# Talking Tees Valley Activity Pack
# Margaret Wright Photography

Tees Valley Museums

Supported using public funding by
ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

Kirkleatham Museum · Captain Cook Birthplace Museum · Dorman Museum · Head of Steam Darlington Railway Museum · Preston Park Museum & Grounds · Museum of Hartlepool · Hartlepool Art Gallery · teesside dementia link services

Tees Valley Museums

# Welcome to another edition of the Talking Tees Valley Activity Pack

Each month we use objects and photos from our museums in the Tees Valley to take a closer look at the lives and stories from people in our area.

This month we look at the life of Margaret Wright, a photographer who worked in Middlesbrough between the 1890s and 1930s.

We will look at the places and people she photographed, and the types of cameras she would have used, and we have a fun Cut-out and Stick Photograph Studio activity.

**Sir Arthur Dorman commissioned Margaret to take this photo of the day of his and his wife's Golden Wedding Anniversary. This photo also features representatives of Dorman Long and Co.**

# Margaret Wright

Margaret Wright was born in 1865 in Lockerbie, Dumfriesshire. She moved to Middlesbrough around 1890 and lived with her sister Jane and her brother-in-law Alexander Phillip.

Margaret and Alexander were both photographers and together they set up a photography business, Phillip and Wright, at No. 75 Albert Road.

**These are Cabinet Cards, postcard shaped photographs. They were a very typical product for independent photographers like Margaret, as they were cheap and quick to make.**

They worked together for a short time until 1894 when the business dissolved and Alexander moved his young family back to Scotland. Margaret took over the business and continued working at the Middlesbrough premises.

## Let's take a look at some of the photographs Margaret took during her life -

In 1909 the Olympia Skating rink opened in Middlesbrough, and Margaret reproduced photographs like these to sell as postcards.

**For the grand opening the rink was decked out in bunting and lanterns, and a brass band were also hired to play in the balcony you can see here**

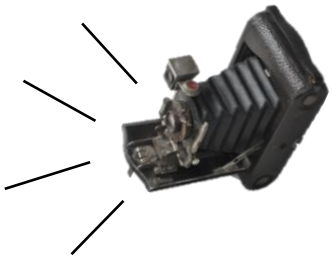
When the Transporter Bridge opened in 1911 the day was celebrated with a big opening ceremony and Margaret was invited to take official photographs.

**It looked like a busy day! Can you imagine the excitement people felt seeing this strange, new bridge being opened?**

**By 1911 Margaret was living with Jane and her children, Richard and Gladys, following the death of Alexander. Margaret decided to employ her niece as an apprentice, and Gladys later became a partner in the business.**

This is a photograph taken in 1914 upon the outbreak of the First World War of a tram conductress in uniform.
Many women undertook jobs that had previously belonged to men, and this photograph is a snapshot of a changing time.

**What do you think the conductress was feeling at the time this was taken? Could she perhaps have been proud of her new job?**



**This was the Golden Wedding Anniversary of Arthur and Clara Dorman, taken in 1923. At this point in her career Margaret was a talented woman who had influential clients.**

In 1927 Margaret and Gladys decided to dissolve the business and part ways. Despite this, Margaret continued to work as a photographer.

One of the most prominent people Margaret ever photographed in her life was Princess Mary when she visited the Municipal Maternity Home in Middlesbrough in 1929 to celebrate its 10 year Anniversary.

Throughout her life Margaret also went overseas to India, China and Africa, carrying out commissions by Dorman Long to take photos of infrastructure they were building.

She took this photo of a train ferry bridge which was still being built in China. This may have also been one of the last photographs she took in her life.

**Margaret Wright passed away in 1932 in Whitby, leaving a large inheritance to Gladys.**

# What sort of cameras would Margaret have used?

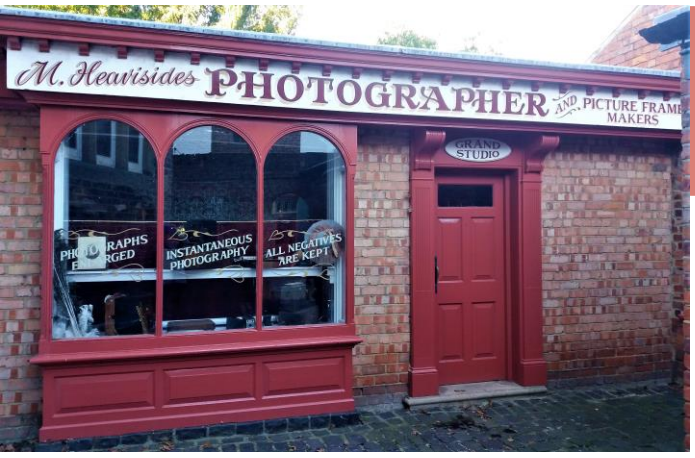
**This is a tailboard camera, produced by Gandolfi in the 1880s. These are the types of cameras Margaret may have used in her studio.**

Photography was first invented in the 1820s, and photographs needed different chemical processes to develop, including the use of dark rooms, and many of these processes were time consuming.

In the 1880s new easier ways of developing photographs were introduced and this allowed Margaret to take more photographs in a smaller time frame.

**As we have seen in this pack, Margaret also took photographs outside of her studio, so she would have needed a portable camera.**

This is a Kodak No.1 Pocket camera, introduced by Eastman Kodak. They were the first cameras that you could take with you anywhere, and they were very popular with the public. For the first time they could take their own photographs without having to go to a studio.




## Have a Go! Cut out and Stick Photography Studio

This is M. Heavisides Photography Studio on Preston Park Museum's Victorian Street. There is a picture of the inside of the studio on the next page, and have given you some people to cut out and stick onto the studio.

**Or, you can take a photo of yourself, friends and family, or anything you like, and cut them out and stick them in the studio yourself. Just have fun with it!**

All images used in this pack are courtesy of Dorman Museum, Teesside Archives, Hartlepool Museums Service and Kirkleatham Museum.

You can find all our Talking Tees Valley packs through the Tees Valley Museums website under 'Latest News' or here: https://teesvalleymuseums.org/news/

If you would like to share your stories or contact us about the packs please e-mail teesvalleymuseums@stockton.gov.uk