

AN OBJECT OF INTEREST FROM HUNSTANTON HERITAGE CENTRE

A STANHOPE containing a photo of the original Hunstanton Pier

A couple of months ago, John Maiden presented us with a number of items following his move from Heacham to Hunstanton and his inevitable sort-out of many personal possessions. One was a lovely painting of Hunstanton Cliffs and Pier. Another was an animal bone and finally a "Gift from Hunstanton" in the form of a Stanhope. These we shall be displaying in the Heritage Centre.

This is the Stanhope we have been given. In the form of a model fish – As you can see it is really small when held in one's fingers. When you look through the glass aperture really close to your eye you see a picture of the original Hunstanton Pier.



Not many people will know what a STANHOPE is! The following we hope will explain with thanks to Wikipedia for much of the information:

Stanhopes or **Stanho-scopes** are optical devices that enable the viewing of [microphotographs](#) without using a microscope. They were invented by [René Dagron](#) in 1857. Dagron bypassed the need for an expensive microscope to view the microscopic photographs by attaching the microphotograph at the end of a modified [Stanhope lens](#). He called the devices *bijoux photo-microscopiques* or *microscopic photo-jewelry* In 1862, Dagron displayed the devices at the [Exhibition](#) in [London](#), where he got an "Honourable Mention" and presented them to [Queen Victoria](#). In 1864 Dagron became famous when he produced a stanhope optical viewer which enabled the viewing of a microphotograph 1 square millimetre (0.0016 sq in), (equivalent in size to the head of a pin), that included the portraits of 450 people.

History

In 1851 [John Benjamin Dancer](#) invented microphotographs using a [collodion](#) process and a microscope converted to a camera. This resulted in a microphotograph about 3 square millimetres (0.0047 sq in) in area. The main disadvantage of Dancer's method was that the viewing of the microphotographs required a microscope which was at the time an expensive instrument. In 1857 Dagron solved the problem by inventing a method of mounting the microphotographs at the end of a small cylindrical lens. Dagron modified the Stanhope lens by sectioning the normally [biconvex](#) Stanhope lens and introducing a planar section so that the plane was located at the [focal length](#) of the convex side of the cylindrical

lens. This produced a [plano-convex](#) lens, where Dagron was able to mount the microscopic photograph on the flat side of the lens using [Canada balsam](#) as adhesive. This arrangement enabled the picture to be focused.

The Stanhope optical viewers were also mounted inside the bows of [violins](#) by French violin maker [Jean-Baptiste Vuillaume](#), probably using Dagron's methods and equipment. The violin Stanhopes featured the portraits of famous people such as [Paganini](#), [Tourte](#) and [Stradivari](#).

The sectioned lens could magnify the microphotograph three hundred times, so that the viewing of the microphotographs no longer required a bulky and expensive microscope. The modified Stanhope lens was small enough to be mounted in all manner of miniature artifacts such as rings, ivory miniatures, wooden toys etc. Dagron also designed a special

microphotographic camera which could produce 450 exposures approximately 2 by 2 millimetres (0.079 in × 0.079 in) on a 4.5-by-8.5-centimetre (1.8 in × 3.3 in) wet collodion plate.



Stanhope ring



A Stanhope in the form of a miniature telescope

Dagron's efforts met with great success. The viewers were first introduced to the general public at the 1859 International Fair in Paris.

The success of his viewers enabled Dagron to purpose-build a factory dedicated to their production. As of June 1859, Dagron's factory was manufacturing the Stanhopes, mounted in jewellery and souvenirs. In August 1859 he exhibited them at the International Exhibition in Paris where they met with great success. In 1862 he had 150 employees and was manufacturing 12,000 units a day.

In 1860 Dagron obtained the patent for his viewers under the title *Bijoux Photomicroscopiques*. Dagron also developed [mail order](#) marketing techniques for his viewers. In 1862 Dagron published his book *Cylindres photo-microscopiques, montés et non montés sur bijoux*.

In the early twentieth century Eugène Reymond took control of Dagron's Stanhope lens factory in [Gex, France](#). He was succeeded in the management of the factory by his son Roger. In 1972 the factory, run by Roger Remond, produced the last Stanhope lens made by the traditional methods. In 1998, after Roger's death, the workshop was closed and its equipment dismantled and sold. Stanhope lenses are still manufactured to this day, but they are not produced according to Dagron's methodology.

In modern times, the most common Stanhopes are usually gold or silver crosses with Christian prayers in the microphotograph.