

Photographing Hellenism



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The Society for the Promotion
of Hellenic Studies Photographic
Collection 1870s-1960s

Deborah Harlan



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The figures in this book are not reproduced at a consistent scale in relation to the original object, nor are they printed at a consistent relative scale; legibility of the image on the page has been a priority. The reader can determine the size of the original object from the caption to each image, which either states that they conform to a standard size (glass negatives, lantern slides), or indicates the physical size in centimetres of the original.

Captions also retain the original spellings from the photographic registers and may contain older placenames, divergent transliterations from Greek or Turkish, and non-standard spellings. They also list the probable photographer and the date when the photograph was thought to have been created.

See Chapter 3 for more detail.

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Preface & Acknowledgements

As an archivist, I have always found old photographs and photographic collections fascinating. This is perhaps why Stephen Poliakoff's *Shooting the Past*, a BBC fictional television series, made an impression on me. The series told the story of the fate of a large photographic archive earmarked for disposal and the gallant, but vain attempt by the archivists to save it. Its screening in 1999 coincided with the time that I was employed by the Institute of Archaeology, Oxford University, to handle the management of their in-house library and sort documents and miscellaneous material objects that would become their archive. This included the (then abandoned) lantern slide teaching collection that I discovered in a storage cupboard in the Institute's basement. The composition of the lantern slide teaching collection is similar to that collected by the SPHS: a mix of images from individuals, photographs taken out of publications, commercial images, and slides from other image collections, many of which were of Greece and adjacent lands – a subject well-known to me. It included lantern slides that came from an early collection started by school teachers, referred to as the Hellenic Association, and, of course some from the Society for the Promotion of Hellenic Studies (SPHS), the latter labelled with their catalogue numbers. John Linton Myres proved to be the connection between these individual collections. His own negatives and negative register were also found in the same basement cupboard as the lantern slides. The slide collection had originally been based in the Ashmolean Museum before it was split up and divided across various Institutes in Oxford after WWII, the bulk of it coming to the Institute of Archaeology. Now, digital versions of those slides as well as Myres' images are part of the Historic Environment Image Resource (HEIR), a digital initiative started in 2015 by Sally Crawford and Katharina Ulmschneider, my successors at the Institute.

During my years in Oxford, I encountered Elizabeth Edwards; I was one of many who visited the the Pitt Rivers Museum archives when she was the curator of their photographic collection. Her work introduced me to exciting concepts in the interpretation of photographs and their collections. The now defunct Oxford University Museums and Archive Collections History group (OUMACH) also broadened my horizons by bringing archivists, many of whom were dealing with image collections, across the University together to exchange ideas. Also, a brief flirtation with the Magic Lantern Society of the UK resulted in my article on the 'archaeology' (*history*) of the Ashmolean Lantern Slide Teaching Collection in one of the Society's scholarly publications (Harlan 2005).

I later published an article based on a group of negatives originally given to J.L. Myres and found with the lantern slides in Oxford (Harlan 2009b). The negatives comprised a set of travel photographs dating to the late 19th century, which led me to an in-depth investigation into the topic of Victorian era tourism to Greece and the eastern Mediterranean. At the time I wrote that article, I speculated that the trip represented by the photographs pre-dated 1896, the date of the first modern Olympic games that had been held in Athens. However, I can finally set the record straight and correct the precise date of the journey to 1896. I owe this correction to Curtis Runnels who pointed out the small detail of the white hulled battleship in the Smyrna harbour shown in one of the photographs (Harlan 2009b: 429, fig. 3). This could only have been an American ship, dating the photograph to 1896 when the U.S. Navy was known to have been in the area. I later learned from old newspaper accounts that their presence was to protect the interests of American residents who might have been caught up in the backlash caused by the Armenian genocide. The lesson learned from this was that details in photographs are important, no matter how seemingly insignificant, and that they can provide a deeper understanding of what is being told through an image.

At the Visualisation and Knowledge Formation Workshop, held on 23-24 October 2008 at the University of Southampton, I presented a paper entitled 'Institutionalizing Images'. This paper looked at Myres' role in the development of both the SPHS's and Royal Anthropological Institute's (RAI) photographic collections and how these institutional collections were connected to the Ashmolean Lantern Slide Teaching collection through exchange networks. I have used the research from this unpublished paper and incorporated elements of it into this book. Although my interest in the SPHS collection pre-dates its dispersal, beginning with the links to the Ashmolean teaching collection, I was not able to see it before it had left London. However, the London Administrator of the SPHS at the time, Richella Doyle, gave me access to the remaining box of negatives which turned out to be those photographed by William Stillman, well-known for his 1870 publication, *The Acropolis of Athens, Illustrated Picturesquely and Architecturally in Photography*. At Richella's suggestion, I published these in *Archaeological Reports* (Harlan 2009a).

I was briefly in Athens in 2011 when I asked the British School at Athens (BSA) archivist, Amalia Kakissis, about the BSA's share of the SPHS collection that had come from London. The material – negatives, prints and lantern slides – had been re-housed in specialist archival boxes, but remained uncatalogued. Amalia was also kind enough to take me to the Hellenic Literary and Historical Archives or Ελληνικό Λογοτεχνικό και Ιστορικό Αρχείο (ELIA-MIET) where a large portion of the SPHS collection had been sent in 2005. At this time, Nikos Koutsoumpos was cataloguing the index cards – small photographic prints pasted on rectangular cards – and I was able to give them more information about the history of the collection in general and the Stillman images in particular. On this visit I also got a brief glimpse of the treasure trove of original wooden boxes and file cabinets that housed the uncatalogued SPHS negatives and lantern slides.

When I moved to Athens in 2015, the BSA SPHS collection was still uncatalogued, although numerous student helpers, in the interim, had begun an inventory. I was given permission to catalogue, digitise, and study the collection. It was a monumental task, but achieved in the course of the seven years I was living there, helped by an intensified digitisation programme during Covid-19 lockdowns. The work was broken down into groups of photographs by common themes, such as excavation photographs, study tours by individuals, or specific photographers. To publicise the images, as groups of them became available on the BSA's Digital Collections platform, I published blog articles (Archive Stories) on the Archive page of the BSA website. In fact, all of these past investigations into the study of old photographic collections dating back to the late 1990s have led up to this book.

Various archival sources aided my research. The Myres archive in the Bodleian Library at Oxford was one primary source. This led me to the small set of lantern slides of Greek antiquities preserved in the Garstang Museum at the University of Liverpool. The Royal Anthropological Institute archives in London also held material about Myres' involvement with the formation of their institutional photographic collection. With frequent visits to London and help from Richella Doyle, I was able to take record photographs of all the pages of the SPHS photographic registers. We also unearthed a box of typescript slide lectures which proved to be very helpful in understanding how the SPHS used the slide collection in their educational programme. Librarians Sue Willets and Paul Jackson at the combined Library for the Institute of Classical Studies and the Hellenic and Roman Societies, University College London, helped me to track down even more documentary information on the old photographic collection.

Over the years many people have supported and assisted me with this research, significantly John Bennet who has been with me for the entire journey. He has patiently listened, offered sage advice, and on a practical level corrected my mis-spellings and grammatical mistakes. At the BSA, many enthusiastic conversations with Michael Loy, then Assistant Director, were very much appreciated. We also had fun in our joint venture in analysing and comparing a group of travel images from the SPHS with Instagram images (Harlan and Loy 2020). Amalia Kakissis, the BSA archivist, continued her support throughout and

responded with aplomb to seemingly unrelated requests for information on material from other BSA collections. BSA librarians, Evi Charitoudi and Evgenia Villioti and their predecessors Penny Wilson-Zarganis and Sandra Pepelasis, provided a welcoming home in the BSA Library. I would also like to thank the BSA in general as well as the previous Director, John Bennet, and the current Director, Rebecca Sweetman, for permission to publish this material.

In addition to Sue Willets and Paul Jackson at the Joint Library for Hellenic and Roman Societies in London, I am very grateful to Rosario Rovira Guardiola who introduced me to the old SPHS drawing collection which she was in the process of digitising. Administrators of the SPHS, formerly Richella Doyle and currently Fiona Haarer, have been unfailingly helpful. At Cambridge, I have found a kindred spirit in fellow archivist, Rebecca Naylor, who generously shared information about Alan Wace's early photographs held in the archives of the Faculty of Classics. Alessandra Giovenco, archivist at the British School at Rome (BSR), with her usual professional efficiency, provided me with information about its related collection from the Roman Society as well as the BSR's collection of photographs from the Robert Gardner photographic collection. Conversations with Nikos Koutsoumpos were very helpful drawing on his knowledge of the ELIA-MIET collection when he was cataloguing the material. Over the years, he has also been generous in sharing his numerous publications and conference papers. Currently at ELIA-MIET, Mathildi Pyrli provided valuable information and I am very grateful for her time in looking through the catalogued and uncatalogued material in Athens. Jan-Marc Henke, the head of the photo library at the German Institute in Athens, provided me with detailed information on various images, copies in the SPHS collection that had originally come from the German Institute collection. I am also grateful to Laura Brown, curator of photography collections at the University of St Andrews for taking the time to go through Miss Janet Low's Greek lantern slides for comparison to images in the BSA SPHS collection.

A number of other individuals have lent their support and, significantly, their considerable expertise. I am very grateful for engaging and diverse conversations with Christopher Stray on the English Photographic Company, John Clarke Stobart, Richard Jebb and the founding of the BSA, the Classical Association, and other bits of arcane knowledge. Olga Palagia shared her incomparable knowledge of Greek sculpture. Sebastian Marshall's lecture in the BSA Upper House seminar series, 'Beyond the Classical Landscape: Photographs of Rural Greece from the SPHS Image Collection', spurred me on to tackle the picturesque. Many of his ideas were derived from his 2024 Cambridge Ph.D. thesis, 'Sketching, Sight-seeing and Scholarship: Greece and Asia Minor, 1828-1898'. It is encouraging to see early-career scholars make use of the SPHS material. I would also like to thank Mike Schurer and Robin Orlić at Archaeopress. I am immensely grateful to all who have helped see this book to completion.

Abbreviations & Digital Resources

Abbreviations

ABSA: Annual of the British School at Athens

BAAS: British Association for the Advancement of Science

BSA: British School at Athens

BSR: British School at Rome

JHS: Journal of Hellenic Studies

ELIA-MIET: Hellenic Literary and Historical Archives / Ελληνικό Λογοτεχνικό και Ιστορικό Αρχείο

RAI: Royal Anthropological Institute

SPHS: Society for the Promotion of Hellenic Studies

SPRS: Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies

Digital Resources

BSA Archive Stories: <https://www.bsa.ac.uk/about-us/archive/archive-stories/>

BSA Digital Collections: <https://digital.bsa.ac.uk>

Cambridge Digital Library: <https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/collections/>

Historic Environment Image Resource (HEIR): <https://heir.arch.ox.ac.uk/pages/home.php?login=true>

LUCERNA Database: <https://lucerna.exeter.ac.uk/index.php>