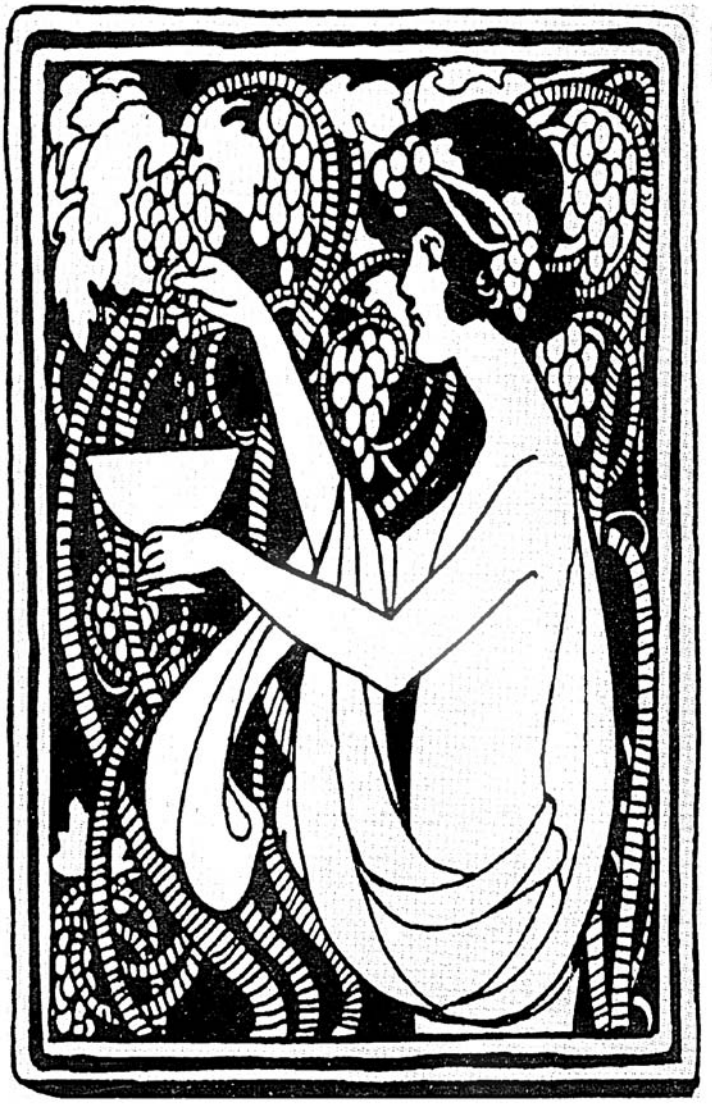
THE AMALGAMATED PHOTO HISTORY NEWSLETTERS

• VOL. 1-4 2020

Welcome the British Collectors' Society with a sampling from their magazine *Photographica World* and newsletter *Tailboard*. Timothy Campbell chose mostly *PW* pages which show the heavy coverage they devote to hardware in their 60 page tomes. A *Tailboard* cover is in the middle of the collage: he added less Tailboard content as it mainly reports regional meetings (but I find them interesting). Where do they get all those camera stories?

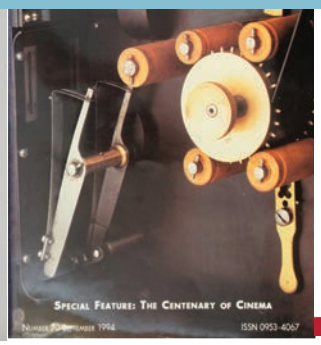
Wisconsin Historical Society is new and covers all historical aspects. Have not been able to reach a specific photo editor. The e-mail address included to access it direct.

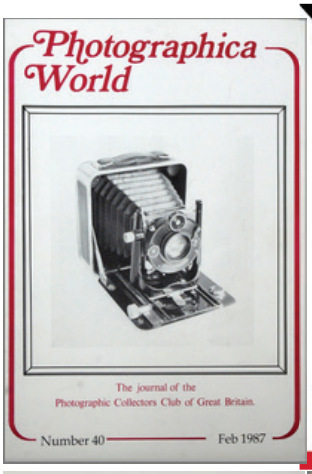


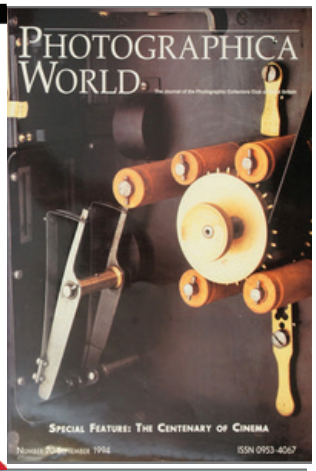
Permissions granted:
Photographica World –Photographic Collectors Group of Great Britain–
Timothy Campbell
Wisconsin Historical Society Newsletter–
membership@wisconsinhistory.org

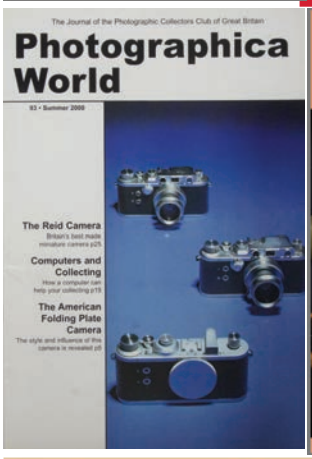
Photographica World & Tailboard

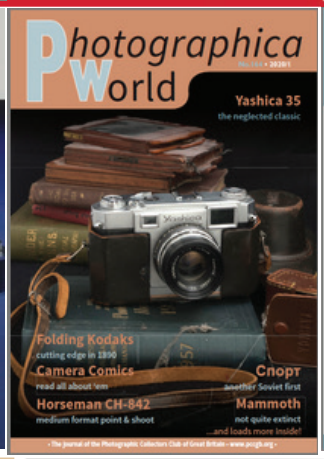
• The journal and newsletter of the Photographic Collectors Club of Great Britain •

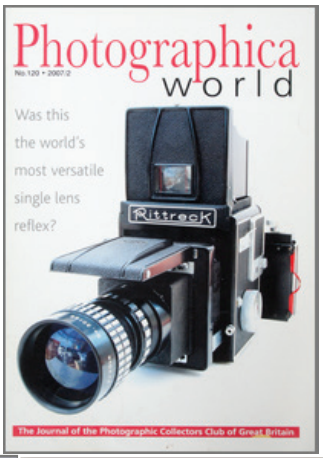


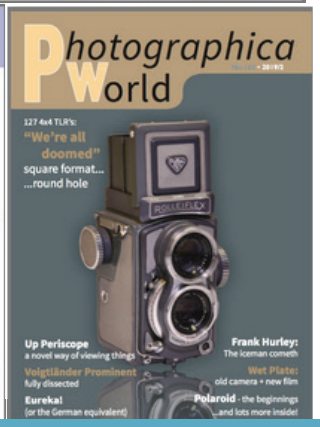












The Photographic Collector's Club of Great Britain

The Photographic Collector's Club of Great Britain is the World's leading organization for collectors and enthusiasts interested in the collection and study of photographic equipment, images, processes and history. Formed in 1977, the club has over 750 members worldwide, with diverse interests ranging from sub-miniature cameras to Daguerrotypes, through to photographic books and using vintage equipment and processes. Although UK based the PCCGB has members across the globe, and we welcome input for our publications from everyone – be it academic study, camera marque history, the use of old and not so old equipment. We also welcome the opportunity to review new books and collections on the subject of photographica – please contact editor James Downs if you are able to provide review copies.

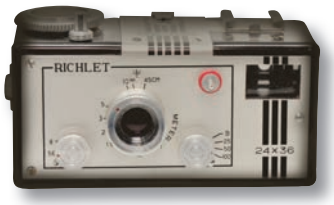
Membership is open to anyone interested in photographica – we have members who collect cameras who don't ever take photographs, we have members who collect and study images but don't own a camera, we have members who specialise in Victorian cameras and will not look at anything made after 1900, and still others who consider anything made before 1990 to be uninteresting – and the vast majority fit somewhere in between all of this!

Our publications (Photographica World and Tailboard) feature articles written by both experts and absolute newcomers to the club and the wonderful world of photographica. Knowledge is a great thing to share, but enthusiasm is also a key aspect – and we welcome research and discussion from everyone. We are as likely to discuss the merits of a DIANA camera as we are the history of the Leica. Stereo/3D photography is another perennial favourite – both from an historical angle and also how to get the best results.

From just £49 per year, membership of the PCCGB includes 3 issues of Photographica World, 6 issues of Tailboard, free entry to the countries biggest and most prestigious annual camera fair (Photographica, held in London In May) and of course the opportunity to attend any of the regional club meetings held throughout the year.

We look forward to welcoming you to the PCCGB!

Please visit our website (www.pccgb.com) for details of how to join the PCCGB. If you have any research or articles ready for publication we'd be delighted to hear from you! Please contact PW editor James Downs (**jamesdownspw@gmail.com**)




Membership of the Photographic Collectors Club of Great Britain is open to everyone – worldwide.

Membership is available for individuals and families and for both UK residents and internationals, with annual subscription starting at just £49.00 per year.

Membership has many benefits including:

- Access to all Club meetings across the UK
- Free entry to the annual Photographica fair in London
- Photographica World magazine, published three times a year
- Tailboard magazine (printed or digital download option) published six times a year
- Participation in the postal auction
- Free copy of the Members Handbook

Annual membership subscription:

Non UK European Individual: £49.00

Overseas (non European) individual: £55.00

Ricoh TELECA 240 -

the biggest ever half frame camera?

by Timothy Campbell

In the last issue of *Photographica World* (#160) John Wade covered one of the more unusual sub species of camera - the binocular-camera (or is it camera-binocular?), including the half frame example from 1968, the NICNON - this article is a further delve into that camera and it's more common version the Ricoh TELECA 240

A fine pair - Ricoh Teleca 240 (left) and the dinky Ricoh Auto half E - the Auto Half is only slightly taller than a standard 35mm film canister (Auto Half E image courtesy of John Wade)

Half frame cameras have always been at the heart of my collection, as they tick one of the primary boxes of interest for me - that of unusual, or downright weird design. I've written about RICOH cameras in a previous article (PW 141), and since then I have managed to track down what is a very hard to find (or afford) camera, courtesy of an SAS express auction held in 2017.

SAS - WHO DARES WINS

I was aware of the Teleca many years ago as it was listed in Terry Hardy's Half Frame guide [The Half Frame Camera, 1908 - 1989, A List of Cameras (Bath, 1999)], and sometimes one would be listed in the 'Camera Collector' magazine, but apart from the very high cost (later confirmed in Mackeown's) I'd put it down as a camera to look out for, but never likely to own.

Cut to early 2017 and the SAS auction. This particular auction was their 'express' one, where there are some decent items, in amongst more humble cameras and mixed boxes of bits. As usual I'd had a thorough browse online and made notes on anything that tickled my fancy - I very nearly overlooked one of the lots as the catalogue image was a birds eye view of a small soft case and a bigger hard case, with only the description to guide me. Luckily for me they listed the lesser item first (also featured in John's article in PW 160) - the 110 format ITT binocular camera. The other item was a TELCA Ricoh (sic).

The bigger case definitely had the RICOH badge on it, so I decided that I'd take a chance, leave a £30 bid and see what might happen (deciding the ITT must be worth that much, so I could always sell that on to get my money back). I can only assume that no-one else realised the typo, or possibly bothered to have a look on the viewing day, as I was the only bidder.

To say I was delighted is an understatement. To say that I was staggered at the weight of thing once it arrived is an even bigger understatement!

Over 1.5Kg is probably a World record for a half frame camera!

Before I move on to the TELECA 240 and it's workings I'll cover what I can of the cameras history - it's very sketchy, and all I can really do is compare what I've been able to find by looking at images online.

MURKY ORIGINS

As mentioned the forerunner of the TELECA 240 was the NICNON camera - to add to the confusion there was also a badge variant called the TEFLEX, but it would appear to be exactly the same camera. The manufacturer (or at least the name that is on the NICNON) is the NICHIRYO INTERNATIONAL CORPORATION Co: About the only thing I can state with any certainty is that RICOH made the camera! NICHIRYO possibly made the binoculars, and possibly assembled the parts, but at this stage it's guesswork.

During my research I've seen many times the 'google fact' that the NICNON/TELECA uses a Ricoh Auto Half camera - it most certainly does not.

The Ricoh Auto Half camera was introduced in 1960 (only

Rear view - eyepieces are -4 - +2 dipoter adjustable
Camera speed selector visible to the right

Top deck - focus by central wheel, lens stops seen on right hand binocluar barrel.
The redundant cold shoe is clearly visible!

a year after the phenomenally successful Olympus Pen half frame) and went through several variants, right up to the 1980's. This delightful, tiny camera is still a very ueseable one, and in Japan is especially sought after by fashion/design loving arty types - as proven by the availability of new replacement front panels (for the later models), in a bewildering range of patterns, and also a Japanese book featuring hundreds of modded versions of the Auto Half family.

The Auto Half became the Auto Half E in 1964, the most important change being the shutter release, which was moved from the front to the top plate - and it stayed there for all subsequent models. The original camera had a fixed 1/30th shutter speed on A (auto) mode, the selenium cell in the large front panel dictating the aperture.

The dial on the top plate could be moved to manually set the aperture, and switched the shutter to 1/125th to use with flash. The lens is a fixed hyperfocal one - half frame offering decent depth of field even wide open, and of course this camera was only ever meant for family snaps, not for 'serious' shooting. Later models added a self timer, faster lens, and ultimately built in flash and zone focus.

The most important spec for the purposes of this article is that the shutter of the Auto Half (and E) is a typical simple 2 leaf variety.

Camera innards compared
Top - Ricoh Auto Half, leaf shutter visible in centre
Bottom: Teleca 240, showing film gate - shutter curtain is inside

Bottoms up:
Teleca 240 (left) showing much deeper body

CFPS - HFC - OK?

Given that the NICNON was produced from 1968 (up to 1978 according to some sources, but I think that's more likely to be new old stock still being available) it's quite natural to assume that the camera built in to the binoculars is the Auto Half E (as the shutter release sits on the top). What's very surprising is that the camera featured on the NICNON and TELECA 240 looks like an Auto Half E, but, as John Wade mentioned, it has been modified - by the addition of a cloth focal plane, 3 speed shutter.

This puts it in a tiny handful of CFPS half frame cameras - the only other commercially available ones I can think of are the Leica 72, The Nikon S3M, the Ducati camera and the Konica IIIm of 1959 (this being switchable half or full frame - the later Konica Auto Reflex uses a vertically running metal shutter so is a sub species of its own).

There may be others, but I think the point is made…

The Auto Half E had a deeper body than the first model, and although I don't have one to compare directly it seems that Ricoh did use the outer shell and winding mech from the E to create the camera used on the Teleca.

So, we definitely have a collaboration between the camera maker (Ricoh) and the binocular company (NICHIRYO). Until someone in Japan does the research (and the translation) it's impossible to say who did what/why and exactly when, but I can go over the specs and variants with a degree of accuracy.

Ricoh TELECA 240 (continued)

SPLIT PERSONALITY

The right hand barrel of the outfit has an opening with the camera body attached/grafted in to it. The binoculars are used in the traditional manner with a large, click stopped focusing wheel - this is firm but easy to rotate, and has deep serrations for glove wearers.

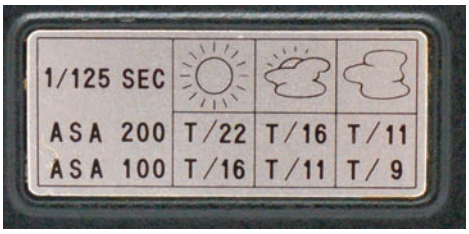
In use, the light from the subject enters the binoculars (right lens), hits a split mirror, half going to the camera, half to the right hand eyepiece. The camera has a basic exposure plate on the back, indicated for 1/125th (the camera has 1/60, 1/125 and 1/250 speeds, selected on one end with a slider) and 3 weather symbols, sunny, sun/cloud and cloudy. There are then figures giving T values.

T values are the binocular version of f stops, but as the split mirror loses so much light, you can't just use a hand-held light reading, or even a guesstimate reading without making allowances, so it's very important to use this exposure guide as a starting point.

The right hand lens has a built in lens hood and is marked with both F and T stops, so in fact what appears at first to be a confusing way of doing this is actually simple - f4 = T 11, f5.6 = T16 and so on, BUT it does throw you a bit, and I can imagine a keen photographer getting a lot of badly underexposed shots due to using a previously reliable 'sunny 16' rule of thumb!

The lens on the binoculars is a 165mm which, due to the quirks of the half frame format, is the equivalent of a 240mm on full frame - hence the Teleca 240 name

Top front view: Camera back catch visible to the left



Handy exposure guide plate, fixed to camera back door

COLD SHOE SHUFFLE

The NICNON was first made without a shoe on the right hand barrel. Given that these binoculars are quite high magnification, and flash fallout over a minimum focus distance of 20 meteres is considerable, why do you need a flash shoe, you ask? - you don't, is the brief answer!

But it's possible (this is conjecture) that complaints about incorrect exposure and wasted film meant they added the shoe after the initial cameras had been made - along with what appears to be a VERY rare accessory - the NICNON exposure meter.

This tiny device is marked out in T stops and would have been a boon to anyone who had lugged the camera along to do some wildlife shots - at least that's the theory. In reality who has got the time to spot a golden eagle, focus the binoculars, move binoculars to see the meter reading, set the T stop, set the shutter speed, put binoculars back to eyes, press shutter release?!

What's very odd is that I've seen a dozen or so NICNON cameras online, about half have the shoe, and ALL TELECA 240 cameras have the shoe, but the meter is virtually impossible to find, and also has ONLY be seen branded as NICNON- I don't believe there was a Ricoh version - very strange indeed.

In order for thoroughness I made a note of the serial numbers of the cameras I'd seen - and came to no conclusions... They use a 6 digit sequence - 691361 is a shoeless NICNON, 703401 is a shoed NICNON, ALL TELECA 240 are

Incredibly rare NICNON exposure meter (image grabbed from Ebay auction site)

7 digit, with 7010 as the opening numbers (the exception being the one shown on the instruction booklet, but that's probably a messed with early NICNON, not a production model Ricoh as it doesn't have a shoe).

I wondered if the first 2 are year indicators, but that doesn't compute either as I noted a shoeless NICNON 750682 (even if they were still selling up to 1978, they surely would have sold all the initial shoeless batch…)

Anyway, enough of the rivet counting - let's get on with the appraisal!

OUT AND ABOUT WITH A TELECA 240

Mackeown's lists the TELECA 240 as being available from 1971, and I see no reason to argue with them - there's no date given on the instruction booklet to confirm one way or the other.

Given the rarity of the NICNON (in either shoed or shoe-

Ricoh TELECA 240 (continued)

DONT MENTION THE ACCESSORIES

Luckily my TELECA came with the instruction manual, which is split Japanese and English, but there is NO mention of either the support or the light meter. It seems potty that they went to the expense of making and adding the shoe, then not make the meter available - there's no slot in the carry case either, which seems to confirm that the meter was never made for the Ricoh version.

The binoculars are very well made, and are of very high optical quality. The right barrel has a fitted lens shade (as that's the 'taking' lens), and there are fitted caps for lenses and eyepeices, the big ones having the Ricoh logo on them. Both eyepieces have diopter adjusters from -4 to +2, and there's a measure on the back of the joining/focus tube for eye separation distance.
As mentioned the right barrel has the T and F stops, which run from f3.5 (T9) to f11(T21) - this is smooth and continuous, but with indents at each full stop.
The focus is interesting in that it is marked in feet and meters, 20-25-30-40-70-200 and infinity, and is click stopped at each - so I suppose if you had focussed on a set subject and distance you don't worry about nudging it off while you faff about with the meter and camera settings!
The lenses on mine are in really excellent shape (the benefit of a good carry case) and the only part of the ensemble that's deteriorated are the 2 velcro straps inside the case!

A few more details on the camera: this unique Ricoh Half has a hinged back (the standard model had a detachable back, the E was hinged) and has had the viewfinder window blanked out. As you can see the viewfinder surround is still part of the shell, but has no purpose.
There is a strong back latch on one end and the sliding shutter setting lever at the other. The top plate features a film speed memo - on the original camera this is the meter control - I imagine they kept this to avoid having to retool specially… The back door has the afore mentioned exposure guide plate and a manufacturer strip.
The Auto Half E had a simple upright shutter release - they added a surrounding collar to the TELECA - this makes sense as you would be firing the camera while holding the Binos to your eye, so better to have a definite shape to grope for, to prevent accidental exposures.

The camera uses a base spring wind, and on the original Ricoh Auto Half you could get up to 20 exposures from a full wind, but I found that I was getting maybe half a dozen in use. With half frame you could get 72 exposures on a 36 shot film so it is a very economical way of shooting wildlife.
Film rewind is manual, although it's not entirely obvious that you have to push the base of the wind control to disengage the drive! The rewind crank is folded into the casette end shaft.
You can see the rear shutter curtain when you open the back, and of course the slightly unusual (unless you are half frame familiar) vertical format - the majority of HF cameras used this orientation, it's dictated of course by whether the film runs horizontally or vertically.

So, having prattled on about the knowns and the unknowns, the big question is - what's it like to use?

ELBOWS IN, BREATHE OUT

I ventured out into the wilds of Rawdon St Peters church to do some test shots, and sod's law dictated that while I was doing so another keen snapper would come along with a Canon DSLR, fitted with a gigantic zoom and remote release attachment - the look he gave me was priceless - if he'd been more than 20 meters away I could have photographed him!
The key thing that struck me on looking through the glasses is just how high a magnification it is - I took a reference image on my digital camera - as you can see the natural view is of more or less the whole church - the Teleca shows the clock face and surrounding tower and not much else.
The next thing that struck me was the unwieldiness of the combo. You can hold it comfortably, and using an 'elbows in' approach allows for a degree of steadiness, but only for a minute or 2. I think the main downside of using it as it is is that it's very hard to judge the shutter release position, so you prod down on the release, not quite certain of the exact point of fire. The simplest workaround for this is of course a cable release, and I've seen other camera plus binocular set ups that use that for a smoother job (for instance with the Minox subminiature). However having not brought a cable along I moved on to my next set of test shots - I attached the chest brace and tried again - this was a huge improvement, in comfort, steadiness and sharpness of final image.
I made a series of shots based on a hand held meter, and applied what I hoped was the correct adjustment for the F stop to T stop equation. I also did bracketed exposures to be sure!
Photographing a distant flat image is one thing, but I also wanted to see the effect of out of focus areas when shooting closer. Trying to get the minimum 20 meters away from anything vaguely photogenic is actually quite hard...In the end I settled for some headstones, and took the picture here while resting on one of them.

A very good point that is made in the manual is that you are looking at a circular image, and that the actual frame is vertical and rectangular - so a level of guestimation is needed to know what is included in the final shot - no problem if you keep the subject dead centre, but it can be a bit of a waste of frame to not use as much as you can - especially as you are only using half frame format to start with!

There is something slightly skewed in my results in that the frame is most definitely listing to port! I'm not that cack handed that I would have a tilting horizon on every shot I took, so clearly the camera isn't quite sitting true.

A church clock face and gravestones might not be everyones cup of tea but they do demonstrate that the Teleca was a very capable combo - the contrast and definition are really very good indeed.

Rawdon St Peter's - actual view taken with Nikon DSLR

Cemetery - actual view taken with Nikon DSLR

Rawdon St Peter's -
from same viewpoint as top left photo, taken with the Teleca 240

Cemetery -
from same viewpoint as top right photo, taken with the Teleca 240

I'm sure that even in 1971 anyone loading up with Tri X would have been happy with the results. My film of choice was the surprisingly nice 200 ASA Kodak Color Plus film - a still available from new cheap and cheerful emulsion that isn't overly grainy and has nice saturated but accurate colour.

So, all in all a very quirky and niche product from Ricoh - via NICHIRYO. A rare-ish camera that doesn't turn up in the UK very often, but thanks to Ebay it is possible to get one fairly easily: they generally sell in the £350+ range, the NICNON meter would probably costs that on its own, assuming you see one. If you've been after a cloth focal plane shutter half frame and had given up on getting a Leica 72 or the beautiful Ducati, this could be the solution for you - just don't count on there being another misla-belled one in an unopened box at auction!

Taking a close look at a vintage photographic publication

by archivist

Photographic Review of Reviews, May 15th, 1892

The Photographic review of reviews, first published in 1892, stood alone (as far as I can tell) in that rather than just covering equipment, exhibitions and reports from the UK, it fully details photographic items of interest from across the World, and quotes at length from non UK publications.

This particular edition (which was monthly, and cost sixpence) is from that first year, and is the 5th edition, dated May 15th - the magazine continued at least into 1893 (I have a copy), but sadly I've not been able to determine how long it lasted; what I do know is that copies of any issues are rare, and are more likely to be found listed in museum collections, than at a camera fair sitting among a pile of photo mags from a century later.

It is typical of its time, both from the language style and from the images used, with a large number of ever more unlikely claims for products, and an alarming disregard for health and safety, with top tips for improving plate and print quality - usually involving arsenic, mercury and, if all else fails, a grain or 2 of laudanum.

I've chosen this issue for review as it contains a supplementary print (how on earth it is still there is a miracle) - being an example of a collotype print, by renowned photographer (and original grumpy old man) Frank Meadow Sutcliffe. The collotype was a glass based process, championed by Alfred Stieglitz, and produces incredibly fine detail and tonal range in the print - it's a sort of half way house between a true photographic print and a printing off press. The image, typical of Sutcliffe, is of 'The New Quay, Whitby', and is incredibly evocative - a harbour scene illuminated by side and top light, with boats large and small safely anchored, with what I assume is Whitby abbey just about visible in the distance.
The great man is quoted at length within, and on the subject of framing for exhibitions is of the opinion "If you want anything doing well, do it yourself"!

Any period publication can be invaluable for the adverts and this mag is no exception. A double page spread for ADAMS has such offerings as 'the Adams Hand camera " the most perfect hand camera it is possible to buy", their CLUB model is 'the lightest made' and also 'an exquisite piece of apparatus in every particular' - and who am I to argue?
Over the page there's an ad for The Stereoscopic company' with their 'twin lens artist' camera being modelled by none other than HRH the Princess of Wales - at least the proximity of the tagline to the line drawing of a bonnetted madame would make many readers draw that conclusion...
You might think that marketing is a modern abomination, but you have to hand the innovation prize to Thornton Pickard - their ad for their ubiquitous Time Shutter is run upside down! I thought this was a plate makers error, but I have seen this in other mags, so it's definitely deliberate - unless they ran the ad unchanged for years without anyone commenting?!

As an aid to current day research there is an invaluable publications index on page 183 - ranging from the well known (***BJoP, Amateur Photographer***) to the obscure (***Magic Lantern Journal, St Louis and Canadian Photographer***) - it won't help anyone track them down, but it's nice to know what was available at the time.

It's always intriguing reading about the latest technologies and breakthoughs - ***The Photographic Times*** is quoted on the hot topic of CELLULOID, and details it's invention in 1869, and the process for making it - and it's likely use in photography… an article that caught my eye was the one on 'Flying Bullet Photography' - all done decades before the invention of flash guns! The section on 'Novelties of the Month' covered the latest variant of the afore-mentioned TP roller blind shutter (The Safety Snap Shot Shutter), Houghtons waded in with their very Victorian 'Revolving Vignette Table' and my pick of the bunch Braine & Sons revealed their '**Book Camera**' - I've been unable to find this listed anywhere else so possibly a 1 off prototype? Answers on a postcard.

The proof that there's nothing new under the sun - Do you think that images of cute cats are a modern atrocity? Think again - those crazy Victorians did it already!

the digital dodger

Mixing Old and New - basic lens adapters

a look at using legacy lenses on digital cameras

2008 saw the launch of a new breed of interchangeable lens cameras. Called "Compact System Cameras" (CSC's), they are now more often referred to as Mirrorless cameras. Because they do not need the mirror box of traditional SLR cameras they are lighter and the much shallower bodies allow the use of a wide range of manual 'legacy' lenses with the aid of a suitable simple adapter.

Fuji XE2 fitted with a Diax fit 50mm f 2.8 Xenar lens in a functional but perhaps not elegant mount

Focusing is done manually on a magnified screen or electronic viewfinder. Exposure can be automatic or manual.

To use any older lens on these cameras, adapters fall into two main categories:

1. Commercially made adapters - usually for the main SLR or rangefinder lens fittings. These are available on-line, at camera fairs and from some camera dealers. Initially expensive, they now cost from a few pounds. The quality can vary by way of poor tolerances causing loose fittings and weak springs and rough finishes.

   Each mirrorless camera range has its own lens mount and so has a specific adapter. Typically available are adapters for Leica L39 screw, Leica M & Leica R , Nikon F, Yashica/ Contax, M42 Pentax/ Praktica screw, Praktica B, Minolta MC/MD, Olympus OM and Canon FD.

   If you had previously been using adapters on a Canon EOS SLR there are savings to be made by simply buying a mirrorless to EOS adapter and mounting your lenses using two adapters. Adapters with a built in tilt facility are available for shift lenses.

2. Custom made adapters - for the more obscure lens fittings these can be made up by specialised engineering firms or home made.

I am no engineer but over a period have made up several different lens adapters to work on my mirrorless cameras. Rather than making them to fit direct to a camera I usually try to get them to fit and register to a Leica L39 screw mount. This gives some flexibility to use shorter focal length lenses. Making your own adapters means seizing every opportunity to collect anything with a useful thread (or bayonet) mount including broken lenses and camera bodies, enlarger lenses and flanges, extension tubes, reversing rings, etc.

Having obtained a "project" lens it is a matter of cobbling together a mount using items such as MDF board, photo mount card, Plasticard modelling sheets, various glues and, even, black paint and sticky backed black baize.

It is important to try and keep the lens centred on, and parallel to the sensor if the best results are to be achieved.

By standardising, as far as possible, my custom adapters to use Leica screw as a mount it enables me to use the set ups on different sensor size mirrorless cameras. M42 Pentax/Praktica thread parts will also be suitable (and

more available) especially for longer lenses.

M42 Helicoid variable extension tubes, available on the internet, are useful to create focussing mounts.

Also useful from the internet is a list of camera lens registers, an example being Wikipedia's Flange Focal Distance.

So why do it? Legacy lenses can clearly never be as good as modern lenses. But, they can be different. The photographers amongst you may appreciate the bokeh (out of focus background areas) slightly less sharp, and lower contrast which can give wider tones, especially in monochrome.

For the collector, what can be more satisfying than buying, say, a slightly older but still capable used mirrorless camera and combining it with an appropriate adapter to record, for example, items in your collection, the stages of dismantling for a repair or for comparing lens quality.

Perfectly acceptable images for many purposes can be made with lenses costing just a few pounds as I hope to show you in future articles.

Canon EOS Adapters

16mp Fuji XT-1 with Fuji to Canon EOS adapter, fitted with EOS to Pentax K adapter holding Pentax M 50mm f/1.7 lens

Other EOS adapters, L to R: Yashica/Contax, Exakta, Nikon F, M42 Screw, Olympus OM, Leica R

Typical commercially available adapters

Back row, L to R: Leica R to Fuji X, Canon EOS tilt to Fuji X Centre: M42 to M4/3, Nikon A1 to M4/3, Canon FD-M4/3, Minolta MD-Fuji X

Front Row: CineC Mount to M/43, Leica L39 to M4/3 (slightly modified), Leica M to Fuji X

Homemade adapters

Back Row, L to R: Exakta to Leica Screw, Diax to Leica Screw

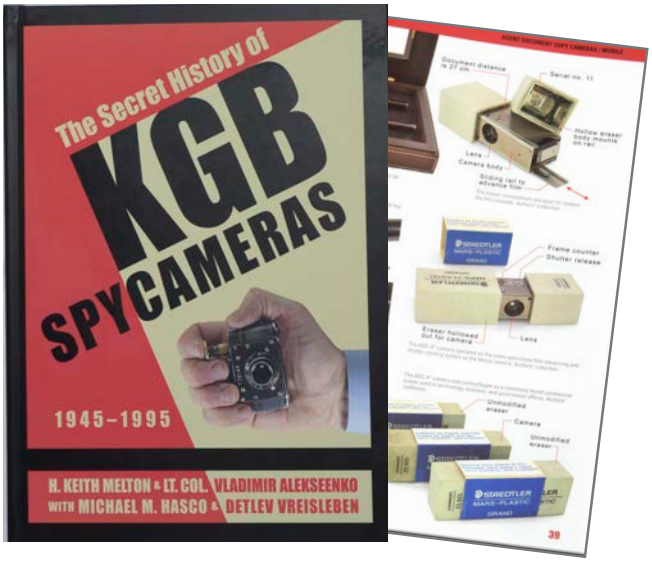
Centre: Voigtlander Bessamatic to Leica Screw, Pentax K to Leica Screw, Modified Leica Screw to M4/3 (chamfered to clear infinity lock)

Front Row: M42 to M4/3, L39 to M4/3 short mount for bellows use

Book reviews

The Secret History of KGB Spy Cameras: 1945-1995

by H. Keith Melton & Lt. Col. Vladimir Alekseenko



Schiffer Publishing Ltd

ISBN-13: 978-0764356162

23.5 x 2.5 x 31.8 cm , hardback

£35.99

There are several books on subminiature cameras that use the term 'SPY CAMERA' as an almost generic term, as if any camera that is smaller than 35mm is or was by default used in espionage (not true at all).
As a keen collector of subminiature cameras I have most of the books that are on the subject, so was fairly blasé about this latest title from Schiffer - I soon changed my tune.

The cover has an image of a hand holding the tiny, relatively well known AJAX 11 (F 21), a camera that is rather like a miniature version of the clockwork ROBOT camera.
The miniscule size and complexity of the AJAX is really quite amazing, but the cameras featured within these pages are truly astounding, making the AJAX a virtual also ran.

Written in association with two senior KGB officials, the book details the history not just of the cameras used by the KGB, but also the KGB itself.
Thankfully the authors do this in a very breezy manner, so even though there are hundreds of acronyms used, it's very light reading - helped by a thorough glossary on pages 175 to 183 (I said there were a lot!)

Most readers will be familiar with the stereotypical spy use of sub min cameras from film and TV, so the bigger budget films (***Bond, Harry Palmer***) used a minox, the low budget TV shows (***Man in a suitcase, Danger man***) used the Mamiya 16, and coupled with later period surveillance cameras that's about as 'secret' as things get. Post USSR there has been a steady stream of ingenious fake spy camera sets come onto the market, mostly based on the Russian 16 mm cameras - John Player Special cigarette packet being a perfect example.

However this book reveals just how spectacularly clever the Russians were at pushing available technology to limits that even the best of the spy writers would never dream of

When I saw the first digital 'roll over' scanners in the early noughties I thought I'd seen the future. To read about and see images in this book that showed that the KGB had working cameras that fitted inside a cigarette packet, that used mirrors and in built lighting to expose a roll of 8x11mm Minox film as you dragged said fag packet across the top secret document in 1951, I could not believe my eyes.

But the miracles go on - working ballpoint pen with lens built into push button end? They did that in 1965.
Ladies leather hand bag with concealed clockwork FED and remote release? That was 1947. Pinhole lens camera with 1/50th shutter speed built into working ladies lipstick? That took a while longer - 1975.
All these examples are given along with dates, details of manufacture and the difficulties with use in the field (primarily due to film jamming, even with ultra thin emulsions).

The reasons for needing certain types of camera are fully explained, from the obvious one of document copying, to remote surveillance and perhaps the 'dirtiest' of all - the use of entrapment. We've all seen films where the private eye waits in his car to take a snap of the silhouetted romeo behind the backlit curtains of a sleazy hotel room. In reality it took more involved work than that.

Choosing a room next to the hotel room where the liaison was to take place, the agent would carefully drill through the wall days in advance, to make the tiniest hole in the adjoining wall, they then used a Zinnia 35mm camera with a multitude of extension tubes to take 1mm pinhole images of the most compromising content!

The book has 11 chapters, broken down into main subjects such as Agent Document Copy Cameras, (mobile and rollover), surveillance cameras (mobile, portable), etc and extra chapters on history, glossary and bibliography. Apart from many photographs of each item, and sample images in some cases, there are also the original watercolour illustrations that were used to train operatives for each of the secret photography techniques needed.

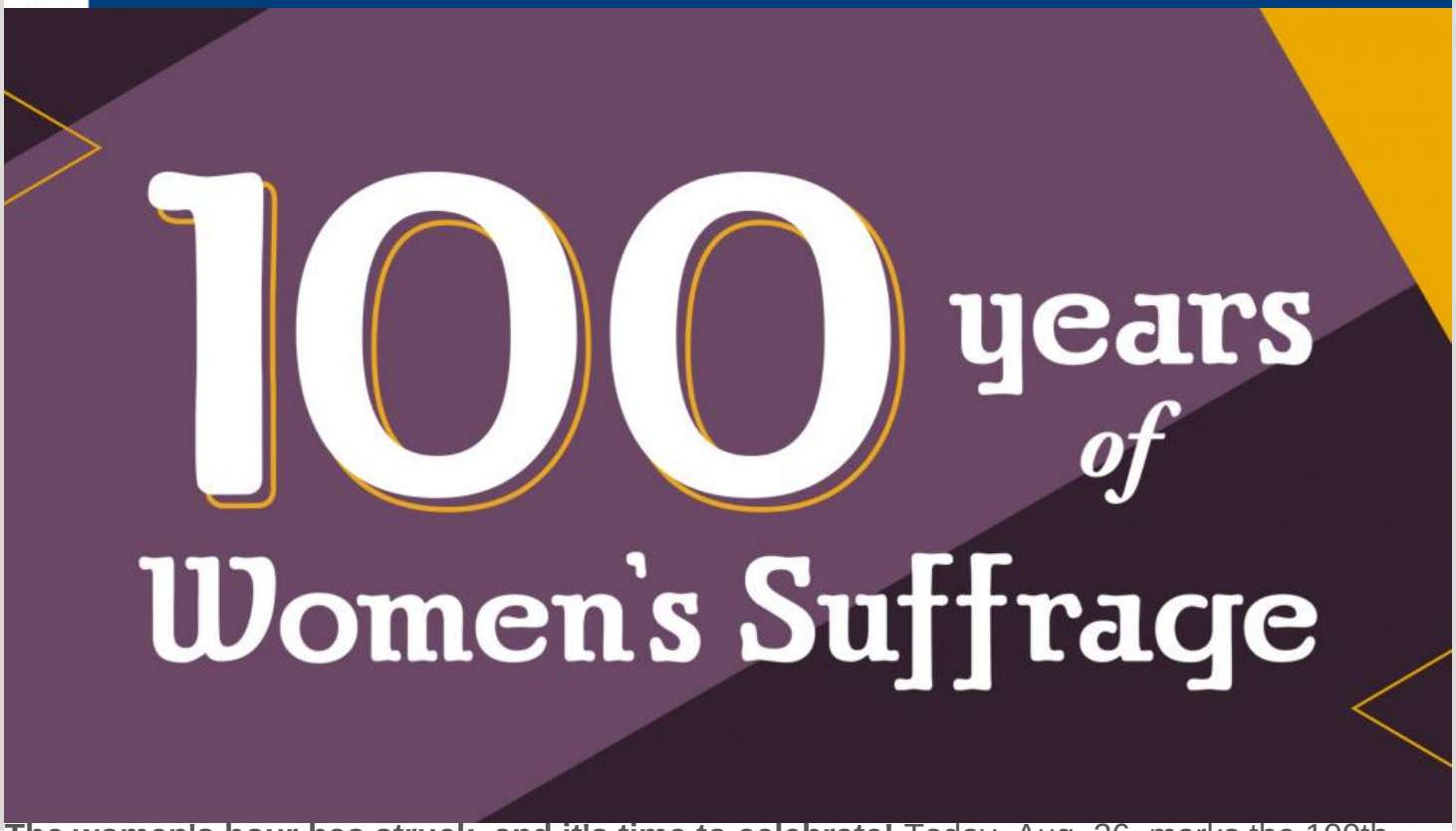
The ONLY criticism I make of the book is that there's often no scale of reference in the images - so although you can fully appreciate the build and complexity of the cameras, it would have induced even more wonder to see that ballpoint pen at size, rather than over sized as shown, but this is indeed a minor point.

For anyone remotely interested in subminiature cameras - this book is an absolute must have.
For anyone who wants to get a taste of the 'real' world of espionage, it's a must have.

For everyone else - this book is a must have!

Timothy Campbell

WISCONSIN HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



The women's hour has struck, and it's time to celebrate! Today, Aug. 26, marks the 100th anniversary of the certification of the 19th Amendment to the United States Constitution, granting women the right to vote. This historic moment was the culmination of decades of efforts from many different women's rights groups who worked tirelessly to obtain women's suffrage.

On the days that followed the certification of the amendment, cities across the United States celebrated by ringing bells and whistles at noon. In the spirit of these celebrations, the Society is hosting a Virtual Women's Suffrage Centennial Celebration, and we hope you can join us in celebrating this historic moment. Ring a bell, wherever you are, in celebration of this important step in voting rights. Take a photo and tag the Wisconsin Historical Society on Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram using the hashtags #WomensVote100, #WIVotesforWomen, and #BIGHistoryIsHappening. Click on the button below to learn more.

JOIN THE CELEBRATION

Ring in the moment

Honor the suffragists who helped win women the vote with this limited-edition commemorative bell from our online store, or browse our entire collection related to women's suffrage. 100% of the proceeds support the Society's mission of collecting, preserving, and sharing history.

A RINGING ENDORSEMENT

A winning strategy and the race to ratify

In episodes five and six of our video series celebrating 100 years of women's suffrage, the suffragists finally find a strategy that helps them win the vote and the race is on to be the first state to ratify the amendment. Click on the videos above to learn how the suffragists finally turned the tide of public opinion in their favor, and see if Wisconsin was able to get their ratification papers submitted ahead of rival Illinois and Michigan. Subscribe to our YouTube channel and click the bell to be notified when each episode of this series debuts, or to view all past episodes.

VIEW ALL EPISODES

Walking through history

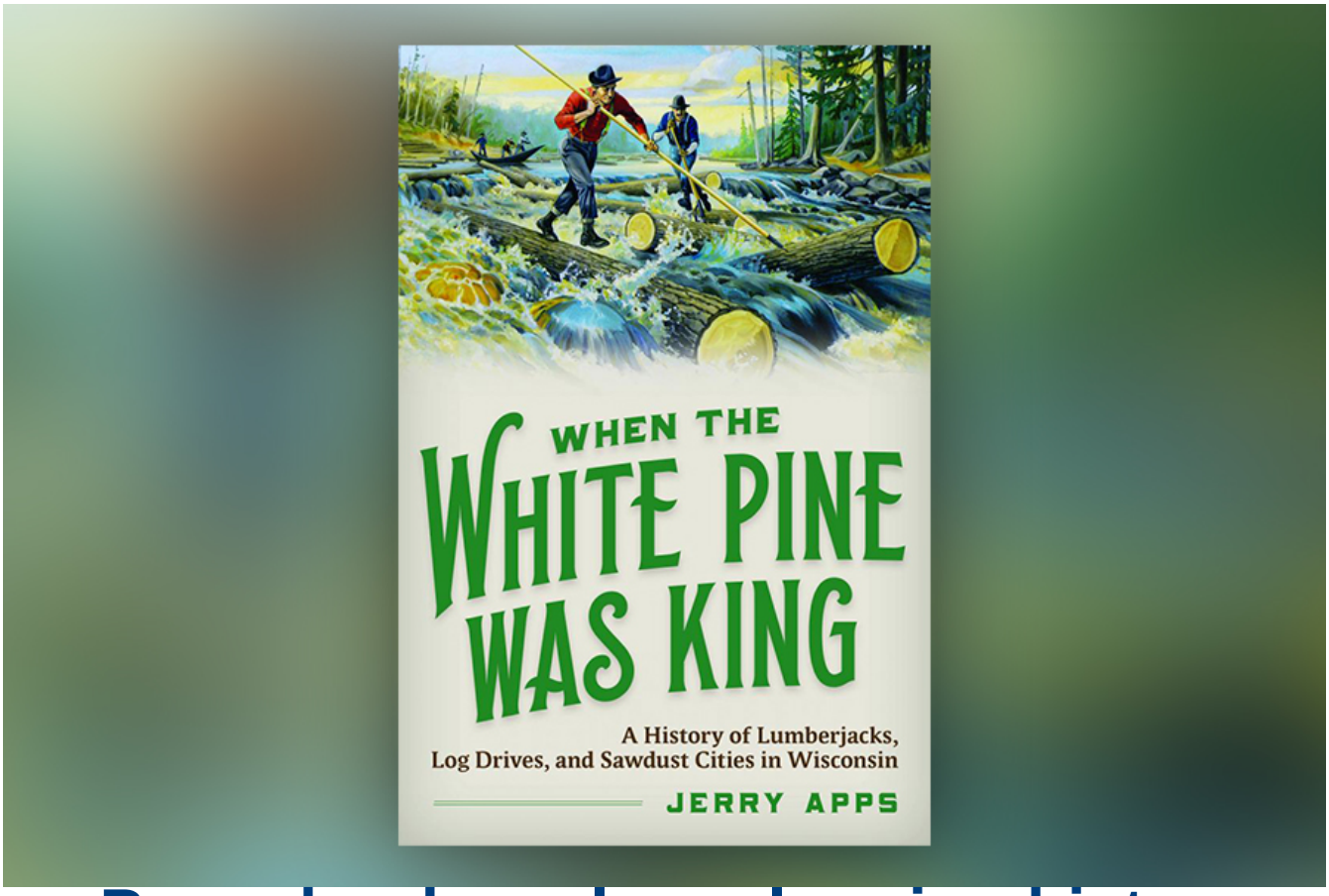
History is all around us, but oftentimes it goes unnoticed. Explore the history of our state through a walking tour hosted by the Society and its sites and museums. Upcoming tours are available with the Wisconsin Historical Museum, Circus World, H.H. Bennett Studio & Museum, Madeline Island Museum, and more. Click on the button below to learn more.

STEP BACK IN TIME

MORE UPCOMING EVENTS

- Aug. 26 - Virtual Women's Suffrage Centennial Celebration
- Aug. 28 - Haunted Kilbourn: The Original Dells Ghost Walk
- Sept. 2 - Walking Tour: Lost Madeline Island
- Sept. 5 - Behind The Scenes in the Old World Wisconsin Workshops
- Sept. 5 - Walking Tour: A Walk on Madison's Weird Side
- Sept. 8 - Walking Tour: A Walk Through Women's History

ALL UPCOMING EVENTS



New Press book explores logging history

For more than half a century, the echo of the ax rang through Wisconsin's Northwoods as white pines crashed to the ground. Celebrated rural storyteller Jerry Apps showcases stories from the heyday of Wisconsin's logging history in his newest Society Press book, "When the White Pine Was King: A History of Lumberjacks, Log Drives, and Sawdust Cities in Wisconsin." From lumberjacks and sawmills to river drives and deadly log jams, and more, Apps showcases the lumber boom and bust of the 1800s--an era when Wisconsin timber not only built the Midwest but cut through the lives of nearly every citizen. Click the button below to learn more and purchase this book.

TIMBER!

THIS WEEK IN WISCONSIN HISTORY

Sterling Hall Bombing rocks UW-Madison

Aug. 24, 1970 - 50 years ago this week, four young men parked a stolen Ford Econoline van next to Sterling Hall on the UW-Madison campus. They had filled the van with close to 2,000 pounds of ammonium nitrate and topped it off with fuel oil. At 3:42 a.m., shortly after they lit the fuse, the homemade bomb exploded, destroying a large portion of Sterling Hall, injuring four men inside, and killing Robert Fassnacht, a post-graduate student and promising young physicist. An engine fragment from the bombing is now part of the Society's collection, a solemn reminder of this tragic moment in history. Click on the button below to see this item and learn more about the motivations and outcomes resulting from the Sterling Hall Bombing.

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