

Annual Report 2025

I hope that things are settling down now at the RPS with the new CEO Victoria Humphries taking over. I regularly attend MemCom meetings and from the most recent one, it was clear to me that the volunteers in SIGs (Special Interest Groups) like ours are working very hard for their members. There is still a feeling that volunteers are not being told enough about future policies though I think it is getting better.

Your committee meets regularly, mostly by Zoom, to review progress and plan our programme. Group membership has stabilised at around 150. We are aware though of the need to continue to attract new and particularly younger members to our Group. Our social media presence co-ordinated by David Barber has helped publicise our activities to growing numbers around the world, who support us online via Instagram (756 followers); X (619 followers); Bluesky (126 followers); and Threads (105 followers). Our three-times-a-year research journal *The PhotoHistorian* edited by Michael Pritchard continues to attract admirers.

During 2025, the secretary role has been shared by committee members David Barber and Roger Farnham. Our long-standing treasurer Geoff Blackwell agreed to stay on for another year and will do so again in 2026. We are grateful to Geoff for his many years of service.



As Chair, and together with members of your committee, we have worked throughout the year to organise web talks and in-person events for the Historical Group.

There were six in-person events in 2025:

- On 20 February the group had a double event in London. First, Dr, Carolyn Bloore showed us how the RPS photography collection is homed at the V&A. Then in the evening, Jamie Owen, curator at the Royal Geographical Society, and his colleagues brought out an impressive selection of their photographic treasures, among which were a great number by Antarctic explorers.
- Our AGM on 25 March was held at Lacock Abbey, the home of British photography. This was a whole day event. I hope we can go to Lacock again soon as the house and grounds are beautiful and the National Trust village, which television companies use

for settings for period dramas, is interesting to walk around. Highlights of the day were a talk and demonstration of stereoscopy and its history by Denis Pellerin and Rebecca Sharpe from the Brian May Archive of Stereoscopy (BMAS), and a very interesting review of the Trust's policies on its holdings of historical photographs by Andy Cochrane, the curator at Lacock.

- The Research Day on 29 March was hosted at the University of Wolverhampton, a new venue which we are visiting again in 2026. I am very grateful to committee member Janine Freeston and our University of Wolverhampton host Euripides Altintzoglou for organising this very successful event.
- On 10 May, the bi-annual Hurter & Driffield Lecture organised by committee members Ed Bylina and Geoff Blackwell was given at the National Science+Media Museum (NSMM) in Bradford by Andy Saunders on remastering the NASA moon photographs.
- On 21 June, we went to the Spinners Mill at Leigh in Lancashire where Tony Richards has his studio. Tony is a modern practitioner of wet collodion photography, and he took our portraits using a vintage camera and showed us how the wet plate was processed. After the demonstration, some of us had a try for ourselves. He was somewhat stressed during the day as the temperature was at least 30°C and he was worried that the emulsion would dry out; but all went well. One attendee was a curator who deals with collodion plates all the time in her work and was very pleased that she now has a better understanding of the problems that the nineteenth century photographers faced.
- On 7 November, we had a curator-led visit to the refurbished galleries at the National Science+Media Museum, Bradford where we were able also to see and handle items from their collection.
- Two online 'Show and Tell' sessions were held during the year each attracting around a dozen participants. These opportunities to speak for five minutes or so about anything of photographic interest are another way of meeting fellow RPS members.

We try to have an online talk every month for members. These talks are mostly given by curators of lesser-known photographic collections. We are very grateful to the speakers, who agree to give these talks. They volunteer their expertise unpaid and may have to do a considerable amount of work in preparing their PowerPoint presentations. Hopefully, this initiative will help the collections become more widely known.

We aim to get as wide a regional spread of talks as possible featuring contributions from across the UK and beyond. The full 2025 programme was:

Online talk: Returning to Robert Adamson, 14 January 2025

Online talk: Ursula Clark: Architectural Photographer, 28 February 2025

Online talk: Sam Hanna: Documenting Lancashire Life, 26 March 2025

Online talk: Fashion and Dress through the Autochrome 1907-1930, 2 April 2025

Online talk: Through a New Lens: The Horner Collection, 1 May 2025

Online talk: The Gibsons of Scilly Shipwreck Collection, 3 June 2025

Online talk: Canadian Stereographs from the Jack Brown Collection, 2 September 2025
 Online talk: Kresen Kernow's George Ellis Photographic Collection, 23 September 2025
 Online talk: Picture Post: A Twentieth Century Icon, 2 October 2025
 Online talk: The Itinerant Photographer in Berwick-upon-Tweed, 11 November 2025
 Online talk: Fraunhofer Spectra - their place in photography, 2 December 2025 (this talk was in collaboration with the RPS Science Imaging group, and we hope to further develop this relationship going forward).

Here's a table featuring all our 2025 online talks and in-person events in descending date order with numbers of people who signed-up in the right-hand column: -

Date	Event title	Registered
03/12/2025	Historical and Imaging Science - Fraunhofer spectra - Dec 2025	40
11/11/2025	Historical Group: The Itinerant Photographer in Berwick-upon-Tweed - Nov 2025	37
07/11/2025	Historical and Yorkshire: Curator tour of NSMM, Bradford - 7 Nov 2025 (*)	13
02/10/2025	Historical Group: Picture Post: A Twentieth Century Icon - Oct 2025	33
23/09/2025	Historical Group: Cornwall's George Ellis photographic collection - Sept 2025	35
02/09/2025	Historical Group: Canadian Stereographs - the Jack Brown Collection - Sept 2025	53
15/07/2025	Historical Group: Show and Tell evening - Jul 2025	16
21/06/2025	Historical Group: Collodion Studio visit - 21 Jun 2025 (*)	6
03/06/2025	Historical Group: The Gibson's of Scilly Shipwreck Collection - Jun 2025	55
10/05/2025	Historical Group: Andy Saunders - Apollo Remastered - May 2025 (2)	
29/04/2025	Historical Group: The Horner Collection project - Apr 2025	36
01/04/2025	Historical Group: Fashion and Dress in Autochromes - Apr 2025	54
29/03/2025	Historical Group: Exploring the History and Impact of Photography - Mar 2025	34
28/03/2025	Historical Group: School of Creative Industries tour - Mar 2025 (*)	8
26/03/2025	Historical Group: Sam Hanna - Documenting Lancashire life - Mar 2025	31
04/03/2025	Historical Group: Annual General Meeting - Mar 2025	17
04/03/2025	Historical Group: A visit to Lacock Abbey and Fox Talbot Museum - Mar 2025	21
28/02/2025	Historical Group: Ursula Clark: Architectural Photographer - Feb 2025	69
20/02/2025	Historical Group: Tour of the V&A Photography Centre - Feb 2025	21
20/02/2025	Historical Group - The Royal Geographical Society collection - Feb 2025	25
14/01/2025	Historical Group: Robert Adamson - A Series of Calotype Views - Jan 2025	73
	Total:	677
	(*) numbers limited by venue (2) - bookings handled by NSMM	

The recordings of our 11 online talks in 2025 were viewed more than **7,500** times on the RPS YouTube channel. Our talks archive playlist now features 40+ talks attracting hundreds of further views each month.

The year ended with the sad news of the death of Colin Ford CBE HonFRPS at the age of 91. Colin was a long-standing supporter of the Historical Group and his advice and counsel over many years will be much missed.

My thanks to our committee for their hard work and support during 2025 and I look forward to welcoming you to a photohistory talk or in-person event during the coming year.

Gilly Read FRPS Chair, RPS Historical Group