

Project Proposal Application

To be completed by the lead proposed supervisor,
with input from the non-HE Partner Organisation(s).



Arts and
Humanities
Research Council

SECTION 1: PROJECT SUMMARY AND APPLICANT DETAILS			
Proposed Project Title:	A Woman's Work: Photographic histories of Northeast England through the lens of Daisy Edis and the J.R. Edis Studio		
Project Summary: <i>(Maximum 100 words)</i>	A Woman's Work uses the J.R. Edis Studio (1895-1964) to interrogate histories of photography in Durham, a cathedral, university, and mining town in Northeast England. Based on archives at Beamish Museum and Durham University, it centres photography as a way to examine class, gender, and empire through the careers of founder John Reed Edis and his daughter Daisy. What roles did the Edis Studio play in Durham's 'town and gown' community, and how has its afterlife – as a working reconstruction at Beamish – continued to shape ideas about identity, photography, and history?		
Host University:	Durham University		
Name of Non-HE Partner Organisation(s): <i>(Add more lines if needed)</i>			
1. Beamish Museum, Beamish, County Durham			
2.			
Contact(s) at Non-HE Partner Organisation(s): listed in alphabetical order <i>(Add more lines if needed)</i>			
Name:	Helen Barker, Assistant Director, Engagement Activity & Collections Access	Email:	helenbarker@beamish.org.uk
Name:	Dan Hudachek, Head of Collections	Email:	danhudachek@beamish.org.uk
Name:	Rosie Nichols, Curator of Social History	Email:	rosienichols@beamish.org.uk
Name:		Email:	
Primary AHRC Subject Area: <i>Select one subject area from the list here. Do not add or amend subjects - there will not be a corresponding Subject Area panel to assess the application.</i>		Photography: History, Theory and Practice	
Does the project include a Creative Practice component?	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Do you consider the project to be interdisciplinary?	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>	

If you consider the project to be interdisciplinary, please state why:

*(Maximum 100 words. Note, all applications will be assessed by the appropriate **primary subject area** cross-institutional panel.)*

Although Photography is the primary subject area of this PhD, the project design, research questions, and methodology intersect with other AHRC Subject Areas, namely 1) Cultural and Museum Studies and 2) History, encompassing histories of social class, gender, business, technologies, and empire. Methodologically, working with photographic materials always requires an interdisciplinary approach, especially in a museum and heritage context where photographs may have had a low priority compared to other collections, and may have been used primarily as direct evidence of historical individuals or information. A Woman's Work also foresees an ethnographic and practice-led component through the candidate's site-based observation, staff and visitor interviews, and public engagement activity at the non-HEI partner, Beamish Museum.

SECTION 2: PROJECT PROPOSAL AND CASE FOR SUPPORT

Please provide full details of the proposal and make your case for support below:

(Maximum 750 words)

Photography revolutionized image-making, hand-in-hand with industrialization, imperial expansion, and the birth of mass media. As photography became embedded in daily life, professional studios and societies for serious amateurs boomed across 19th- and 20th-century Britain. Yet few studies (Dominici 2022) consider the photographic industry as a nexus and driver of historical change, from the economic opportunities it created to the ways in which its best-known product – portraiture – enabled new individual, family, and group identities to emerge. Methodologically, historical research has tended to reduce photographs to their surfaces, treating them as straightforward illustrations of the past rather than constituents of it (Edwards 2022). Museums often hold vast photograph collections, and may use selected images for display, but photography itself is rarely seen as *shaping*, rather than showing, history. Moreover, as Gartlan (2022) demonstrates for St Andrews, provincial photographic societies and studios were extensively networked through British colonialism and empire.

A Woman's Work uses the J.R. Edis Studio to interrogate histories of photography in Durham, a cathedral, university, and mining town in Northeast England. Working in partnership with Beamish, a 'living museum' of working-class history, the project centres photography as a site of identity formation for photographers, subjects, and viewers alike – and as crucial to both past and present notions of 'history' itself. It takes two interrelated approaches: 1) archive-based research on the 19th- and 20th-century history of the Edis Studio, in particular the career of Daisy Edis (1888-1964), drawing on archives at Beamish and Durham University, and 2) practice-based research on the studio's afterlife as a working reconstruction at Beamish, a popular attraction where visitors can don Edwardian-style costumes and pose for portraits that evoke the era.

Founded by John Reed Edis in 1895 and run by his daughter Daisy until it ceased trading in 1964, the Edis Studio was the most prominent photographic business in Durham. Its clients included the cathedral, the university, and Durham School as well as the wider community of this Coalfield town. Located centrally, the Studio supplied photographic goods and images geared to the tourist market. The Edises were active in the Northumberland and Durham Photographic Society (est. 1901), one of many UK organizations for serious amateurs and professionals. Having joined her father's studio in 1903 (aged 15) as a hand-colourist, Daisy Edis later ran it as sole proprietor. She exhibited her work in Britain and abroad, eventually becoming a Fellow of the Royal Photographic Society. In 2022, Durham erected a historical marker (blue plaque) in Daisy's honour at her former family home.

A Woman's Work bridges historical research and contemporary heritage practice to ask:

1. What role did the Edis Studio play in Durham's 'town and gown' community over its 70-year history? Who were its clients, what services did it provide, and what made it successful? Given the centrality of empire to Durham's knowledge and industrial economies, how might visually 'banal' photographs, which were the studio's core business (company, college, and other group shots; tourist views; studio portraits), be understood within the imperial context?
2. How did higher education, or lack of it, shape careers in British photography? John Edis studied at the Regent Street Polytechnic during Quintin Hogg's leadership, while Daisy may have had little formal education: how typical was their experience? Did social class or religious affiliation affect their working lives (John was Nonconformist, Daisy's son became an Anglican priest and missionary)? How accurate is today's 'blue plaque' view of Daisy as a woman pioneer? Was photography a more accessible occupation for women of any class, or was she an exception – and why?
3. Beamish's reconstructed Edis Studio creates an affective experience of the past, with studio props, costumes, and reproduction cabinet cards; demonstration prints offer a brief history of photography. What do visitors take away from this, and does it reflect current thinking about gendered labour, class, and imperial economies of photography (where did the silver and gelatine come from, for instance)? What opportunities for public engagement does the Daisy Edis Archive present, in line with Beamish's goal of reflecting the diversity of working-class life in Northeast England? How might insights from this project inform the wider museum sector's approach to historic photograph collections?

A Woman's Work will produce a thesis, an information pack for Beamish's internal use, and materials for public engagement, helping transform the Edis Studio in the 1900s town and develop new interpretation for the 1950s town. A Collaborative Doctoral Award is essential for the realization of the project, which stands to yield significant new knowledge and skills for the candidate and supervisors, as well as measurable social impact for Beamish and its visitor base, transforming its approach to photography.

Provide details of any resources and facilities, including equipment, fieldwork, training, etc., that will be required to complete the project successfully. NBC has limited Research Training Support Grant funding, which may affect the feasibility of high-cost projects. Please note where you might also secure additional funding, (e.g. partner organisations; department or school). Include estimated costs:

(Maximum 200 words)

A Woman's Work requires access to two main archives of photographic material, at Beamish Museum (c. 600 prints, some annotated by Daisy Edis) and Durham University Library, Special Collections (c. 1800 glass plates, depicting local industries, tourist attractions, and miners' cottages). Additional research will take place in archives at Durham Cathedral, Durham School, individual colleges, and elsewhere, e.g. papers in the Edis family. Beamish will provide relevant training for the handling and (where necessary) cataloguing of materials in its collection, while the primary supervisor, Prof. Christina Riggs, will ensure the student is versed in principles of photographic archiving and the history of photographic technologies. The supervisory team will jointly oversee the candidate's ethics training and preparedness for on-site work, including public engagement activities and any observation and staff/volunteer/visitor interviews undertaken in connection with the Edis Studio attraction at Beamish.

Further training opportunities may arise over the course of the project through Durham's Centre for Visual Arts and Culture (CVAC, which has a very active postgraduate committee) and by attending conferences and events elsewhere. In the UK, the universities of Oxford, St Andrews, De Montfort, and Westminster host regular photographic research events, as do institutions such as the National Media Museum in Bradford and the National Archives, British Library, and V&A in London. The student will be able to request funding from the Department of History as well as the Northern Bridge, to support conference attendance and research visits over the course of the project (approximately once per year), grouping such visits together to reduce travel costs.

Outline the arrangements for communication between the non-HE partner organisation and the academic host institution in regard to project management and monitoring academic progress:

(Maximum 200 words)

The academic supervisors at Durham University and colleagues at Beamish Museum have close working relationships already, including doctoral and impact-related collaborations. The physical proximity of the partner institutions will facilitate in-person meetings at scheduled intervals, at Beamish, with additional meetings arranged on an as-needed basis.

At the outset of the project, the academic supervisors, the Beamish advisor, and the candidate will create a workflow chart together, setting out milestones for academic progress alongside Beamish-based activities; this will be updated at the start of each academic year. The primary supervisor and the candidate will meet monthly in Year 1 of the project, including the secondary supervisor and Beamish advisor once per term (3x/year); the entire team – both academic supervisors and the Beamish advisor – will remain in independent contact as well. If wished, a shared folder (Dropbox, Google, or similar) can enable all team members to access written work, meeting notes, and so forth throughout the project, minimizing reliance on email chains.

The academic supervisors and Beamish colleagues will also aim to involve each other in professional development activities related to the project, for instance public engagement events, conferences and training opportunities, and reciprocal archival visits between the Beamish and Durham University collections.

What benefits will there be for the candidate and the non-HE partner organisation as a result of your collaboration?

(Maximum 300 words)

The candidate will gain invaluable experience and transferable skills in the innovative environment of Beamish Museum, which uses a variety of 'living history' and costumed interpretation techniques to shape and tell stories of Northeast history based on detailed historical research. The candidate will contribute to public engagement for Beamish's 750,000+ visitors per year. S/he will benefit from staff expertise in Northeast social history and all facets of public engagement, outreach, and visitor services. S/he will develop presentation skills for non-academic audiences, including the Board of Trustees and museum professional networks; as the project develops, the candidate can help deliver training for museum staff and volunteers as well.

The candidate will gain skills in archival research and the handling, conservation, storage, documentation, and digitization of photographic materials. Given the vast size and wide range of institutional photographic collections around the world, experience working in this field opens a number of career pathways, including HE, museums/heritage, libraries, and picture libraries.

Beamish will benefit from enhanced understanding of the Edis Archive and its relation to the museum's development; Edis and founder Frank Atkinson were friends. The candidate will improve the archive's accessibility, both digitally and physically. In addition, s/he will help develop appropriate engagement activities, as well as creating a training pack about Edis for museum staff and volunteers. We anticipate that the candidate will help transform both the Edis Studio (1900s town) and the new 1950s town, where photography doesn't yet feature. Work on this project will help Beamish refresh its strategy for its vast photographic holdings (c.2.5 million images), with an opportunity to develop sector-leading practices for photographic materials in history museums – an underexplored area. The project will also strengthen Beamish's links to related Edis archives, including the Edis Negative Collection at Durham University.

State what financial (if any) or in-kind contribution the non-HE partner organisation will be making over the duration of the award:

*(Maximum 100 words. A financial contribution is **not** a requirement. However, the AHRC expect that **non-HE partners based overseas** will make a financial contribution to the costs of the student's return travel and accommodation when visiting.)*

Beamish Museum will host the student on site to facilitate research on the Daisy Edis archive and the Edis Studio reconstruction in the 1900s Town. Museum staff will offer an induction to the candidate and access to any training opportunities that arise during their time at Beamish, alongside project-specific training in the museum's collections management system; handling, conservation, and archival storage; and costumed historical interpretation, public engagement, and outreach. This may extend to the use of on-site desk space and computer terminals; the supply of materials for documentation and storage improvements; and resources associated with the development and implementation of public-facing engagement activity. For the purposes of the doctoral thesis and any academic publications arising from it, Beamish will support fee-free use of Edis images where possible. Moreover, the museum will facilitate contact between the candidate and descendants of the Edis family. This will help the candidate better understand the family's history and, with appropriate permissions and ethics training in place, conduct interviews with them and consult personal papers and photographic materials.

Describe the nature of the collaborative arrangement and the activities the candidate will be undertaking with the non-HE partner organisation:

(Maximum 300 words)

The candidate will collaborate with Beamish Museum staff in three areas: 1) improvements to the cataloguing, storage, and accessibility of the Daisy Edis Archive, which comprises c. 600 photographic prints and related material; 2) creation of an information pack for Beamish volunteers, summarizing the research findings; and 3) development of at least one public engagement activity arising out of the research, either for the 1900s Town (where the reconstructed Edis Studio is located) or the 1950s Town (perhaps with a focus on the lives of professional women and women business-owners at this time), or for both sites if time and resources permit.

These collaborative outcomes represent work the candidate can undertake both as part of the research process (1) and as a summative result (2), helping to ensure effective knowledge transfer and mutual benefit for the candidate and Beamish Museum.

The exact form(s) of public engagement activity (3) will emerge through discussions with Beamish Museum and will depend on the candidate's own interests and skills, as well as the results of the doctoral research. The engagement may be a one-off event on site, an outreach activity that can be replicated widely, or a longer-term intervention in Beamish's existing interpretation. Transformative innovation in the existing Edis Studio in the 1900s Town is one exciting possible outcome; the museum is looking to push the interpretative techniques it uses to tell Northeast stories through new lenses such as gender and empire. Currently this work is focussed around exploring museum theatre and scenario-based activity as methods for telling more complex and contested histories. Another option would be developing new interpretation focussed on the education, careers, and lives of women in the 1950s Town or between the two areas of the museum, using Daisy Edis as a historical example.

SECTION 3: SUPERVISION AND EXTERNAL ADVISORS

Primary (or Co-) Supervisor: Prof. Christina Riggs, Chair in the History of Visual Culture

School or Department:	History	Email Address:	christina.j.riggs@durham.ac.uk
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Secondary (or Co-) Supervisor: Prof. Julie-Marie Strange, Chair in Modern British History

School or Department:	History	Email Address:	julie-marie.strange@durham.ac.uk
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Name of the Advisor based at the Non-HE Partner Organisation: Ms Rosie Nichols, Curator of Social History, and Dan Hudachek, Head of Collections

Organisation/Institution:	Beamish Museum	Email Address:	rosienichols@beamish.org.uk
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Organisation/Institution:	Beamish Museum	Email Address:	danhudachek@beamish.org.uk
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Name of Additional Internal or External Advisors or Academic Supervisors, if any:

Organisation/Institution:		Email Address:	
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Explain how the expertise of the supervisory team and external advisor(s) will allow them to support the proposed project and the selected candidate:

(Maximum 500 words)

The supervisory team bring complementary expertise, knowledge, and skills to the project, and a commitment to its success.

The primary supervisor, Christina Riggs, is one of the only photography scholars based in a history department in the UK. Her research on photography and the 1920s Tutankhamun excavation broke new ground in considering the role of photographic and archival practices in historical interpretation. She is currently writing about the impact of historic photographs on public imaginations of the past, including the use of enlargements in museum displays and the prevalence of digital modifications such as colourization and ‘zoom’. Since joining Durham in 2019, Riggs has been developing new research on photography, local industries, and imperial connections between Northeast England and the Middle East. She is co-supervisor of a current Northern Bridge CDA with the British School at Rome, focused on a photographic archive there, and has supervised or co-supervised six PhDs to completion. Riggs is the author of eight monographs and has extensive public engagement experience (media appearances, exhibit curation, and writing for the general public). She began her as a museum curator and education officer. Her research has been supported by the AHRC, the British Academy, the Leverhulme Trust, and All Souls College, Oxford.

The secondary supervisor, Julie-Marie Strange, is a historian of modern Britain, with a focus on working-class life in the 19th and early 20th centuries. She has collaborated with Beamish on an outreach project called ‘Global Beamish’, and she is supervising a current Northern Bridge CDA held with Beamish, investigating the role of nostalgia in historical interpretation. She is also supervising, or has supervised, research projects on Black British history in Northeast England and the development of coal-mining in the region in the early-to-mid 19th century. Like Christina, Julie-Marie has curated or contributed to a number of museum exhibitions and has a strong track record of impact and public engagement. She has supervised 20 PhDs to completion and has managed large AHRC grant projects; most recently, she has held a Major Research Fellowship from the Leverhulme Trust.

At Beamish, two lead advisors will collaborate to cover the project’s twin scope of archive-based research and public engagement: Curator of Social History, Rosie Nichols, and Head of Collections, Dan Hudachek. Rosie oversees much of the museum’s social history engagement, with a remit covering interpretation, research, and aspects of acquisitions and documentation. She was a key contributor to developing the current interpretation of the Edis Studio and has been part of the development and opening of 15 major exhibits at Beamish. She is currently looking at refocussing interpretive storytelling in order to reflect current thinking around diverse and hidden (or under-represented) histories. Dan oversees collections management across the entire museum, including documentation, storage, conservation, and digitization. He has overseen significant collections-centred projects at Beamish, including database migration to the new CMS (Collections Management System) and large-scale collection audits (repackaging and documenting 150,000 social history objects). With a background in theatrical design, he is closely involved in creating new exhibits as well.

SECTION 4: RESEARCH ENVIRONMENT

Please provide details about the research environment the selected candidate will be joining and its suitability:

(Maximum 500 words)

With its emphasis on class, gender, and empire, and its collaborative partnership with Beamish Museum, this project on Daisy Edis and the Edis Studio fits strategic priorities identified by Durham University for Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion. The project will further develop the university's links with the local community and regional heritage organizations, as set out in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities' Creativity and Culture Strategy.

The Department of History at Durham University is one of the top-ranked history departments in the United Kingdom, with a commitment to research that spans geographic and temporal boundaries and incorporates a range of methodologies, including visual culture and oral history. It has recently expanded and refurbished its office, teaching, and communal spaces in the historic centre of Durham. PGR students have access to shared office space within the department buildings, as well as being able to request study space in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities postgraduate centre and the Bill Bryson Library. Some of the research for this project will take place in archives held in Special Collections at Palace Green Library, which is also equipped with an open-shelf local history collection that will be useful for the project.

The History department has a thriving postgraduate community, with regular PGR reading groups organized and attended by members of academic staff. At least two department-wide seminars (or similar events) take place each term, and subject-specific research groups – including one with a focus on the Northeast of England, another on Modern British History – meet at least once per term to discuss work-in-progress or hear an invited speaker. PGR students have access to a range of academic and professional skills training through the Durham Centre for Academic Development and the Durham University Excellence in Learning and Teaching Award (DELTA); paid teaching experience is available (if wished), depending on a candidate's academic progress and the department's undergraduate timetable each year.

In addition, the Centre for Visual Arts and Culture (CVAC) is an interdisciplinary research centre that hosts seminars, archive and museum visits, conferences, discussion groups, and training sessions on all aspect of visual arts and culture, material culture, digital and traditional media, and museum and heritage studies. The CVAC postgraduate committee has created a welcoming environment for taught MA and postgraduate research students, with dedicated reading groups, social activities, and an annual Summer School organized by postgraduates themselves.

Durham's shortlisting for the UK's City of Culture 2025 strengthened collaborations between the university and several local arts and heritage organizations, including Beamish, The Story (the new home of the county records office, opening in 2024), and Redhills (historic headquarters of the Durham Miners' Association, currently undergoing an HLF-funded refurbishment). The candidate will thus find a stimulating research environment not only within Durham University and other Northern Bridge institutions, but also throughout the city and region served by the Edis photographic studio for some 70 years.



RECRUITMENT INFORMATION

In the event that your project is successful it will be advertised on the Northern Bridge Consortium website to aid recruitment:
<http://www.northernbridge.ac.uk/applyforstudentship/cda/>

Please therefore complete the following Applicant Criteria so that advertising can begin immediately following the outcome of the competition:

<i>For further information about this Collaborative Doctoral Award and to submit an Expression of Interest, please contact:</i>	
Lead Supervisor (or Alternative Contact):	Prof. Christina Riggs
Email:	christina.j.riggs@durham.ac.uk
Expressions of Interest must be received no later than:	31 January 2024
Expressions of Interest must take the following format:	
<p>1) a short CV (two pages of A4)</p> <p>2) a personal statement (one to <i>maximum</i> two pages of A4) about your interest in this PhD project; you may wish to indicate what experience and skills you would bring to the project and how it fits with your future plans</p> <p>3) the names and contact details of two referees who can speak to your academic or professional experience</p>	
Interviews for shortlisted candidates are expected to take place:	Week commencing 19 February 2024

APPLICANT CRITERIA		
<i>Candidates must also meet the criteria for acceptance on a doctoral programme as set out by the host institution's Postgraduate Admissions Service. The successful candidate will be required to submit a postgraduate application to their host institution following notification that they are to be awarded a conditional CDA studentship, and meet the conditions of the offer of a place on the doctoral programme.</i>		
Education and Professional Qualifications	Essential Criteria	A good Master's degree in History or a cognate subject, such as Art History, Visual Culture, Heritage Studies, or Museum Studies
	Desirable Criteria	Previous studies in photographic history and/or the history of North East England

Research and Impact Experience and Training	Essential Criteria	Demonstrable ability to produce concise, well-written reports
	Desirable Criteria	Evidence of interest in the museum, heritage, or archives sector
Professional Practice and Job-related Experience	Essential Criteria	Ability to manage time effectively and work towards deadlines. Evidence of excellent presentation skills, written and oral.
	Desirable Criteria	Experience of working in museums, archives, or the heritage sector; experience of working with photographic materials
Interpersonal Skills	Essential Criteria	Evidence of successful team working; evidence of excellent interpersonal skills and ability to communicate in a clear and accessible way to diverse audiences.
	Desirable Criteria	
Other Factors	Essential Criteria	The project will require extensive time based in North East England, with access to Beamish Museum and Durham
	Desirable Criteria	