

THE THOMAS ASHBY PHOTOGRAPHIC ARCHIVE: A PRIVATE ARCHIVE NOW IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN

by Alessandra Giovenco and Janet Wade

The prints, negatives and albums in the British School at Rome's Thomas Ashby Photographic Archive are a rich assortment of materials created by Ashby and his colleagues, such as Agnes and Dora Bulwer. The archive was the natural and spontaneous product of Ashby's personal and working life and it was not until after his death that it was transferred into the public institutional domain. This article investigates the original intention of Ashby's archive, its transfer from a private to public context, and its subsequent evolution and reception. Building on the work of previous BSR staff and scholars, the article looks at Ashby's archive from a fresh perspective, emphasizing the need to consider the archive's original non-public authorial intent, its polyphonic elements, and the diachronic nature of its formation and reception from Ashby's time to the present. Given that images within photographic archives are now regularly viewed as digital objects, this is a timely discussion of the nature of private photographic archives that have been moved into the public domain. It is now more important than ever that archives like Ashby's are acknowledged as entities with detailed and complex histories, and that these histories are taken into account when viewing the individual photographs within the archive.

Le stampe, i negativi e gli album conservati nell'archivio fotografico di Thomas Ashby presso la British School at Rome rappresentano un ricco assortimento di materiali creati da Ashby e dai suoi colleghi, come Agnes e Dora Bulwer. L'archivio si è formato come prodotto naturale e spontaneo della vita personale e lavorativa di Ashby, e solo dopo la sua scomparsa ha acquisito una valenza istituzionale di carattere pubblico. Questo articolo esamina il proposito originale che sottende all'archivio di Ashby, il suo trasferimento da un contesto privato a uno pubblico e la sua successiva evoluzione e ricezione. Basandosi sul lavoro di precedenti collaboratori e ricercatori della BSR, l'articolo analizza l'archivio di Ashby da una nuova prospettiva e sottolinea la necessità di considerarne l'intento autoriale originale, di carattere privato, gli elementi polifonici e la natura diacronica della sua formazione e ricezione dalla sua genesi ad oggi. Considerato che le immagini degli archivi fotografici sono abitualmente fruite come singoli oggetti digitali, questa discussione sulla natura degli archivi fotografici privati che sono stati trasferiti nel pubblico dominio è opportuna. Ora più che mai è importante che archivi come quello di Ashby siano riconosciuti come entità costituite da narrative complesse e ricche di particolari, e che queste narrative siano prese in esame ogni volta che si visualizzano le singole fotografie all'interno dell'archivio.

INTRODUCTION

The British School at Rome (BSR) currently holds an extensive catalogue of photographs from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in its

collections. Many of the photographs from this period belonged to Thomas Ashby, the director of the BSR from 1906 to 1925. This article analyses Thomas Ashby's archive and highlights its originally private (or personal) character. The photographs within the archive and the ways in which they were collated and organized by Ashby clearly show that his intention was not to create a public collection. In fact, the archive acquired a different meaning and context when it became officially absorbed into the BSR holdings after his death. In this article, we investigate the formation of Ashby's archive, its distinctive elements and its relocation from a private dimension into a public space. We highlight the issues that can arise when a private archive is transferred into the public domain, and the importance of always considering the creator's intention and the original context. Ashby's archive, containing his own images and others by photographers such as Agnes and Dora Bulwer, is an excellent case study for our overall research. This is due to the invaluable information that exists on the formation, history and provenance of the archive itself and many of the images contained within it. Ashby and the Bulwer sisters' photographs also provide numerous examples of the multiple lives or social biographies that are possible for photographic objects from this period; a phenomenon that has only increased with the modern digitization of archival resources.

To place Ashby's photographic archive in context we first discuss the history of the overall BSR photographic collections and the institution's approach to collecting photographs since its inception. The Ashby archive demonstrates the changes that have occurred in the BSR's approach to visual heritage objects over the years. We define the terms 'collection' and 'archive', firmly placing Ashby's photographic materials into the latter category, before exploring the various components of his photographic archive in detail. The contents of Ashby's archive, its acquisition by the BSR and the ways in which the material has been viewed, catalogued and incorporated into the public institutional holdings are all discussed. Using a variety of visual examples, the article then examines the original context of the photographs taken by Ashby and the Bulwer sisters, highlighting the multifaceted nature of Ashby's complete photographic archive, and the subsequent issues associated with its transfer into the public domain. Building on the work of previous archivists and scholars, we investigate the photographic holdings from a fresh perspective, inspired by new trends and methodologies in the field of archival research that have emerged in the past three decades. We also touch on some of the implications that these new methodologies may have for the digital translation of archival objects such as those in the Ashby archive, emphasizing the increased need to consider the original context and meaning of such objects as a result. It is our hope that this article will generate more interest in the BSR Collections, but also that it will be of relevance to archivists and researchers of photographic collections and archives in general.

THE BSR PHOTOGRAPHIC ARCHIVE: ORIGINS AND CONTEXT

The BSR Archive has recently become more strategic in serving the operational functions of the institution itself. The archive is reflective of changes in direction and policies at the BSR through its increasing focus on the production and conservation of current and past heritage records. It contributes to the generation and support of research for a broad community of staff, faculty and council members, alumni, award holders and academics from every discipline. In addition, the archive serves partners in the UK and Italy, including the British International Research Institutes (BIRI), higher education institutions and other organizations from the research and GLAM (galleries, libraries, archives and museums) sectors. Due to the versatility and multi- and interdisciplinary nature of the BSR's archival resources, its significance crosses traditional boundaries, making the archive of great interest to researchers across multiple fields.

The origin, formation and acquisition of the photographic collections preserved in the BSR Archive have been the subject of many surveys, analyses and reports aimed at understanding their importance, uniqueness and cultural and academic value. The state of conservation of these collections, their arrangement and access have been of great concern to the institution, and this is reflected in the numerous investigations conducted by staff, fellows, students and external consultants starting from the late 1970s.¹ It should be noted that although the need to provide formal descriptions for images based on commonly adopted cataloguing standards has recently been met,² and information about the provenance of the various collections has been presented according to the principles of *respects des fonds* and original order wherever possible (Schwartz, 2020: 522), a comprehensive reflection on the nature of the individual collections and archives, their interrelatedness and overall scope within the institutional framework still needs to be undertaken. Such a reflective

¹ Various surveys and reports on the BSR Archive have been written by Dimitri Michaelidis (BSR assistant director 1978 and assistant librarian 1981); Alistair Crawford (recipient of various BSR Fellowships between 1978 and 1996); Jill Franklin (recipient of an Archival Fellowship in 1981–2); Anthony Luttrell (BSR assistant director and librarian 1967–73); Ian C. McIlwaine (School of Library, Archive and Information Studies, University College London); and Michael Gray (curator of the Fox Talbot Museum) who acted as a consultant in 1993. Most recently, Valerie Scott (BSR librarian 1989–2021) instigated various investigations and reports related to the BSR collections. Documents relating to these matters are preserved and labelled as 'Archive management, History, various collections', BSR Archive Office.

² Rules regarding the description of archives, personal papers, and manuscript collections and their creators, ISAD(G) and ISAAR[CPF], are issued by the International Council on Archives (ICA): <https://www.ica.org/en/isadg-general-international-standard-archival-description-second-edition> (last accessed 6 July 2023). Their US counterpart is 'Describing Archives Content Standard' (DACs): <https://www2.archivists.org/groups/technical-subcommittee-on-describing-archives-a-content-standard-dacs/describing-archives-a-content-standard-dacs-second-> (last accessed 6 July 2023). Descriptions of the BSR archival resources can be found at <https://archive.bsr.ac.uk/> (last accessed 6 July 2023).

study of the collections promises to unlock their further research potential and to highlight new ways in which researchers can engage with them in the future.³

When the BSR was founded in 1901, the creation of a photo-library or *fototeca* alongside the library was not taken into consideration at all. Unlike at other foreign institutions in Italy, in particular the German institutes such as the German Archaeological Institute, Bibliotheca Hertziana, and Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florence, the idea of building up a *fototeca* organized by themes or subjects does not seem to have crossed the minds of the early founders, associates and officers of the BSR.⁴ There is no mention of the creation of a repository of photographs detached from the library holdings in any of the early administrative correspondence or in the strategic agenda related to the library's acquisitions. As late as 1986, Anthony Luttrell (BSR assistant director and librarian from 1967 to 1973) wrote that the photographic holdings at the BSR could not be classified as a normal *fototeca* because of the variety of ways that the photographs had been classified over time, often in direct relation to notes and other items.⁵ In the early years, the photographic material was assembled and catalogued solely to serve the perceived needs of contemporary researchers and scholars, and the photographs were regarded as auxiliary objects for research. This is illustrated in the selective mounting and arrangement of a collection of photographs for display in 1923–4 based on the school's most general and contemporary interests. The Annual Report for these years states that

The mounting of the very large collection of photographs is nearly finished. This has rendered possible a systematic arrangement of the collection which is almost unique in Rome. The students are already making constant use of it, and when completed it is likely to be one of the most useful and popular features of the Library. The Cruickshank photographs of medieval and other art outside Italy have not yet been properly dealt with ...⁶

³ As early as 1997, Alistair Crawford (Balsdon Fellow 1995–6) recognized how much material in the BSR Archive was still to be catalogued and explored. In draft notes from an unpublished book on 62 calotypes discovered in the BSR Archive and attributed to the Scottish photographer Rev. James Graham (1806–1869), Crawford wrote that there was no actual archive when he first visited the school in 1978, because the materials assembled as a scholarly resource by Thomas Ashby and Eugénie Sellers Strong from 1906 to 1925 had been 'plundered' by successive staff and visitors to the school. Crawford wrote: 'the term "The British School at Rome *Archive*" suggests other than it is; *as yet*. Such a term assumes that, in addition to the School's well known Library, all other manuscripts, maps, documents, letters, drawings, prints, paintings, sculptures, photographs, postcards, negatives, slides, cameras, (even typewriters) and, not to mention, a similar array of important material that can be termed the "Archaeology Archive", is in a similar catalogued and user-friendly state as the Library. Alas, it is not so.' Crawford's printed draft is filed in the BSR Archive Office.

⁴ For the establishment of a *fototeca* within such institutions see Caraffa, 2011: 21–2; Röhl and Schallert, 2014: 169–82; Dally, 2019: 37.

⁵ Note from a handwritten document entitled 'British school at Rome: the Archive', signed by Antony Luttrell and dated February 1986, in 'Archive management, History, various collections' box, BSR Archive Office.

⁶ BSR Annual Report 1923–24: 3. The Cruickshank photographs and negatives were acquired by Ashby in 1920, when the BSR was invited to select materials from Cruickshank's valuable library in Florence. See BSR Annual Report 1920–21: 3.

At this early stage, the photographs were considered important, but only as aids to research, art and archaeology, and not as objects of research or works of art themselves. Certain popular topics or subjects were favoured whilst others, such as those dealing with medieval art and history, were not made readily available or accessible to students and scholars. In fact, the excellent collection of Cruikshank photographs remains largely unexplored to this day.

The first reference to photographs in the school's records can be found in the Annual Report for 1905–6 and relates to the financial costs associated with them. The report's Library section states that 'the binding of large numbers of periodicals and the formation of a collection of reference photographs are ... heavy items of Library expenditure'.⁷ Only a few years later in 1908–9, in addition to the photographs, a collection of lantern slides was growing.⁸ This collection continued to expand quite rapidly and by 1909–10 it included images of sculpture, artworks and architecture in Rome.⁹ In the administrative records, it is surprisingly difficult to find any references to the potential value of photographs as fine art objects, or to their acquisition based on aesthetic qualities and mastery of composition. However, Thomas Ashby, the director of the BSR during this period, certainly had an appreciation of such artistic and aesthetic attributes. Ashby's approach to collecting and collections was quite versatile, and he seems to have considered photographs to be of equal value to engravings and drawings when he was looking for objects to expand his private collection of rare books and other special items. It is likely that it was Ashby — through the collectors Agnes and Dora Bulwer — who acquired the set of outstanding Robert Macpherson photographic prints that are currently in the BSR Collections, and that these prints were only absorbed into the BSR institutional holdings after his death. Given the value of Macpherson's photographs during his lifetime — he had already built a solid international reputation and was considered to be one of the first to introduce photography to Rome (Murray, 1858: xix; Crawford, 1999: 353–403)¹⁰ — it is unusual that the acquisition was not mentioned in the BSR Annual Report at the time. In a similar manner to Ashby, Eugénie Sellers Strong (BSR assistant director and librarian from 1909 to 1925) can also be considered a connoisseur of fine art photography. She acquired and collected a large set of prints by art photographers such as James Anderson, Fratelli Alinari, Lodovico Tuminello and Pascal Sébah.¹¹ These prints were acquired for Strong's private collection of photographs, and were amongst the several thousand images that were incorporated into the BSR's institutional photographic holdings before she left

⁷ BSR Annual Report 1905–6: 6.

⁸ BSR Annual Report 1908–9: 9.

⁹ BSR Annual Report 1909–10: 8.

¹⁰ Macpherson's personal edition of Murray's 1858 handbook to Rome is preserved in the BSR Rare Book Collection.

¹¹ BSR Photographic Archive, The BSR Collection of Early Photography, Box 6.

the school in 1925.¹² Indeed, both Ashby and Strong were generous donors who enriched the BSR's collections with substantial gifts from their own private collections of books, photographs and lantern slides.¹³

Regardless of the perceptions of Ashby and Strong of the photographs they took and collected, there has been a general tendency by staff, researchers and artists at the BSR to view the photographic archival holdings based on their content and subject matter; that is, photographs are often simply seen as serving the purpose of illustrating an article or book, providing additional evidence for a research theory or conclusion, or recording a lost or transformed work of art. Noteworthy attempts have been made since the time of Ashby and Strong to view some photographs as art and heritage objects per se, particularly by Alistair Crawford between 1982 and 1997. These efforts revealed new potential avenues of research in the history of photography, advanced knowledge about the BSR Archive and provided support for conservation practices at the institution. However, despite these efforts, the continued emphasis on the content and subject matter of photographs has meant that their contexts of creation, circulation and viewing have often been overlooked. Such contexts are important as many of the photographic archival holdings at the BSR and other similar institutions were not originally created as public records.¹⁴ In the case of Thomas Ashby's photographs, for example, there was no marketing, institutional or corporate agenda behind them. Ashby's photographic views were not produced as public records or for resale purposes, but rather he took the images for his own personal motives, even when they were part of his research activities. Yet, this private or personal aspect of his archive has received little attention to date. Instead, focus has centred largely on the content of his archive from an archaeological, topographical and, to a lesser extent, anthropological perspective. As Joan Schwartz (2011: 92–3) points out in regard to archives in general, there has been an overwhelming tendency to separate the content of a photograph or photographic archive from its context. This is certainly the case with the Thomas Ashby Photographic Archive.

Ashby's archive is a record, or a map of sorts, of his entire life. It reflects his personal interests and relationships, his research and travel experiences, his modes of travel (by boat, bicycle, train and on foot) and his curiosity and passion for the world. This is an important element of the archive, and to fully study Ashby's images and archive we must, as Schwartz (2011: 92–3, 103) suggests, not only ensure that we do not separate 'the content from its context', but we must also learn 'a new language of contextualized visual literacy'. A new methodological approach is needed to examine the materiality of these photographic objects across space, time, context and within the overall BSR Archive itself. This approach emphasizes the 'social lives' and meanings of the

¹² BSR Annual Report 1921–22: 4. The Eugénie Sellers Strong photographs are identified by her stamp 'ES'.

¹³ BSR Annual Report 1924–25: 4.

¹⁴ For further discussion of this concept in relation to archives in general, see Schwartz, 2011: 75.

photographs (Schwartz, 2020: 525). Photographic collections and archives have now rightly become objects of academic speculation, in the same way that collections of drawings, engravings and maps were for early twentieth-century scholars like Ashby. The BSR photographic materials have much to offer twenty-first-century scholars and artists in this regard, and the time is ripe for these materials, preserved within a rich archive of polysemic and multifaceted entities, to be examined using new theoretical perspectives that address the role of photographic materials in museums, archives and libraries.¹⁵

THOMAS ASHBY'S PHOTOGRAPHIC ARCHIVE: CONTENT AND CONTEXT

In order to situate our argument regarding Ashby's Photographic Archive in a broader context, it is worth briefly considering the definition of an archive. The term conveys multiple meanings depending on the context; however, the most common and widely utilized definitions are those that describe an archive as a physical location or building that houses archival materials; an organization or institution responsible for acquiring and keeping archival records of historic value; and/or a complex, organic and structured set of documents spontaneously created and accumulated over the course of a specific function and activity, and intrinsically bound to one another.¹⁶ Robert-Henry Bautier (1961: 1120) emphasizes the latter definition by juxtaposing it with the term 'collection'. Bautier suggests that while an archive emerges automatically and naturally from the activities carried out by organizations, families or individuals acting in a private, public or religious capacity, a collection is the artificial product of a choice made a posteriori and which responds to selective and subjective criteria.

According to Bautier's definition of an archive as a complex, interconnected and organic set of documents accumulated naturally over the course of time and as part of a specific activity, it is clear that Thomas Ashby's photographs, albums, negatives and handwritten notes should be considered archival materials. Certainly, they are not a considered collection of materials chosen intentionally or created *ex post*, but rather the spontaneous product of personal activities conducted with the support of various media: cameras, notebooks, pens, pencils and scraps of paper. Unlike the collection of rare books, prints and drawings which Ashby inherited from his parents — a collection he continued to enrich until his death in 1931 — the photographic albums, negatives and handwritten notes seem to mirror Ashby's everyday and working

¹⁵ For a review of scholarship on photographic archives and new theoretical perspectives on the role of photographic materials from the last 30 years see Schlak, 2008: 85–101.

¹⁶ For a list of definitions, see Duranti, 2014: 20–1, and Paoloni, 2014: 429–38. See also Schwartz, 2020: 521.

life. It has even been possible to use these materials on their own to map several of Ashby's research and travel itineraries (Wade and Gioenco, 2022: 297–324). The distinction between Ashby's archival and collected material also emerges from correspondence between his wife, Caroline May Ashby (known as May), and Colin Hardie (director of the BSR 1933–6). In March 1933, while discussing the sale of Ashby's prints and drawings to the Vatican Library, May Ashby and Hardie argued about the nature and integrity of the collection of prints, drawings and books. In response to Hardie's suggestion that these items were accumulated by Ashby as a complementary collection of materials that should not be divided, May highlighted that the original nucleus of the print, drawing and book collection had actually been put together by Thomas Ashby Sr, and the bulk of the print collection was initiated by Ashby's mother.¹⁷ In this way they differed markedly from the younger Thomas Ashby's photographs.

In a document dated to October 1931, May Ashby confirmed that the books, photographs and negatives, all of which comprised 'the library of the late Dr Thomas Ashby', had been sold to the BSR.¹⁸ In further correspondence from February 1933, Ashby's widow also transferred ownership of Ashby's archaeological and research notes to the BSR.¹⁹ All of these items were important components of Ashby's private library/archive which included numerous photographs, prints and negatives taken both by Ashby himself and by others who had gifted their photographs to him, such as Agnes and Dora Bulwer. As part of the sale to the BSR, May Ashby stipulated that the books, photographs and negatives — now forming a collection — 'should never be divided nor allowed to leave Rome'.²⁰ Likewise, May stressed that the former BSR director's research and archaeological notes were not to be removed from the school.²¹ Judging by a letter sent in October 1931 from the BSR's honorary general secretary in London, Evelyn Shaw, to the director of the British

¹⁷ C.G. Hardie, Letter to M. Ashby dated 8 March 1933; and May Ashby, Letter to C.G. Hardie dated 12 March 1933, BSR Archive, Thomas Ashby Notes and Notebooks, May Ashby Correspondence 1931–33.

¹⁸ May Ashby, Contract entitled 'The Library of the Late Dr. Thomas Ashby' (signed by Ashby and Ian Richmond, director of the BSR) dated 3 October 1931, BSR Archive, Thomas Ashby Notes and Notebooks, May Ashby Correspondence 1931–33. In a letter to Hardie, May also refers to the books, photographs and negatives as her husband's 'library'. See May Ashby, Letter to C.G. Hardie dated 7 July 1933, BSR Archive, Thomas Ashby Notes and Notebooks, May Ashby Correspondence 1931–33.

¹⁹ May Ashby, Agreement entitled 'Dr. Thomas Ashby's Manuscript Notes on Archaeological Subjects' dated 18 February 1933, and May Ashby, Letters to C.G. Hardie dated 19 February 1933 and 26 February 1933, BSR Archive, Thomas Ashby Notes and Notebooks, May Ashby Correspondence 1931–33. See also G.F. Hill, Letter to C.G. Hardie dated 2 February 1933, BSR Administrative Archive, May Ashby Correspondence 1931–33.

²⁰ May Ashby, Contract entitled 'The Library of the Late Dr. Thomas Ashby' dated 3 October 1931, BSR Archive, Thomas Ashby Notes and Notebooks, May Ashby Correspondence 1931–33.

²¹ May Ashby, Agreement entitled 'Dr. Thomas Ashby's Manuscript Notes on Archaeological Subjects' dated 18 February 1933, BSR Archive, Thomas Ashby Notes and Notebooks, May Ashby Correspondence 1931–33.

Museum, George Francis Hill, this clause does not appear to have caused much concern for the BSR, at least in regard to the books and photographic materials.²² Shaw suggested that the BSR would prefer to combine these materials with the school's own collections, but their significance was clearly understood; the books, photographs and negatives were to stay at the BSR to enhance the institution's existing collections. At this point, Ashby's library of personal and research-related photographic prints, negatives, notes and books ceased to exist solely as a private assemblage, and instead became a component of a larger public archival collection.

Ashby's personal library of books — now embedded within the BSR Rare Book Collection — was considered invaluable at the time. The BSR Annual Reports from the years following the acquisition stress the incomparable value of the topographical literature assembled by Ashby, highlighting the books as the most important legacy left to the BSR by the former director. The Annual Reports further stress the importance of the proper absorption of Ashby's book collection into the BSR Library holdings in order to preserve the collection's unity, and to place the books resolutely at the core of the institution's research interests.²³ However, Ashby's photographs, negatives and albums were a different story. These photographic materials lay untouched for almost 40 years until a photographic campaign was launched by the BSR, with the support of the Gabinetto Fotografico Nazionale (GFN),²⁴ to reproduce and conserve parts of the collection.²⁵ Further, a topographical index to the photographs was not created until the 1970s under the librarianship of Luciana Valentini.²⁶ Valentini's initiative to facilitate access to the photographic materials was continued in the 1980s by the then archivist and assistant librarian, Valerie Scott, who later became the BSR librarian.²⁷ It is largely through Scott's lead that the Ashby photographs finally became more visible to external and less specialized audiences, and their digitization over recent decades (from the late 1990s) has enabled their use in various research projects and publications.

Ashby's photographic material is ideal for our research study; not only were the photographic prints and negatives amassed as a private or personal archive, but the BSR also still holds the indexes accompanying many of his negatives and the albums in which he placed a large portion of his photographs. These items, alongside Ashby's archaeological and research notes, have ensured that the original context of much of his photographic material has been retained. These indexes, lists and albums are important records in themselves and tell us

²² Evelyn Shaw, Letter to G.F. Hill dated 14 October 1931, BSR Archive, Thomas Ashby Notes and Notebooks, May Ashby Correspondence 1931–33.

²³ See BSR Annual Report 1931–32; 1932–33: 2; 1933–34: 1; 1934–35: 2.

²⁴ Now part of the Istituto Centrale per il Catalogo e la Documentazione (ICCD).

²⁵ BSR Annual Report 1976–77: 4.

²⁶ The index cards are stored in the BSR Archive Office. The BSR Annual Report 1983–84: 8 says that 'work has started on a topographical catalogue which eventually will include all the material in the Archive'.

²⁷ BSR Annual Report 1981–82: 5.

a great deal about the nature and original purpose of Ashby's photographs. Unfortunately, a description of the photographic materials acquired by the BSR after Ashby's death is more complex than it might seem.²⁸ This is because Ashby's photographic materials exist in various forms and include images taken by other photographers. Ashby's archive also now simultaneously belongs to an institutional archive which is itself composed of various different archives and collections of photographs. One of the most fascinating components of Ashby's archive is the set of nineteen original albums in which he — and at a later stage another person, possibly his wife May — carefully glued, annotated and recorded images from Ashby's private and working life. These albums are of a personal nature and are a striking reminder that Ashby's photographic archive was not created as a public resource or for an external audience. If considered in its original context, the archive is an intimate account of a person, his relationships, interests, passions, journeys and his academic and archaeological working life.

There are over 8,600 photographic prints, mostly silver gelatin, displayed in chronological sequence in Ashby's photographic albums. Many of the prints were annotated and captioned with place names, dates, inventory numbers and, in some cases, bibliographical references to his own or others' publications. The prints have also been carefully divided according to the format of each photograph; the half-plate prints and the quarter-plate prints are organized in separate albums and they constitute simultaneous and parallel approaches to the use of cameras and the processing of negatives.²⁹ It is important to note that the photographic prints cannot be read and understood without also looking at the archive of negatives from which they originated. In fact, the information recorded in the negative album sheets is sometimes different from that contained in the print album pages. Approximately 800 negatives, both half plate and quarter plate, are glass negatives produced before 1900. The rest of the negatives — almost 6,900 items — are of nitrate film, a material that was quite popular in the early years of the twentieth century. In a similar manner to his photographic prints, Ashby sorted the negatives, arranging them meticulously inside specifically designed cases, Kodak negative albums or other generic negative albums. These albums could hold up to 100 negatives, and it was perhaps in order to distinguish between the smaller and larger formatted negatives that the half plates were numbered with only Arabic numerals, while the quarter plates were numbered with a Roman numeral followed by an Arabic numeral, up to 100.

Many of the photographs glued into Ashby's albums were reproduced for exchange purposes or to facilitate their publication in journal articles or

²⁸ The purchase of Ashby's library and photographs was made possible by Sir William Russell (1868–1931), the BSR Faculty of Archaeology, History and Letters Honorary Treasurer 1925–31, who donated £3,000 to the Faculty to form the nucleus of the Library Endowment Fund. See BSR Annual Report 1930–1: 4 and BSR Administrative Archive, Box 166a (old numbering).

²⁹ Three cameras belonging to Thomas Ashby are held at the BSR. See Martinelli, 1986: 13.

monographs. Ashby also donated copies of his images to organizations such as the Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies to enrich their photo-library, as did other contemporaries like Agnes and Dora Bulwer.³⁰ Other images were reproduced to support the creation of Ashby's and the BSR's growing Lantern Slide Collection, as shown by the original catalogue of slides containing Ashby's handwritten references to his archival numbering system.³¹ These lantern slides were extremely popular for lectures and presentations, including various overseas lectures given by Ashby and the regular BSR lecture series held during his and Strong's tenure.³² Ashby selected other photographs to be copied and mounted on cardboard for display purposes. Others were cropped, resized or reproduced using a variety of printing and developing techniques. Due to the material differences and the motives behind the creation of each version of these images, they should not be considered as duplicates but rather as multiple photographic originals (Sassoon, 2004: 201). The fact that the same image could be repurposed, displayed or annotated by Ashby with different information multiplies the potential and historical contexts of his photographic archive. As Schwartz (2020: 525) notes, 'photographs have "social lives" and can exist as multiple originals, which follow different biographical trajectories; they are repurposed and invested with new meanings, and such "recirculation [of a photograph] lays down a historical layer each time, made distinct by conditions of the day"'. Each version of a photograph created or shared by Ashby has its own social trajectory and historical layer and, as a result, his is a dynamic and multifaceted archive bursting with research potential.³³

Alongside the photographs contained in Ashby's albums, there is also a substantial and largely unexplored assortment of loose negatives and prints. These are occasionally accompanied by handwritten notes and were assembled by Ashby from various sources or given to him by colleagues, friends and acquaintances. One prominent example is a selection of photographs from Malta taken by Themistocles Zammit (1864–1935), the first director of the National Museum of Archaeology in the Maltese capital of Valletta. Several of

³⁰ The original registers of negatives of the Hellenic and Roman Societies are in London. See <https://www.hellenicandromanlibrary.org/> (last accessed 6 July 2023) for information on the Roman Society. A photocopy of the register bearing the numbers of the 'B Series', under which images of Roman architecture, art and archaeological sites across Italy and the Mediterranean were listed, is now in the BSR Archive Office. Ashby's contribution as a donor is recorded on several pages.

³¹ The original catalogue of the BSR Lantern Slide Collection is in the BSR Archive Office.

³² BSR Annual Report 1909–10: 9 and 1910–11: 10. For Ashby's overseas lantern slide lectures see, for example, an article from Australia entitled British School at Rome, Lecture by Dr. Thomas Ashby, in the *Brisbane Telegraph*, 2 September 1914: 5. Also see N. Moffatt's forthcoming article, 'Thomas Ashby and Australia: lantern lectures, the Western front, and a pandemic'.

³³ The ten boxes in which hundreds of reproductions of Ashby's photographs are stored were assembled in the early 2000s during the reorganization of the BSR Photographic Archive. These were categorized as 'duplicates'. Looking at this material now, from a fresh perspective, can reveal additional information and enhance our knowledge of Ashby's archive.

these images are signed and annotated by Zammit.³⁴ The remainder of the images in this unexplored section of Ashby's library were either taken by individuals, many of whom remain unidentified, or purchased from various photographic studios. The latter are clearly identified by the inclusion of the price on the reverse of the photographic print and were taken by photographers such as James Anderson, Giacomo Brogi and Fratelli Alinari.³⁵ Unfortunately, we know very little about the original arrangement of this loose material due to its reorganization and recategorization in the early 2000s.³⁶ The photographs are currently sorted by subject or location, with boxes labelled as: First World War, Aqueducts and PBSR, Near East Research, Other Photographers, Not identified, Italy, Out of Italy, and Malta. From the various envelopes accompanying these photographs, we can assume that Ashby stored many of them inside envelopes or negative boxes, or he simply scribbled identifying notes on their reverse. As an example, there are over 200 small photographs documenting Ashby's presence at the Italian front during the First World War. These images complement the more than 350 snapshots from the front that are glued into his albums. Ashby kept the 200 photographs in an envelope, with a scribbled note in pencil that reads, 'Photos taken by me. Negs given to Mrs. Watkins v Cookson ...' (Fig. 1). Mrs Marie Watkins was the head nurse at Villa Trento (Dolegnano) near the Italian front when Ashby was stationed there after joining the first British Red Cross Ambulance Unit for Italy in August 1915 (see Bosco and Deganutti, 2017: 61). This set of images is a wonderful example of photographs with multiple paths, stories or social lives. Ashby kept printed versions of these photographs and sent the negatives to Watkins, a colleague who would, no doubt, have processed them into prints and shared them with others, thus repurposing and investing each version (prints and negatives) with new meanings and histories. These photographs from the Italian front were also undoubtedly personal memories for Ashby, Watkins and many others who were there with them.

THE PRIVATE/PERSONAL NATURE OF THOMAS ASHBY'S PHOTOGRAPHIC ARCHIVE

Ashby started taking photographs when he was seventeen. One of his early images depicts the Servian Wall near the Aventine in Rome in 1892. His mother, a tiny and barely noticeable figure, stands in the foreground (Fig. 2). In the image,

³⁴ These photographs are contained in a box labelled 'Malta'. Ashby, who visited Malta on several occasions, had ongoing collaboration with the Maltese authorities during his directorship. See BSR Annual Report 1913–14: 5.

³⁵ See Crawford, 1999: 361, for a discussion of the growth of photographic studios in Rome.

³⁶ Inventory lists documenting the reorganization are preserved in the BSR Archive Office. The reorganization took place on the occasion of the Centenary Building Programme (2000–4), when major building works impacted the building and its premises. See BSR Annual Report 2003–4: 4–6.



Fig. 1. Envelope containing negatives given to Mrs Watkins by Thomas Ashby. BSR Photographic Archive, Thomas Ashby Collection, First World War box.

Ashby's archaeological research interests and domestic life are juxtaposed. It is a perfect example of the different dimensions of Ashby's life that he captured in his photographs. Ashby does not record his mother's presence in the handwritten caption to the image, but this makes sense when we consider that it was not taken or labelled to be part of a public collection. Rather, the photograph was for Ashby's own personal archive and he, of course, did not need to remind himself that the figure in the image was his mother.

Ashby's photographs were personal records regardless of whether they were taken for purposes of research, pleasure or a combination of both, as was the case with the image of his mother alongside the Servian Wall in Rome (Fig. 2). Many of Ashby's prints and negatives record historical, archaeological, topographical, cultural and anthropological subjects, and for these reasons they are of immense value to scholars and archaeologists today. Ashby had the interest of an historian and archaeologist in antiquities, monuments and historical sites; a topographer's fascination with landscapes and the environment; and the appreciation for people and cultures of a humanist or anthropologist. Often, even his 'holiday snaps' reveal one or more of these scholarly or scientific interests. For example, his 1926 photograph of a street scene in Colombo — taken on a world trip he conducted with his wife — captures Mrs Ashby walking alongside local residents and a historical temple in the Sri Lankan (then Ceylonese) capital (Fig. 3). The image shows his wife on vacation but also betrays his passion for anthropological, cultural and historical



Fig. 2. Servian Wall on the Aventine with Thomas Ashby's mother, Rome, 18 January 1892. BSR Photographic Archive, Thomas Ashby Collection, ta-0011.

subjects. Likewise, his environmental and topographical interests are clear in his photographs of Big Sur in California, also taken on the same 1926 trip (Fig. 4).

The BSR holds many other images from Ashby's private life, including photographs of his family and friends taken in the UK, at the BSR and other locations in Rome, and whilst Ashby was on vacation or excursion. The image taken at the BSR in 1924 of May Ashby and a male relative is one example of Ashby's personal images taken at the school (Fig. 5). He took numerous photographs of his mother, including a group of three images from 1921 that were taken at her lodgings in Piazza del Gesù 47 in Rome.³⁷ The snapshot of Ashby's hiking companions at the top of Corvatsch Mountain in Switzerland from 1894 illustrates Ashby's adventurous spirit, love of nature, his friends and personal interests (Fig. 6). Another example of the personal nature of his images is the photograph of May in front of a temple in Japan in 1926. This photograph reveals Ashby's interest in historical and cultural sites, but it is also the type of snapshot that most international tourists and holidaymakers would recognize, even today (Fig. 7). Ashby was well travelled and his photographs are a striking testament to this (Hodges, 2000: 17–18). In addition to his photographs from the UK, Italy and other parts of Europe, his personal library

³⁷ ta[PHP]-LVIII.052, ta[PHP]-LVIII.053, ta[PHP]-LVIII.054 (negatives), BSR Photographic Archive, Thomas Ashby Collection.



Fig. 3. Temple in Colombo with May Ashby and the Hotel Galle in the foreground, 1926. This image was originally incorrectly identified as in Singapore. BSR Photographic Archive, Thomas Ashby Collection, ta-LXI.097.

contains prints and negatives from all over the world, including countries as far afield as Australia, Egypt, Japan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and the United States.

Ashby's photographs of Italy, taken over the course of many years, have attracted the most attention to date. In particular, his images of Italy's countryside and topography, antiquities and monuments, and people and traditions have been of most interest to historians and archaeologists.³⁸ These photographs have rightly received considerable attention; they are excellent environmental and cultural heritage records of transforming landscapes, monuments, cities, towns and traditions in Italy at the turn of the twentieth

³⁸ For a list of publications of Ashby's photographs, see Thomas Ashby Photographic Collection, 1890–1931 at <https://archive.bsr.ac.uk/repositories/3/resources/81> (last accessed 6 July 2023).



Fig. 4. Big Sur River from Pfeiffer's Resort, California, 1926. BSR Photographic Archive, Thomas Ashby Collection, ta-LXI.046.

century.³⁹ Ashby also took a number of photographs of the archaeology and topography of Malta during excavations and on his various trips to the country between 1908 and 1921 (see Fig. 8). These images are valuable records of Malta's ancient remains and changing landscape at a time when it was still a British colony (Hodges, 2000: 42–4; Stoddart, 2016: 8–9). The prominence of the Italian photographs — and to a lesser extent those from Malta — with their heavy focus on topography, archaeology and the material and cultural remains of the past (see Fig. 8 for example), may have provided many scholars

³⁹ For a good selection of Ashby's images of Roman roads, monuments, the Italian countryside and topography, see the 2023 BSR Virtual Exhibition by Wade and Giovenco at <https://virtualexhibitions.bsr.ac.uk/omeka-s/s/expeditions-from-rome/page/welcome> (last accessed 30 June 2023).



Fig. 5. May Ashby and a male relative (incorrectly identified as Colin Gill), 1924. BSR Photographic Archive, Thomas Ashby Collection, ta-LX.095.



Fig. 6. Ashby and a group of friends on Corvatsch Mountain, Switzerland, August 1894. BSR Photographic Archive, Thomas Ashby Collection, ta-0321.



Fig. 7. May Ashby in front of a temple in Japan, 1926. This image was originally incorrectly identified as in the Philippines. BSR Photographic Archive, Thomas Ashby Collection, ta-LXI.071.



Fig. 8. Remains of a Roman villa at excavations of Birzebbugia, Malta, May 1914. BSR Photographic Archive, Thomas Ashby Collection, ta-XLV.043.

and historians with the wrong impression of the original intent of Ashby's photographic archive. These photographs suggest a curated collection of topographical and archaeological research records, directly linked or belonging to the BSR and functioning as a public archive or library. Many of Ashby's images were indeed taken when he was conducting activities and travel related to his role as BSR director; however, as we have seen, his library included a range of photographic records of all aspects of his life, including his family and friends. All these photographs together formed his personal library and, during his lifetime, were not kept in the manner of a public institutional collection.

Ashby's prints and negatives — like his archaeological notes and letters — were organized in a manner relevant to the man himself; but neither the written notes nor visual records form a carefully curated collection. Ashby may have hoped that many of his research notes and photographs would be of use to others, both during his lifetime and after his death, but they were still not created as public records. Ashby shared or exchanged his personal photographs and notes with his friends, colleagues and other interested parties. This was common practice amongst scholars and other groups during this period of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Edwards, 2000: 1–17). Within Ashby's close circle, this practice is clearly illustrated by the exchange of photographs between Ashby and his friends and walking companions, including the Italian archaeologist Rodolfo Lanciani and the photographers Agnes and Dora Bulwer (Bucci, 2007: 107; Wade, 2022: 273–6). Ashby also donated or provided photographic prints to other individual acquaintances and institutions on request. A prominent example is a selection of 330 prints which Ashby sent to the curator of the Newport Corporation Museum and Art Gallery in Wales in 1927. These prints were documentary in nature and largely related to excavations and remains of the Roman town of Venta Silurum in the Welsh village of Caerwent, although the selection would also have included images of other historical sites such as that of Saint Stephen's Church under restoration (Fig. 9). A letter from the curator, W.A. Gunn, expresses his appreciation to Ashby for the excellent range of prints which he considered a valuable addition to the museum's collection.⁴⁰ Ashby took private photographs from Caerwent as well, including images of the families and children of his acquaintances, their pets (Fig. 10) and even a photograph of an eclipse of the sun that occurred during one of his visits.⁴¹ Presumably he did not include any images of an entirely personal nature in the selection given to the Welsh Museum.

Ashby knew that many of his archaeological and topographical photographs and notes were valuable heritage records and it was for this reason that he shared them with other individuals or institutions. In regard to Italy, in

⁴⁰ W.A. Gunn (curator of the Newport (Mon.) Corporation Museum and Art Gallery), Letter to T. Ashby dated 1 March 1927, BSR Archive, Thomas Ashby Notes and Notebooks, Box 4.

⁴¹ Eclipse of sun, Caerwent, 1904(?). BSR Photographic Archive, Thomas Ashby Collection, ta-1716. Family photographs include those of the Martin family in ta-V.015–016a-b; and other friends in ta-XV.032, ta-XV.057, ta-XXI.096–098.



Fig. 9. Saint Stephen's Church during restoration with Roman stones (with the shadow of Ashby's camera and tripod in the foreground), Caerwent, Wales, 1900(?). BSR Photographic Archive, Thomas Ashby Collection, ta-1259.

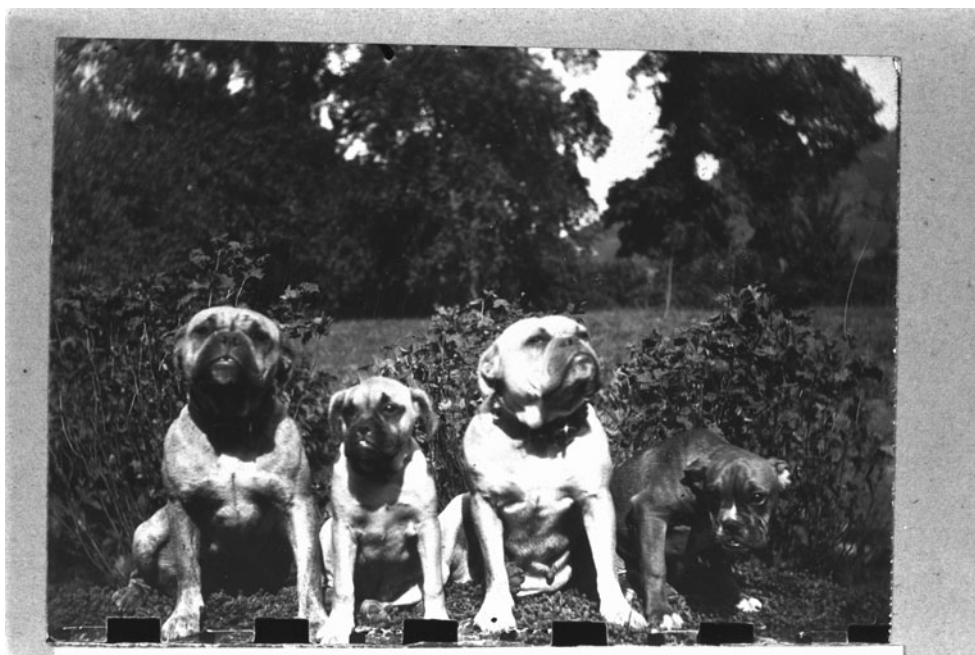


Fig. 10. Dogs in Caerwent, Wales, 1902. BSR Photographic Archive, Thomas Ashby Collection, ta-V.016c.

particular, Ashby was cognizant of the fact that the country was developing and transforming at a rapid pace. He hoped that his photographs and notes would act as comprehensive records of the state of the country's monuments and landscape as it was in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Bultrighini, 2011: 13; Smith, 2011: 12; Wade, 2022: 270–2). Ashby must have foreseen that these records would be of use to later scholars and archaeologists. His desire to create a visual and documentary record for posterity was reflected in a letter sent by May Ashby to Colin Hardie after her husband's death. Writing of the importance of preserving all of Ashby's records, May stressed that 'half the stuff that T. [Thomas] saw in his early Roman days is now either covered up or lost or developed into something else. A great deal of it forgotten ... That is why I feel so much that it ought not to be destroyed ...'⁴² May Ashby's fears regarding the potential loss or destruction of Ashby's research materials, particularly his notes, were not entirely unfounded. There were those at the BSR, like Hardie, who understood the value of all of Ashby's research material, even his handwritten notes. Hardie wrote to May Ashby that any suggestion that she might destroy Ashby's notes and manuscripts 'or send them to one of the other Schools in Rome fills me with alarm'.⁴³ Yet there is other correspondence that suggests that Hardie's view of Ashby's research records was not shared by all. For example, in correspondence sent by George Hill at the British Museum to both Hamilton Smith in 1932 (BSR director from 1928 to 1930) and Hardie in 1933, Hill remarked that Mrs Ashby 'has no idea that the notes are not exactly worth their weight in gold' and refers to Ashby's collection as 'three parts junk and one part mostly illegible'.⁴⁴

It certainly became clear to those at the BSR after Ashby's death that his written and visual materials had not been arranged and stored in the manner of a neatly curated public collection. In Hill's letters, he pitied any man who dared undertake the job of sorting through Ashby's records.⁴⁵ May Ashby reiterated the disarray of Ashby's materials, writing to Hardie that her husband 'collected notes and scraps from all quarters' and that 'he would write most important details and measurements on the back of an envelope — in pencil — and put it straight in a drawer, and there it would live'.⁴⁶ It seems that Hill may have been right to pity whoever undertook the mammoth task of turning Ashby's

⁴² May Ashby, Letter to C.G. Hardie dated 26 February 1933, BSR Archive, Thomas Ashby Notes and Notebooks, May Ashby Correspondence 1931–33.

⁴³ C.G. Hardie, Letter to M. Ashby dated 22 February 1933, BSR Archive, Thomas Ashby Notes and Notebooks, May Ashby Correspondence 1931–33.

⁴⁴ G.F. Hill, Letter to C.G. Hardie dated 9 February 1933, BSR Archive, Thomas Ashby Notes and Notebooks, May Ashby Correspondence 1931–33. See also G.F. Hill, Letter to A.H. Smith dated 20 October 1932, BSR Archive, Thomas Ashby Notes and Notebooks, May Ashby Correspondence 1931–33.

⁴⁵ G.F. Hill, Letters to A.H. Smith dated 20 October 1932 and C.G. Hardie dated 9 February 1933, BSR Archive, Thomas Ashby Notes and Notebooks, May Ashby Correspondence 1931–33.

⁴⁶ May Ashby, Letter to C.G. Hardie dated 26 February 1933, BSR Archive, Thomas Ashby Notes and Notebooks, May Ashby Correspondence 1931–33.

private library of material into a public archive or collection. Ashby's photographs and negatives were certainly in a more ordered state than his notes; however, these photographic materials had been accumulated over many years and Ashby's system of organization and categorization was — and is — not always clear to others. The conversion of a private library or assemblage into a public archive is never a simple task, and Ashby's photographic library is no exception.

As previously noted, most of Ashby's prints and negatives were numbered meticulously and accompanied by short captions, descriptions, dates or locations. Nevertheless, there are images for which he did not provide any notes or other identifying information, making it difficult for these items to be organized and categorized by later cataloguers. For example, most of Ashby's negatives and prints from Australia and Sri Lanka in 1914 were numbered by Ashby without descriptions or locations.⁴⁷ The lack of information for these photographs has led to issues with their identification, visibility and utility to researchers. In fact, the sites depicted in these photographs from 1914 remained unidentified for almost a century after Ashby's death. They have only recently been investigated and identified by Nicole Moffatt, who utilizes them in a forthcoming article to trace Ashby's itinerary to Australia and Sri Lanka at the outbreak of the First World War.⁴⁸

There are also instances in Ashby's archive where the description or caption accompanying a print is different from the text provided for the corresponding negative. The text accompanying Ashby's negatives in their albums — where such text exists — is typically in Ashby's handwriting. This is also generally the case for his print or photographic albums, but there are instances where the handwriting in these print albums is not Ashby's. In several of these cases, the text has not been transcribed correctly from his negatives, meaning that the title of a negative is sometimes incomplete and differs from that shown with its corresponding print. Unfortunately, the captions from Ashby's print albums have generally been used for ongoing cataloguing and digitization, despite these not always being in Ashby's hand. This issue is illustrated in the albums containing photographs from the world trip made by Ashby and his wife in 1926, where several photographs in the print albums have been incorrectly labelled by someone other than Ashby.⁴⁹ The images of May Ashby walking in the streets of Colombo, Sri Lanka (Fig. 3), and outside a temple in Japan (Fig. 7) are two such examples of misidentified photographs. These images were mistakenly catalogued as Singapore and the Philippines respectively. On

⁴⁷ These photographs are in Albums 17 and 19 (prints) and Albums XLVI and XLVII (negatives), BSR Photographic Archive, Thomas Ashby Collection.

⁴⁸ N. Moffatt, 'Photographing a sunburnt country: a study of Thomas Ashby's Australian images', forthcoming article.

⁴⁹ Many of the photographs from their 1926 trip are contained in Album 19 (prints) and Album LXI (negatives), BSR Photographic Archive, Thomas Ashby Collection. Until recent work was conducted on these photographs by Nicole Moffatt, many of the locations and dates were either incorrect or unknown.

occasion, Ashby's own handwriting records a different caption for a negative and its corresponding print as well.⁵⁰ This list of issues has made it extremely difficult for cataloguers and archivists in the past to determine the correct location or description for all of Ashby's photographs.

An additional problem with the conversion of Ashby's personal archive of prints and negatives into a public collection is the existence of the large number of loose photographs that he did not glue into albums or clearly identify with descriptions or markers. As previously mentioned, it is possible to determine the photographers for some of these images, but not all. These photographs were stored separately from Ashby's prints and negatives and were taken with a variety of cameras and in different photographic styles. The lack of authorial detail for many of these loose images has led to difficulties categorizing or digitizing them and they have simply been sorted by subject or location since the early 2000s. As a result, these prints and negatives have received little scholarly attention. Ashby did not feel the need to label all these photographs — or he never found the time — and, as such, they are a good reminder that his photographic library was for his own personal use. Ashby did write the initials of some of the photographers on the reverse of the images. It was in this way that Wade and Gioenco (2022: 19–22) were able to identify eighteen loose photographs taken by R.A.L. Fell, an award holder who stayed at the BSR in the 1920s and worked with Ashby on the documentation of the Via Flaminia. Ashby had added the words 'photo: R.A.L.F' to each of his images.⁵¹ Hopefully more of these photographs and their photographers will be identified in due course; however, this may prove difficult given the lack of contextual and authorial information provided by Ashby.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY AGNES AND DORA BULWER IN THE THOMAS ASHBY PHOTOGRAPHIC ARCHIVE

There is another group of photographs that were glued into one of Ashby's albums without the inclusion of the photographer's name. The photographer for this series of images was tentatively identified by archival staff as either Agnes or Dora Bulwer based on the photographic characteristics of the images and others in the same album taken by one of the two women. One example from this group (Fig. 11) depicts two men originally thought to be Ashby and Lanciani — both regular walking companions to the Bulwer sisters — at Porta Neola near San Vittorino on the outskirts of Rome. However, it has recently come to light that a version of this photograph is held in the John Rylands

⁵⁰ One example is ta-XXXIX.030 from 1911, BSR Photographic Archive, Thomas Ashby Collection. The photograph is in Album 15 (print) and Album XXXIX (negative).

⁵¹ Photographs by R.A.L. Fell are contained in the BSR Photographic Archive, Thomas Ashby Collection, 'Other Photographers' box.



Fig. 11. Thomas Ashby and Mr Searle of Tivoli at Porta Neola, 21 March 1895. Photographer: Captain J. Douglass Kennedy. BSR Photographic Archive, Dora and Agnes Bulwer Collection, dab-9.78.

Research Institute and Library Photographic Collection, and it was not taken by either of the Bulwers. The image is part of a series from the 1890s taken by Captain J. Douglass Kennedy, a British amateur photographer and historian who knew Ashby and his parents. In Kennedy's photographic album, the image

has been placed alongside others from the same excursion and labelled with the date and time it was taken by Kennedy (21 March 1895, 11.25 a.m.), the location, and the names of the men in the photograph: Thomas Ashby and Mr Searle of Tivoli.⁵² Initial investigations show that there are over twenty of Kennedy's photographs from Rome and its surrounds, dated to February/March 1891 and March 1895, in the same album at the BSR, all of which have been incorrectly attributed to Agnes or Dora Bulwer.⁵³ The misidentification of these images highlights several factors, the first being the importance of contextual data; without this, the content, meaning and/or author of a photograph can only ever be surmised. The second is the need for an ongoing awareness of the possibility of multiple versions of photographs across collections and institutions. The existence of this photograph in both the John Rylands and BSR Collections provides crucial information on the photograph's original context and subject matter and on its subsequent multiple social lives and trajectories. The third factor relates to an issue caused by the transfer of Ashby's archive from a private to public context. Ashby did not feel the need to label this series of images in his own private materials (presumably because he knew who took them or did not intend to use them for publication), but the early date and placement of the series alongside other images taken by the Bulwer sisters has created problems of identification for later cataloguers and archivists.

There are other photographs clearly attributable to the Bulwer sisters in the Ashby and BSR archives. In fact, the Bulwer sisters' prints and negatives are an important component of Ashby's overall archive. There are approximately 1,100 prints and 900 negatives belonging to the two women in the current BSR Photographic Collections. In October 1925, three months after the end of Ashby's BSR directorship, Agnes and Dora Bulwer donated a selection of their negatives to the BSR Library. It is unclear whether the sisters also donated prints to the school in the same year.⁵⁴ However, it is clear that many of the sisters' images had made their way into Ashby's private photographic library prior to this date. The Bulwers provided numbered lists and envelopes with brief descriptions for many of the photographic items they gave to Ashby or the BSR (see Fig. 12). Once these materials had passed into Ashby's hands, he

⁵² The photograph is from the Capt. J. Douglass Kennedy Collection, R20913, Item 15/18, the John Rylands Research Institute and Library, the University of Manchester. Other photographs in the Kennedy collection demonstrate that Capt. Kennedy and his wife were friendly with Mr and Mrs Ashby and Thomas Ashby Jr.

⁵³ Janet Wade has conducted preliminary research on the Kennedy Collection at the John Rylands Research Institute and Library, identifying these misattributed images. The majority of these images are in Album 9, BSR Photographic Archive, Thomas Ashby Collection/Dora and Agnes Bulwer Collection with at least one other (Bulwer(misc).065) in the Bulwer Miscellaneous Album, BSR Photographic Archive, Dora and Agnes Bulwer Collection.

⁵⁴ A note on the cover of a box of negative albums states that the contents were donated to the library by both Agnes and Dora in October 1925.

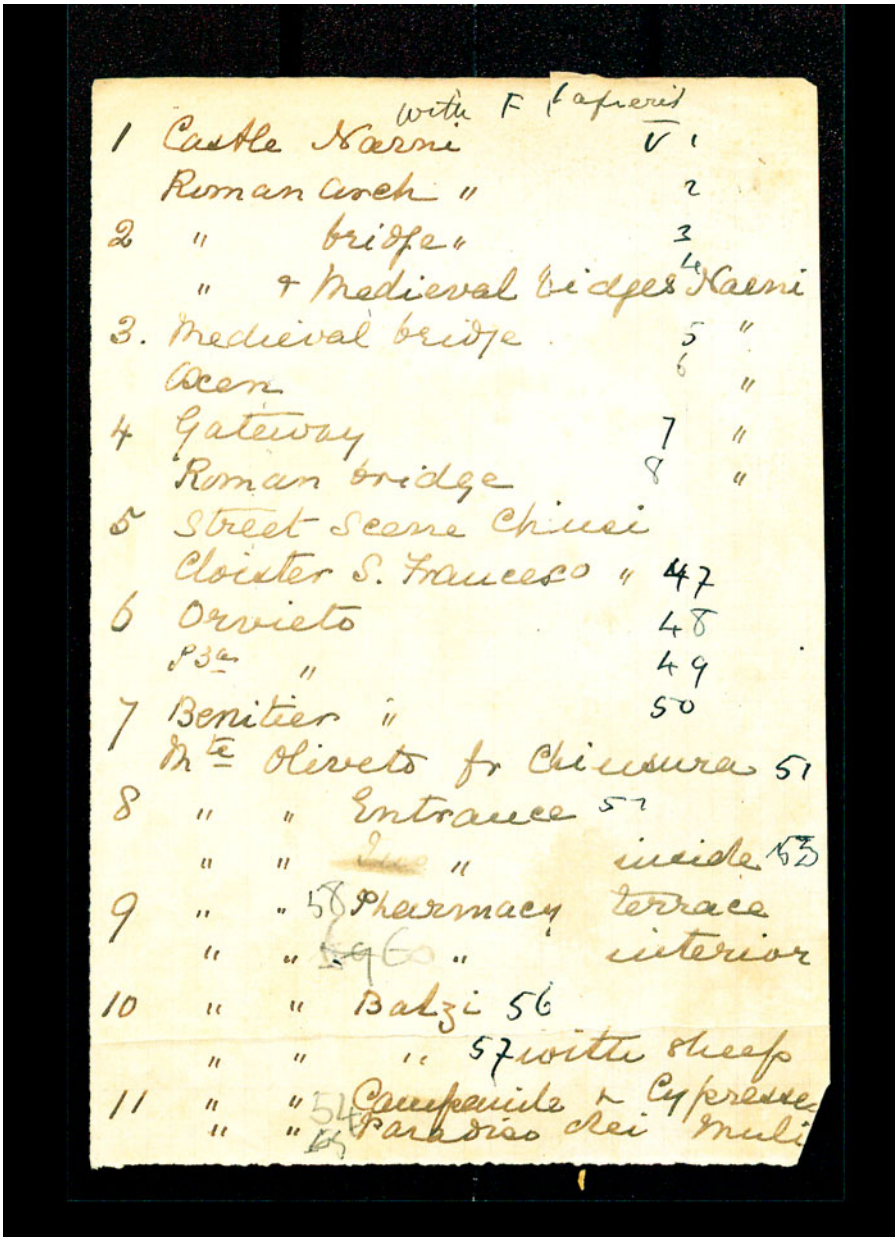


Fig. 12. List of photographs and negatives donated by the Bulwer sisters (with Thomas Ashby's renumbering), unknown date, from a box labelled 'Lists, catalogues, original envelopes and portfolios' preserved together with the Dora and Agnes Bulwer Photographic Collection.

reordered many of the photographs, placing them into albums and sometimes adding a location description or other annotation. In some instances, separate copies of the same photographs were included in the Bulwer sisters' own

portfolios or albums.⁵⁵ By utilizing their photographs in his own albums or articles, Ashby also created new trajectories and biographies for each of the Bulwer prints and negatives that had come into his possession. Of course, the authorship of the photographs never changed, but each version took on a new meaning and context. When Ashby included the prints and negatives in his albums, he generally labelled and credited them to the sisters. Likewise, whenever he utilized their photographs in his publications, Ashby always credited the photographer as either Agnes or Dora Bulwer. Ashby had used individual photographs taken by Dora Bulwer in his research publications for years,⁵⁶ and he was able to incorporate a large number of both sisters' prints and negatives into his personal research library. In the preface to his 1927 volume of *The Roman Campagna in Classical Times*, Ashby thanked both women for the use of their photographs. By this stage, the Bulwer sisters' photographs had been thoroughly absorbed into Ashby's private research records, becoming a crucial part of his photographic library. Thus, when Ashby's own prints and negatives were sold to the BSR after his death, ownership of the Bulwer prints and negatives included in his personal library was transferred to the institution as well.

Prior to their arrival at the BSR, the photographs gifted by the Bulwer sisters to both Ashby and the school were part of their own personal library of images. The subject matter of these prints and negatives is diverse; they capture contemporary life and people alongside natural landscapes, architecture, medieval monuments and ancient remains (for examples, see [Figs 13](#) and [14](#)). Like Ashby's photographs, many of those taken by Agnes and Dora are important cultural and environmental heritage records today. The Bulwer sisters lived in Italy for many years where they witnessed the development and transformation of the country's environment and culture over the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Bucci, 2007). Often in the company of Ashby and Lanciani, they visited archaeological sites, monuments in the countryside, and historical cities and towns (Hodges, 2000: 16–20; Bucci, 2007: 102–3, 107). As talented photographers, Agnes and Dora recorded Italy's urban and rural environment with their cameras, and their prints and negatives were a valuable addition to Ashby's own research materials. Yet, the Bulwer sisters did not only take their photographs for archaeological, research or heritage purposes. The technical merit and artistic quality of the Bulwer photographs demonstrate that

⁵⁵ For example, Bulwer(c).17 and DAB[PHP]-V.011 (BSR Photographic Archive, Dora and Agnes Bulwer Collection) are the same image of the Duomo in Spoleto, placed in two separate albums.

⁵⁶ For example, Ashby utilized Dora Bulwer's photographs in his series of articles titled 'The classical topography of the Roman Campagna', published in *Papers of the British School at Rome* vols 1 (1902), 3 (1906) and 5 (1910). For a detailed discussion of the use made by Ashby and his peers of the Bulwer photographs and the significant heritage and research value of these images, see J. Wade's forthcoming article, 'Dora and Agnes Bulwer's images of Italy: idyllic landscapes or cultural and environmental heritage?'



Fig. 13. Local women washing at a fountain in Subiaco, 1893. BSR Photographic Archive, Dora and Agnes Bulwer Collection, Bulwer(b).80.

photography was a recreational activity that the sisters enjoyed and one in which they had invested time and effort.

The Bulwer photographs are also clearly records and mementoes of their excursions and personal trips. In addition to images of their travels throughout Italy, the sisters' photographs include many from France, Switzerland and the



Fig. 14. Tivoli, partial view of the town with waterfalls and aqueduct, between 1890 and 1913. BSR Photographic Archive, Dora and Agnes Bulwer Collection, dab-III.005.

UK. There are also earlier photographs in the BSR's Bulwer Collection, including images from Greece, but these are too early to have been taken by either sister.⁵⁷ It is possible, as Bucci (2007: 97) suggests, that some of these earlier images were taken by their father, Archibald; however, it is most likely that they are part of the Bulwers' collection of other photographers' work. Indeed, it is possible to attribute several of the early images in the Bulwer Collection to other photographers.⁵⁸ The photographs of France in the BSR's Collection taken by Dora or Agnes reveal that one or both of the sisters travelled there annually during the summer or autumn months (between July and October), at least in the years from 1894 to 1897. Based on the fact that it was Agnes's handwriting on the index lists and envelopes accompanying many of the photographs from France, it is likely that it was Agnes who took these images. From the trips to

⁵⁷ See Bulwer(d).075 to Bulwer(d).148 from Album D, BSR Photographic Archive, Dora and Agnes Bulwer Collection. These photographs are dated to between 1870 and 1875.

⁵⁸ One example includes Bulwer(d).148, BSR Photographic Archive, Dora and Agnes Bulwer Collection. This photograph from Corfu in Greece can be attributed to the photographer B. Borri. There are various photographs in the collection that were taken by other photographers, including commercial photographers. An example from Italy is Bulwer(d).019, BSR Photographic Archive, Dora and Agnes Bulwer Collection, which is an image of the promenade alongside Lake Como and was part of a series taken by Giacomo Brogi.



Fig. 15. Tarn River Valley in France from a boat with women in the foreground, between 1890 and 1913. BSR Photographic Archive, Dora and Agnes Bulwer Collection, Bulwer(misc.).097.

France there are photographs of landscapes, streetscapes, monuments, buildings and group portraits. Photographs taken from a boat on the Tarn River in the south of France suggest that Agnes or Dora enjoyed a relaxing sightseeing cruise there — albeit to a natural location with stunning topography — rather than a research expedition (Fig. 15). The personal nature of such trips and excursions does not discount the research and heritage value of these photographs. Yet, it does remind us that collections of photographs like those taken by the Bulwers were originally personal records of their lives and interests. As Edwards (2011: 55) notes, photographs are ‘rich social objects which carry the material traces of people’s hopes and desires, of their being in

the world'. The photographs of Agnes and Dora Bulwer do indeed contain traces of the lives of these two fascinating photographers. Although the women were aware that their individual photographs might be used in research publications, particularly by Ashby and Lanciani, these images were not originally intended to be records in a public collection; that is, however, what they would eventually become.

CONCLUSION: THE TRANSFER OF THE ASHBY PHOTOGRAPHIC ARCHIVE INTO THE PUBLIC SPACE

As noted, Ashby's albums, negatives and loose photographs were officially brought into the institutional space of the BSR in 1931, and his accompanying archaeological notes followed shortly after in 1933. This included the photographs and negatives within Ashby's library that were taken by photographers like Agnes and Dora Bulwer. The acquisition or transfer of these materials to the institution would today be accompanied by an inventory or cataloguing process to facilitate management of and access to the material. However, at the time, the photographic materials and notes were paid little attention. This was in stark contrast to Ashby's personal library of books which were considered invaluable, incorporated into the overall institutional collection, and placed at the core of its research interests soon after his death.

In this article, we have highlighted several issues that have arisen as a result of the transfer of Ashby's personal photographic archive into the public and institutional archival space. Ashby's renown as a topographer and archaeologist deserves special attention in this regard. The initial interest in his photographs was heavily influenced by his groundbreaking research in Roman topographical and archaeological studies, and this shaped the archive into a particular form from the outset. Research into the photographic archive since Ashby's death has generally been centred on the topographical and archaeological aspects of his photographs, particularly those from Italy. This has been to the detriment of other important elements, features and subjects of his images. The shaping of the archive in the early years continues to influence the ways in which audiences perceive the photographs themselves, the archive as a whole and Ashby's legacy. It has favoured — and continues to favour — certain research narratives over others. Rarely since the time of Ashby's death and the subsequent transfer of his photographs into the public space have the archive's private dimension, the diachronic nature of its formation from Ashby's time through to the present, or its polyphonic properties been considered. This is despite the fact that these elements are crucial to our understanding of the material. As highlighted by Caraffa (2011: 21) in her work on the transition of photographic libraries to archives, 'Whether we are dealing with private or public archives, it is their historical process of formation, formalization, and, sometimes, institutionalization that deserves our attention.'

The transition of Ashby's photographic materials from a private space to an institutional and public environment has, of course, had many benefits. This includes the fact that these significant photographs are now available to a wider audience. The recent digitization of much of Ashby's photographic archive also means that more research can be conducted on these materials and more questions can be asked of them. The digitization of the archive also adds an extra social trajectory to each image (that is, the digitized version becomes another version of the image) and multiplies the possibilities of image repurposing and the number of social lives that a photograph may have. Yet, we must always be careful to remain aware of the original and current context of photographs, both before and after digitization, and to take into account their authorial intent versus their subsequent reception, evolution and history.⁵⁹ In the case of Ashby's photographic material, the intrinsic nature or context of the archive is personal. Its creation was the spontaneous product of Ashby's personal and working life, and it remains an *archive* to this day, despite its place within the larger collections of the institution. In this way, the BSR's Bulwer photographs are also a distinct archive and a reflection of the lives of the two British sisters. At the same time, the Bulwer photographs are a significant part of Ashby's photographic archive *and* a crucial component of the overall BSR Photographic Collections.

The Thomas Ashby Photographic Archive is heterogeneous and multidimensional. It contains a rich assortment of records and photographic materials created by Ashby and others. The materials within the archive, and the archive as a whole, have a detailed and complex history that we must consider when viewing each of the photographs. In short, it is imperative that we as archivists, researchers, historians, or simply as interested parties, are aware that what we see in one single photograph may be divorced from its author's original intention or context, and we must take the time to consider the impact that this has on our research and the research of others. This awareness is particularly crucial in our contemporary online era, where the digitization of photographic archives has democratized our access to such valuable materials, whilst at the same time obscuring, or in some cases eliminating, the vital contexts in which they were generated and preserved.

Addresses for correspondence:

Alessandra Giovenco, Archivist, British School at Rome
via Gramsci 61, 00197, Rome, Italy
a.giovenco@bsrome.it

Dr Janet Wade, Honorary Postdoctoral Fellow
Department of History and Archaeology, Macquarie University, Sydney, NSW, Australia
janet.wade@mq.edu.au

⁵⁹ Schwartz, 2020: 523, also highlights this tension between authorial intention and audience reception.

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