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The Platinum Prints of Peter H. Emerson

At the turn of the century platinum was used extensively in photography, but the popularity of the platinum process declined prior to the First World War. Recently, however, the process has been revived, while early photographs have come to be recognised as valuable collector's items. Among the most sought after are the platinum prints of Peter Henry Emerson (1856–1936). His album "Life and Landscape of the Norfolk Broads" was illustrated with platinum prints, which demonstrated the wide tonal range that could be obtained with platinum. Another feature of the process was the permanency of the image, and today the condition of his platinum prints testifies to this.

Almost one hundred years after publication of this book, and fifty years after his death, an exhibition of his work is taking place at the Sainsbury

Centre for Visual Arts, University of East Anglia, Norwich, until 26th October 1986. The platinum prints that form part of this exhibition, which is sponsored by Norwich Union Insurance, could appeal especially to those who have previously regarded platinum solely as an industrial metal.

Later the display will move to the Royal Photographic Society, Bath (5th December 1986–17th January 1987), University of Warwick (21st February–21st March 1987), Impressions Gallery of Photography, York (27th April–31st May 1987), and the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool (7th August–20th September 1987).

The image reproduced here, from an Emerson in the Johnson Matthey Collection, is featured in the exhibition.

