



ALEX KEIGHLEY HonFRPS 1861-1947



Alex Keighley, the son of Joseph Keighley, a wealthy worsted manufacturer, was a pioneer in the pictorial movement in photography. He was born at Floss House, Spring Gardens Lane in the town that carried his name, and the family later moved to High Hall, Steeton, near Keighley in 1897.

Three members of the YPU Executive were able, recently, to meet up with Alexander Keighley's Granddaughter Lynne Granger. Lynne, who lives in Sydney, Australia, was visiting the UK with her husband, Paul. They were keen to know how the Yorkshire Photographic Union was progressing and Lynne was very pleased to rekindle her family connections once more. Lynne presented back to the YPU an album of photographs and club information originally produced by the YPU and presented to Alexander in 1944. The album contains some fascinating images and information about Alexander Keighley and the Yorkshire Photographic Union.

The picture overleaf shows Lynne with Ray Brammall and Dave Burgess of the YPU looking at the historic album



16 August 2018

ALEXANDER KEIGHLEY PLAYED AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN THE FORMATION OF THE PHOTOGRAPHIC ALLIANCE OF GREAT BRITAIN

“In 1892 several prominent pictorialists, dissatisfied by the lack of recognition given to pictorial work left what was then the **Photographic Society of Great Britain** (*now the RPS*), and formed, an association with purely pictorial aims under the title "**The Linked Ring**", which staged an annual exhibition of photography known as "The Salon", which later became "**The London Salon**".

Keighley, now 31 was invited to become one of the founder members - showing that he was regarded as being amongst the leading exponents of pictorial - or as it was first called - artistic photography. The Linked Ring had the prime objective of trying to make photography recognised as a serious art form.

In 1898 while he was the Society's President, there was held at Bradford Art Gallery one of the earliest important open exhibitions of pictorial photography. Members of the various scattered photographic societies in Yorkshire organised visits to the Exhibition and so were brought into contact with one another. In 1899, the **Yorkshire Photographic Union** was formed, the first Federation of its kind in the country.“

“During the 1920s there was a growing desire for some link between the various Photographic Federations. In 1928 a meeting took place at Alex's home at which a report was drawn up recommending the formation of a body to be known as the **Photographic Alliance**. This was enthusiastically welcomed and, in 1930, the **PAGB** came into existence.”

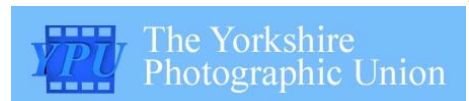
Extracted from the notes of the late Gus Bigney on the life of Alexander Keighley



Alexander Keighley and Members of Bradford C. C. at the opening of their headquarters, 1944. Joe Bruce is top left and Mabel Bruce is on the right. From the Bradford C. C. Archives.

https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_Keighley

The Wikipedia entry is published in German but is worth the effort



Keighley was known to use chalk and pencil on his negatives to produce a desired effect. He would often make prints from several negatives, which he combined to produce a pleasing artistic impression.



Alexander Keighley, an 'impressionist in photography', has been described as 'an amateur who, unrestrained by the imperious demands of patrons, is free to use his photography for the satisfaction of his own aesthetic sense, and desiring no recognition or applause for the display of dexterity or skill the sympathy of those to whom Nature appeals'

by Alfred Horsley Hinton

You can see an informative article at <http://www.notjusthockney.info/keighley-alexander-alex/>



W. E. Gundill (President Y.P.U.) presenting the Alexander Keighley Memorial Chair to the Royal Photographic Society — 9 December, 1950. The chair is being received by L. V. Chilton (President R.P.S.)

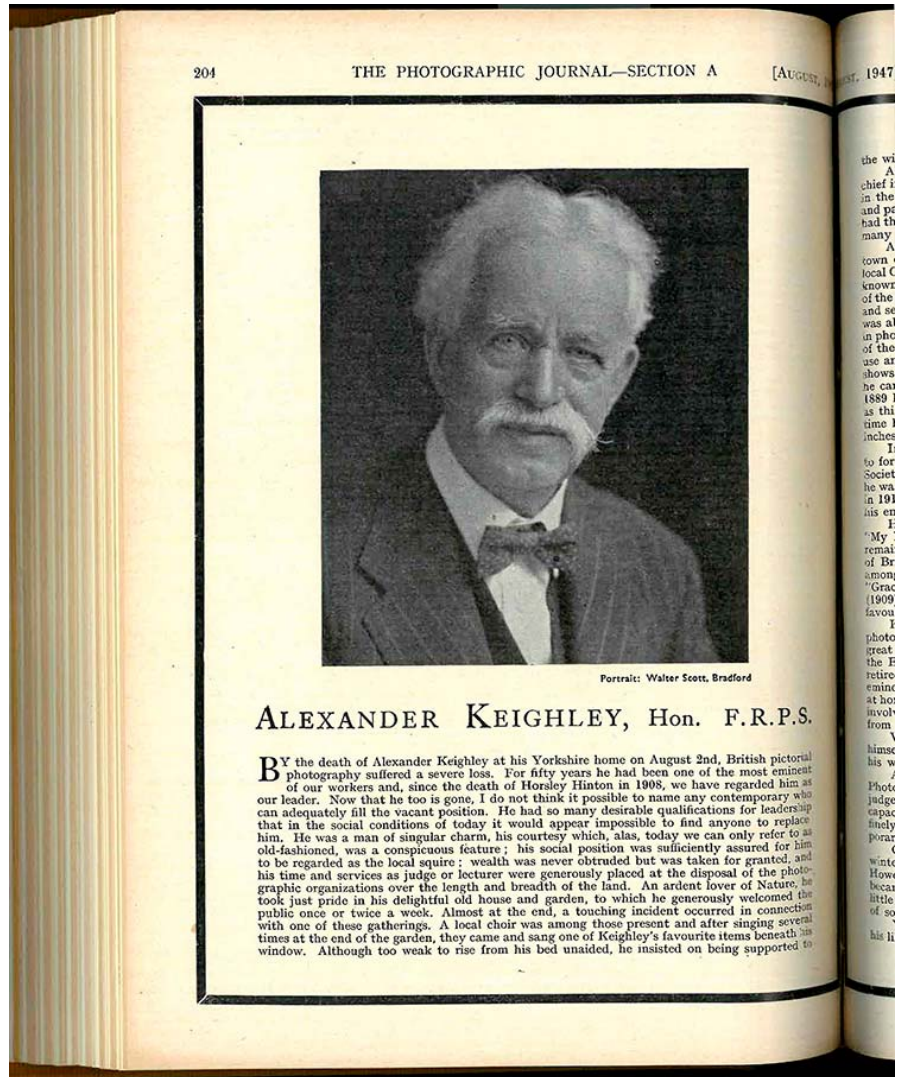
The picture is scanned from the YPU "First Hundred Years", published in 1999.

Dr Michael Pritchard FRPS, RPS Director of Education and Public Affairs, assures me that the Keighley Chair remains in the safe custody of the Royal Photographic Society.



This picture of the Keighley Chair and the scan from a 1947 issue of **The Photographic Journal** is by courtesy of the RPS, together with the extract from the Obituary by J. Dudley Johnston.

<http://rps.org/membership>



Keighley, I think, did more than any other worker to uphold the prestige of British photography abroad. Apart from his visit to South Africa some ten years ago, which was a great personal triumph, he was a regular contributor to the principal exhibitions in America, the Empire generally, and the European Continent. He took advantage of the leisure of a retired business man to produce pictures on a much more liberal scale than almost any other eminent pictorialist. Accordingly, he was able to contribute prints to numerous exhibitions at home and overseas and was thus very widely known. In spite of the quite considerable labour involved in producing his large-size carbon prints, he responded most generously to all appeals from worthy sources.

We have in this Society's Collection, twenty of his finest works, partly through gifts from himself and partly from other donors, and I believe we are to receive other accessions under his will.

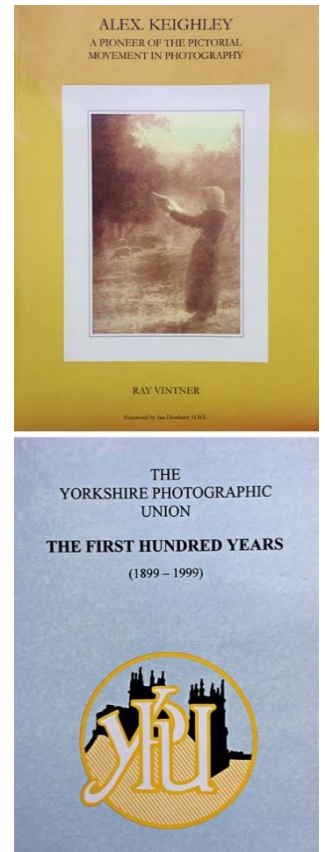
Apart from his photography he did much valuable work as President of the Yorkshire Photographic Union and on the Council of the Photographic Alliance, as well as lecturer and judge to most of the prominent societies of the Kingdom. My contacts with him in these capacities go back forty years, so I can speak from personal knowledge of the sound judgment and finely-balanced mind which inspired all with whom he came in contact. None of his contemporaries was more genuinely respected for personal integrity and breadth of view.

On the whole he enjoyed remarkably good health, but in the very trying weather of last winter he contracted influenza, from the after effects of which he never fully recovered. However, in mid May he was able to lecture to a local society, but it was a last effort and he became seriously ill again. He passed away on August 2nd and on the 6th was buried in the little cemetery adjoining his beloved garden and just beneath his garden wall, in the presence of some hundreds of his Yorkshire friends and admirers.

We can say in all sincerity, he was a great man and we of this generation will never see his like again.

J. DUDLEY JOHNSTON.

The Photographic Journal, August 1947



Ray Vintner, local artist, is seen presenting the book he published about Alex Keighley to, Lynne, his Granddaughter.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE YORKSHIRE PHOTOGRAPHIC UNION <http://www.ypu.org.uk/ABOUTUS-HISTORY.aspx>

The Yorkshire Photographic Union (YPU) was the first of the United Kingdom's regional photographic federations and formed the basis for most of those which followed. Its first exhibition was held at the old Bradford Art Gallery in Darley St, which claimed that it was *'the first time that a Municipal Art Gallery had been used for a Pictorial Photographic Exhibition'*. Their claim however was not quite correct as sadly, Lancashire had beaten them to it with an exhibition in Manchester in April 1898.

The Bradford exhibition ran from November 1898 to January 1899 comprising of work from the union's then twenty-three societies. The Inaugural meeting was held in the Bradford Grammar School on Friday 27th January 1899 with about forty attendees representing some thirteen societies. Percy Lund was elected as the YPU's first President with Alexander Keighley the Honorary Treasurer, and Ezra Clough, the then secretary of Bradford PS as its first Honorary Secretary.

The union continued to grow and by 1917 the exhibition included 236 prints, ten of these on fabric together with a few lantern slides.

The early 1920s were a period of recession and there had been little change from the early days. Things however would gradually change as more activities were introduced, and the exhibition became more competitive with the Alexander Keighley trophy awarded to the society entering the best set of pictorial prints.

In 1920 Alexander Keighley was again elected President and remained so until his death in 1947 at the age of 86.

In 1948 the union hosted its Jubilee Salon, to celebrate its 50th anniversary. There was an entry of 874 prints and 193 slides. Amongst its member clubs is Leeds Photographic Society, which is recognised as the oldest in the country. Leeds P.S. celebrated its centenary in 1952 and predates even the RPS.

By 1953 there were 69 clubs in the Union, with competitions growing in popularity, and without any form of selection, 470 prints were exhibited. By 1960 things had moved on to such a degree that the YPU secretary was provided with a typewriter, which over the years was passed on to successive secretaries. At about this time also, colour prints were introduced into the YPU exhibitions and competitions.

Throughout the 1970s there had been a growing interest in projecting colour slides with a taped music sound accompaniment with several clubs forming an A.V. group. Leeds C.C. went on to form a separate group which over the years has enjoyed much success.

Over the past 115 years the Yorkshire Photographic Union has seen many changes, with perhaps the most significant being the introduction of Digital Photography. Today it has 69-member clubs, which incidentally is the same as in 1953. This surely shows the continued interest in photography in Yorkshire.

Ray Brammall ARPS DPAGB APAGB.

(With extracts from The First Hundred Years by the late Keith I.P. Adamson FRPS EFIAP DPAGB)