



## **PRESS RELEASE:**

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### **Percy Cotton's Cameras**

Major PHG Powell Cotton, founder of the renowned Powell Cotton Museum at Quex Park, Birchington, was an avid lifelong photographer. This is fortunate for the Museum as his legacy has provided a fantastic visual resource. Some 30,000 photographs give invaluable support to the important natural history and ethnographic collections gathered by the Major on his many trips to Africa in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The story of the Major's interest in photography, which began when he was a young teenager in the 1880s, is being told in a new exhibition in the Drawing Room of Quex House. Several of the Major's cameras and some significant early photographic equipment are on display.

Perhaps the highlight of the exhibition is a Camera Lucida, an optical device which came to the attention of pioneering photographer William Fox Talbot in 1833. It was used by artists to project an image of a subject in front of them onto a sheet of paper as a drawing aid. Talbot wondered if it would be possible to fix the projected image on to paper. In 1834 he began experiments coating paper with various substances until he produced a paper that, when exposed to light would lighten while any area of the paper where the light had been blocked would not. This discovery led to the development of photography.

The Camera Lucida at Quex likely belonged to Major Powell Cotton's grandfather, Henry Perry Cotton, who was a keen artist. The instruments are quite rare today, but an identical example is in the Fox Talbot Museum at Lacock in Somerset. During the mounting of this exhibition, the Museum was revisited by Stuart Heggie of Canterbury, a vintage camera specialist. Stuart bears an uncanny resemblance to the Major, as can be seen in the accompanying image.

The exhibition runs until 30 October 2011 - 2pm-5pm

Opening times: April - October  
Museum and gardens: Tues – Sun 11am – 5pm  
House: Tues – Sun 2pm – 5pm

Adults £7 Concessions £5  
Family £20 (2 adults + 3 children)

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