CALL FOR MEMBERS

St Andrews is mainly known as the Scottish capital of golf – an image that does not even distantly encompass the town’s rich and diverse past, including, among other bright moments, the introduction and spread of early photography in the 1840-50s.

Through correspondence with the inventor of the calotype William Henry Fox Talbot (1800-1877), the first Principal of St Andrews Sir David Brewster (1781-1868) learnt the process much earlier than most of his contemporaries. Thanks to his efforts, such pioneering practitioners as John Adamson (1809-1870), Hugh Lyon Playfair (1786-1861), David Octavius Hill (1802-1870), Robert Adamson (1821-1848), and Thomas Rodger (1832-1883) documented St Andrews of the mid-nineteenth century using the photographic medium making it one of the hotspots of early photography.

Refocus! is a cross-disciplinary postgraduate project that aims to enhance the image of St Andrews through research on the local contribution to the history of photography and the social groups that are excluded from the official narratives.

So far, we have conducted research for two projects – Early Photography Sticker Album and Early Photography Treasure Hunt – that we will run in spring and autumn 2021 respectively. For the second semester, we have planned two new exciting activities, and you can choose, which suits you best:

1. **Early Photographic Pub Quiz.** This team will create questions for 5 rounds of an online early-photography-themed Pub Quiz, come up with strategies to promote the event within and outwith the University community, and run the Pub Quiz around week 12.

2. **Digital Deep Dive.** This team will be working on Refocus social media (Instagram/Facebook/Twitter) and, among other posts, will create a series of online puzzles prompting the followers to surf the University Special Collections catalogue in search for the answer.

Each Thursday afternoon, the two teams will meet online to share their findings, update other Refocus! members on their progress and receive feedback.

**At the moment we are looking for postgraduate students interested in joining Refocus!** In order to join the group please have a look at the technical information listed below and send the answers to the following two questions to sd245@st-andrews.ac.uk by **23:59 on January 28**:  
1. Which of the two projects (Early Photographic Pub Quiz or Digital Deep Dive) would you like to join and why?  
2. How can you contribute to it?

We especially welcome individuals eager to study overlooked social groups and cultural activities (e.g. the town fishermen, the university’s female graduates, the enslaved individuals that wealthy families based in St Andrews owed their fortunes to, etc.). The application should be **around 250 and not more than 300 words** in total.

**All the applicants will be notified of the selection committee’s decision by January 30.**

**Eligibility**
In order to join the group you have to:  
- be a postgraduate (doctoral or Masters) student at St Andrews;  
- be interested in the local history of the town and St Andrews’s contribution to the history of early photography.
Key Responsibilities
- participate in weekly online group discussions on Teams (Thursdays 5pm-7pm, from Week 2 to Week 13);
- conduct research on photographs from the University Special Collections in their relation to the history of St Andrews using the Special Collections archive (see https://collections.st-andrews.ac.uk/collection/early-named-photographers-collection/614898) and other relevant historical resources available via the University Library
- do organizational work / write research-based texts for the selected project.

Semester 2 Timeline
Week 1 – call for members
Week 2 – first group meeting + introduction of new members
Week 3 – research for the Pub Quiz / Digital Deep Dive + weekly meeting
Week 4 – research for the Pub Quiz / Digital Deep Dive + weekly meeting
Week 5 – research for the Pub Quiz / Digital Deep Dive + weekly meeting
Week 6 – research for the Pub Quiz / Digital Deep Dive + weekly meeting
Week 7 – research for the Pub Quiz / Digital Deep Dive + weekly meeting
Week 8 – research for the Pub Quiz / Digital Deep Dive + weekly meeting
Week 9 – research for the Pub Quiz / Digital Deep Dive + weekly meeting
Week 10 – research for the Pub Quiz + weekly meeting + Digital Deep Dive
Week 11 – research for the Pub Quiz + weekly meeting
Week 12 – weekly meeting + Pub Quiz
Week 13 – weekly meeting

If you have any inquiries concerning Refocus! or the application process, please contact Sofya Dmitrieva on sd245@st-andrews.ac.uk.