Parliament.

At the AGM of the Cambridge and District Photographic Society in June 1906 the Secretary reported that "*Very little, if anything, had been done by members with regard to the photographic survey of Cambridgeshire*". That was work in which every member could join, and he hoped that many would take it up during the summer, so that by the commencement of the winter they might have a good number of prints to hand over to the Antiquarian Society.

In 1926 the Cambridge and District Photographic Society again agreed to assist the Cambridge Antiquarian Society with a photographic record of Cambridgeshire. Dr WM Palmer, a member of both societies, headed up a joint committee. Dr Palmer also led two summer outings to take record photographs of Barrington and Duxford. In October 1926 Dr Palmer gave a lecture on record photography (producing a record rather than a pictorialist approach).



CAS Survey photographers at work. J H Bullock at Stuntney, probably taken by Doug Reid whose car can just be seen in the distance (Cambridgeshire Collection).

By 1934 there was a standing committee appointed for the project with members of both societies. In 1936 the club resolved to ask the Cambridge Antiquarian Society to send along a speaker to update them on what was required for record prints.

Although the level of activity on the survey fluctuated over the years after a rather hesitant start, it resulted in the production of an important collection of several thousand prints between 1906 and the 1940s, all now deposited by the Cambridge Antiquarian Society with the Cambridgeshire Collection at Cambridge Central Library. The most recent addition to the Survey was in 1942.

2. The photographers.

Key photographers who contributed most to the CAS Survey were identified by Mike Petty as:

Frank James Allen

James Henry Bullock

Canon Frederick James Bywaters

Dr Louis Cobbett (1862-1947)

Charles Harold Evelyn-White (1850-1938)

Henry Castree Hughes

Herbert Samuel Johnson 1881-1971

William Mortlock Palmer 1866-1939

Douglas Gavin Reid 1881-1934

Percy R Salmon, 1872-1959

William Tams

Rex Wailes 1901-1986

3. How negatives are stored

The main medium for the recording project was the photographic print, over 7500 of which were produced in different sizes over the life of the project. In addition, some of the photographers concerned deposited the glass negatives from which their prints had been made, while others deposited additional negatives, without prints. In some cases additional deposited negatives covered out of County locations (for example Box 56 contains 40 images of mazes only two of which are in Cambridgeshire). There are many more negatives in this collection than prints.

The Cambridge Antiquarian Society numbered all the prints in the project – the first two digits being the last two digits of the year in which they were taken. The Society made a card index listing all the prints. In some cases, particularly with a large collection of negatives by Dr Louis Cobbett, the Society had identified and enveloped the negatives from which individual prints had been made. All the other negatives were kept in boxes. Boxes varied in size. Many were the card boxes in which unexposed glass plates were sold by manufacturers, others are wooden boxes of different sizes. Boxes vary in capacity containing between 4 and 100 negatives. Most of the negatives are glass, some are on acetate film. Some of the boxes contain the work of one photographer, others contain negatives grouped by topic or location –

e.g. all church spires, all Ely; the remainder have mixed contents. The Society then deposited their card index, all of their prints and all of their negatives with the Cambridgeshire Collection.

4. How classified

The CAS prints have all been enveloped by location or subject. Large prints are in “large sequence” A4 envelopes which are numbered “I” in any series, so, for example there are six envelopes of prints covering the village of Fen Ditton. Two of these are large sequence envelopes, numbered I (a-f) and I (g-z) the rest are smaller (postcard sized) envelopes, numbered II to V. Where negatives have been identified for individual prints by Cambridgeshire Collection staff, these have been enveloped and numbered in the same way as the prints.

5. Index

Over the years details of many of the more important and interesting images from the survey have been added to the Cambridgeshire Collection’s main illustrations card index and to the online CALM database.

All of the boxes of CAS negatives have been numbered consecutively by the Cambridgeshire Collection staff. There are 171 of these. The boxes are in different sizes and are generally the card boxes used for the supply of glass photographic plates. The Cambridgeshire Collection has produced a list of boxes, the negatives in each box and, where known, the photographers who took them. This CAS Box list is kept behind the staff desk in the “Illustrations Collections Index” ring binders.

Photographers whose boxes of negatives are identified in the Collection are:

Dr L.Cobbett	Boxes 1, 33, 43, 44, 69, 85, 90, 96, 97, 110, 155
Dr Palmer	Boxes 4, 14, 36, 56, 77, 105, 118
Dr Allan	Boxes 46, 50, 51
J.H.Bullock	Box 72,
G.H.Tyndall	Box 107
D.G.Reid	Box 160. There are also 7 boxes of Reid’s negatives (around 700 images) separately boxed and deposited in the Cambridgeshire Collection. (These include some out of county subjects and box 3 is currently missing)
C.B. Coulson	Box 114

All other boxes are of mixed or unknown origin.

6. What you might hope to find in this collection of negatives

This collection is all about locations mainly in the old Cambridgeshire (now the Southern part of the County), the built and the natural environment. In some instances people feature where they relate to local customs, practices and events. The motivation behind each image was the desire to record what might in the future be lost or altered through natural decay, accident or wilful destruction. On the few occasions where a name of an individual features this is purely incidental.

By drilling down into these boxes of negatives you may find images which are outside the Cambridgeshire Collection's main illustrations index, and which may not have been found by other researchers.

Examples:

If you were researching the village of Hildersham, there are 50 negatives taken there in CAS Box 112, which do not all individually feature in other indices.

If you wanted images of Liddiard's Garage St Andrews Hill Cambridge, you would find three images in the main card catalogue and a negative of another unlisted one in CAS Box 135

Researching the old Falcon Inn Cambridge – there are 35 illustrations of the Inn or Falcon Yard in the main collection, but there are two otherwise unlisted interior shots in the CAS survey box 75.

Researching the Basque children who came to Cambridge as refugees during the Spanish Civil War you would find references to five images in the main illustration index of the Cambridgeshire collection (S.1937.32790 and S.1937.32383-6) but in box 148 of CAS negatives you will find additional images of the children.

7. How to search

When looking for photographs of places or activities, first use the main Cambridgeshire Collection classified illustrations card index in the reading room (which covers all the many collections of images in the Cambridgeshire Collection).

To drill down further into the CAS survey material first search the CAS card index. This will include all of the original CAS prints.

To look further to see if there are additional images, use the "Negatives Collection Subjects" card index in the reading room. There are about 200 index cards in a section marked as "CAS negatives". Each card on a place or subject will list the box numbers in which negatives might be found.

Then go to the CAS Box List, kept behind the staff desk in the "Illustrations Collections Index ring binders". This will show you a list of negatives for each box, from which you can select any likely material.

To be absolutely sure you have searched all the CAS material which could yield the images you require, look through the entire Box List.

Then ask the staff to bring up the appropriate CAS box(es). By searching this widely you may be lucky enough to find negatives of images of your subject which have never been used by other researchers.

8. Handling negatives

The staff will fetch a box of negatives for you. You will then need to find the negatives you want in the box book or packet.

Negatives are very delicate and need to be handled with care, touching only the edges of the negative rather than the image area. Cambridgeshire Collection staff will give you guidance on this and will provide you with an A4 plastic sleeve which will enable you to handle a negative without leaving your finger marks on it. Ideally, if you know you will be handling a lot of negatives, you might wish to go equipped, taking along some white cotton or powder free vinyl gloves to wear (gloves are not provided by the Cambridgeshire Collection).

9. Ordering copies

If your search has been positive you will want to order a scan or a positive print. If you are searching for a portrait hoping to recognise a facial likeness, you will find this extremely difficult to establish by looking at a reversed negative image. To study a portrait visually you really need to order up a scanned positive of the image. Photographic and scanning charges and processing times are shown on the Cambridgeshire Collection's website:

http://www4.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/info/20011/archives_archaeology_and_museums/177/archives_and_local_studies/6

If a negative listed in the box lists has a "T" beside it, this means that the Cambridgeshire Collection has a 35mm colour slide of the image – these are easier to handle than negatives and give a much more helpful impression of the appearance of a scan from the negative.

10. Use of Images

If you intend to use the image you are ordering in a publication or on a website or for other purposes than private personal use, then you should discuss this with staff when ordering copies. Generally, for smaller less commercial purposes, the Cambridgeshire Collection will waive reproduction charges in return for an appropriate acknowledgement and a copy of the final publication for their collection.

11. Future possibilities

The accessibility of this material could be improved by entering data from the CAS box list into a spreadsheet

12. Notes and references.

Mike Petty – "*Vanishing Cambridgeshire*" published by the Cambridge Evening News and the Cambridge Antiquarian Society, 2003, is based upon the CAS Survey

More detail researched by Mike Petty on the main contributing photographers can be found at <http://www.fadingimages.uk/survey.asp>

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