

The Metallurgist, the Grandson, and a Micrograph Mystery

Chance discovery lifts lid on first annual RMS imaging competition

Owen Morton

Rummaging through an old box of his late grandfather's photos, Dan Harris came across a series of puzzling images which stirred his curiosity. As he held the collection of black-and-white stills in his hand, he remembered his grandfather Henry had been no stranger to microscopes during his career as a metallurgist. Perhaps these images had something to do with his work?

"My grandfather passed away 11 years ago when I was just a teenager", said Dan, "and I didn't actually know an awful lot about him and his work - other than that he was a metallurgist and was into photography. He never spoke much about this part of his life, so this presented a bit of a mystery that I wanted to get to the bottom of."

The trail might immediately have run cold, had it not been for an accompanying document which pointed Dan in the direction of the RMS.

Dan, who lives in North London, said: "The photographs were in this little, wax paper packet alongside an invitation letter to the micro '58 image competition, and I started putting two and two together."

The congress series dubbed 'micro' was, for several decades, the flagship RMS event and the forerunner of today's biennial 'mmc'. The very first 'micro' in 1958, was, however, purely a micrograph exhibition, with no trade or formal conference element. If Dan's newly discovered images were indeed of the microscopical variety, it seemed highly likely he was looking at his grandfather's submissions to that inaugural event – and therefore a piece of genuine RMS history.

The images themselves are unfortunately without accompanying captions, making specific descriptions



Henry Harris as a young man.

very difficult. However, micrographs they most certainly are – depicting the microstructures of various alloys, following different heat treatments. There is also a macro-image of a rivet.

Unfortunately, a search of the RMS archive at its



Henry hard at work in the laboratory.

Oxford offices turned up precious little in direct relation to micro '58, and staff attempts to track down the names of the entrants and winners have drawn a blank.

However, Dan's own online research uncovered a contemporary newspaper advert for the event, which was billed as 'An Exhibition of Photography with the Microscope' (pictured p34). The advert confirms it took place at the Polytechnic Regent Street (now Westminster University), between the 23rd and 30th of July 1958.



Figure 1 (and 2, above right). Micrographs belonging to Henry Harris, discovered by his grandson Dan.

In prose which more than hints at the passage of 61 years, The Royal Microscopical Society "extends a cordial invitation to all photomicrographic workers to participate in this exhibition of photomicrographs, the first of what will become, they trust, an annual function." It states that "all exhibits, apart from colour transparencies, should be mounted on white card, 20in by 16in."

The advert also refers to R. Settingington, Hon Sec, as the contact for entries. Rodney Settingington, or 'Sett', as he was affectionately known to his friends and colleagues at Carl Zeiss, was a hugely prominent RMS figure, who not only organised the inaugural 1958 exhibition, but continued to be involved on the organising committee for the decades that followed.

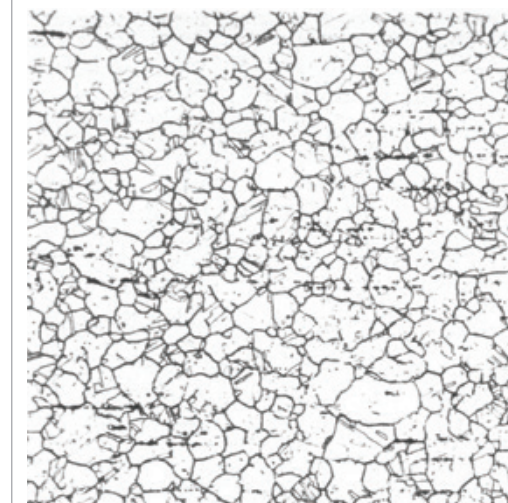


Figure 2.

But who actually won the first annual RMS imaging competition? And could any of the entrants be out there reading this article? A young microscopist in 1958 might now be in his or her mid-eighties, so it's quite feasible that a number of people – possibly even RMS members – could shed some 'first-hand' light on the event. If so, we'd certainly like to hear from them!

One man who knows a thing or two about past RMS imaging competitions is John Hutchison, who has not only become a familiar face on the judging

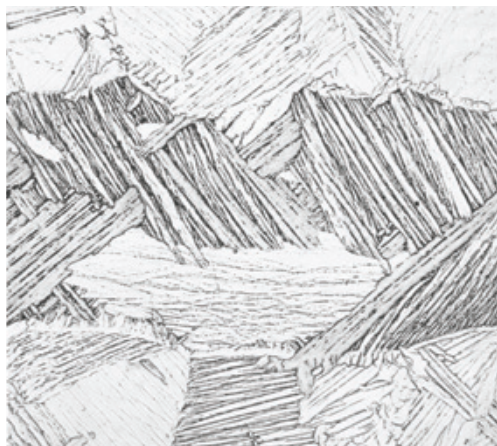


Figure 3 (and 4-6). Further micrographs from the bundle linked to Micro '58.

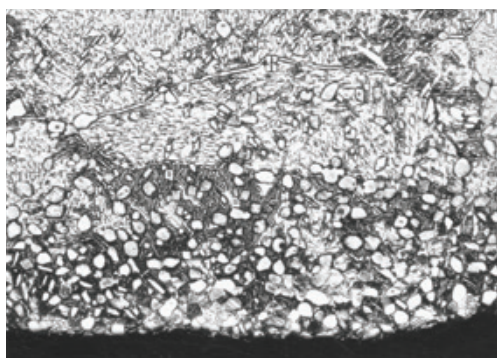


Figure 4.

panel in recent years, but also scooped first prize as a young entrant in the 1974 contest.

John said: "I certainly remember the era when Rodney Setterington was involved, but I had no connection with the imaging competition prior to the 1970s, and the earliest years of the event are a bit before my time. I would certainly not be surprised, however, if micro '58 rings a bell for a few **infocus** readers of a certain vintage."

Commenting on the newly-discovered micrographs, he said: "Given the context in which they were found – alongside the invitation – I have no doubt that they were either submitted, or at the very least, intended to be submitted for the exhibition. All things considered, I think we can say it's highly likely that some of these images would have been on display at the Polytechnic Regent Street, where it all began in 1958."

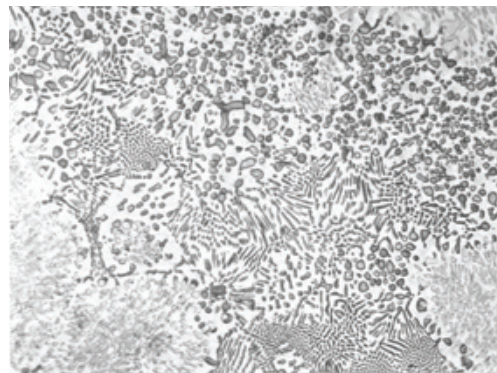


Figure 5.

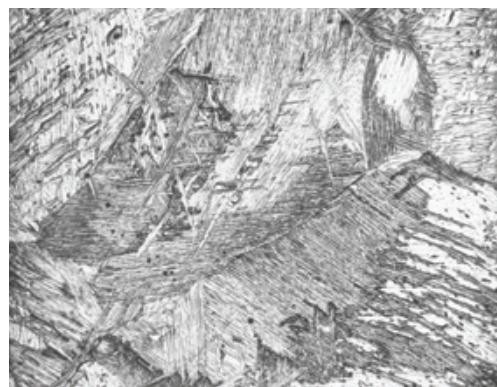


Figure 6.

And what of the man whose forgotten micrographs have reignited interest in the birth of the Society's Imaging Competition? From what Dan does know of his grandfather's early career, Henry Harris was among a group of 1940s military engineers boosting the Allied war effort with their research on the strengthening of metals. He later worked for many years as a metallurgist for aircraft manufacturer de Havilland. Whether or not Henry's micrographs relate specifically to these roles, for Dan, they do at least offer some tangible insight into his grandfather's professional expertise.

Dan, who works for the General Medical Council, said: "He never really spoke much about his work during or after the war, and later on in his life he went into general management for a couple of different companies.

"Coincidentally – or not – I seem to have adopted

Royal Microscopical Society
Tavistock House South
Tavistock Square
London, W.C.1

MICRO 58

An exhibition of photography with the microscope

We have pleasure in enclosing herewith the forms of entry for the above exhibition in the hope that you have some work you will wish to submit. No restriction has been placed on the subject or the technique used beyond that inferred by the widest interpretation of the word 'Photomicrography' and it is hoped that we shall have examples of work in all possible categories including X-ray, diffraction and field emission in addition to visual, ultra-violet and electron microscopy.

For reasons of uniformity the committee have agreed that all prints submitted should be mounted on white card, 20 in. high by 16 in. wide. This format may include more than one print provided that all those mounted together form part of a logical series. A caption should also be included and should give the title of the exhibit, the magnification and the exhibitor's name. For colour transparencies, for which standard 14 in. by 17 in. viewing boxes will be available, the caption should be submitted on a separate label, preferably adhesive, to be affixed to the mask of the viewing box.

The abstract, for inclusion in the catalogue, should amplify the bare detail given on the exhibit mount and should, if possible, be phrased in popular terms so that the layman can appreciate how and why the picture was taken. It should not exceed 50 words in length and only those reaching the Society by April 30th, 1958, can be assured of inclusion in the catalogue. The exhibit itself should preferably accompany the entry form, but can be accepted up to June 20th, 1958.

All exhibitors will receive a copy of the catalogue and are invited to attend the exhibition. The opening day has been reserved for exhibitors and fellows of the Society and this, therefore, is the occasion when workers in allied fields are most likely to be present. A lounge will be available for informal discussion.

The Society, in sponsoring this exhibition, is endeavouring to establish an annual forum for the benefit of all photomicrographic workers and this exhibition, the first, must therefore be, to some extent, exploratory. We hope that you will participate by entering and by attending the exhibition and you are cordially invited to submit any criticisms or suggestion which the committee can consider for future occasions.

All correspondence in connection with the exhibition should be addressed to:—

The Hon. Secretary, Micro 58,
 Royal Microscopical Society,
 Tavistock House South,
 Tavistock Square,
 London, W.C.1.

Invitation: This document was discovered by Dan Harris, alongside the micrographs belonging to his grandfather.

an Ordinary National Certificate.

Candidates must possess, or expect shortly to possess, the entrance qualifications required by the college authorities and, in the case of candidates who are still at school, should normally have reached G.C.E. ('O' level) standard in appropriate subjects (e.g., English Language, Mathematics and Science).

Application forms, which should be returned not later than May 31st, are available from the Education Office, The Cotton Board, Royal Exchange, 6th Floor, Manchester, 2.

MICRO 58. AN EXHIBITION OF PHOTOGRAPHY WITH THE MICROSCOPE. THE POLYTECHNIC, REGENT STREET, LONDON, W.1. JULY 23rd-30th 1958

The Royal Microscopical Society extends a cordial invitation to all photomicrographic workers to participate in this exhibition of photomicrographs, the first of what will become, they trust, an annual function. Series of micrographs, a coherent résumé of a study of a particular problem, or related research exhibits will be acceptable.

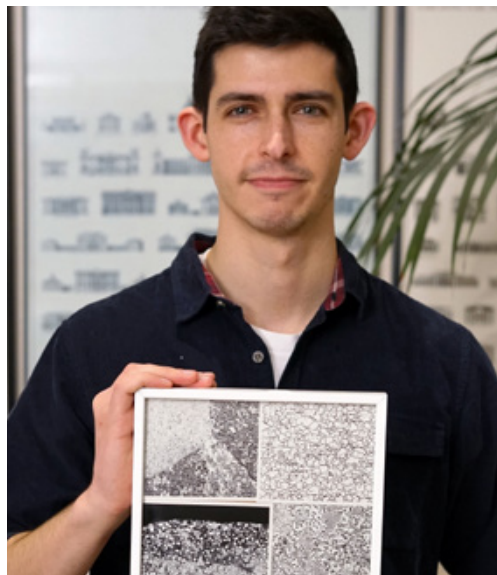
Admission on the first day will be reserved for exhibitors, fellows of the Society and the Press, but thereafter the exhibition will be open to all and will be publicised in an effort to attract the greatest possible number of visitors.

A printed programme will be published and the title, authorship and a 50-word abstract of the exhibit should be submitted to the Society before April 30th to ensure inclusion. Exhibits, however, can be accepted up to June 20th.

All exhibits, apart from colour transparencies, should be mounted on white card, 20 in. by 16 in., which area may include one or more pictures with suitable captions.

Further information and entry forms may be obtained from R. Settingington, Hon. Sec., Micro 58, Royal Microscopical Society, Tavistock House South, Tavistock Square, London W.C.1.

Dan's research led to the discovery of this newspaper advert for Micro '58.



Dan Harris.

some of his interests; not exactly in microscopy, but close-up photography of my own. I'm interested in close-up architectural features – particularly buildings in the south of France, which was also a region my grandfather was obsessed with, and where he owned an apartment."

And it's this creative streak that has given Dan an idea for an art-meets-science project inspired by Henry's images.

He said: "What I'd really like to do is to recreate, as far as possible, these micrographs using today's state-of-the-art equipment, to demonstrate how far technology has come since 1958 and present it as a piece of 'cross-generational' artwork. I'm also still keen to find out anything more about the imaging competition or my grandfather's images, as it would help me feel more connected to my family's past."

If any readers would like to offer help or advice to Dan regarding his micrograph 'recreation' project, or can offer any information about the micro '58 Imaging Competition, or the micrographs themselves, please contact Dan at daniel.alexander.harris@gmail.com

Owen Morton

DEBEN

IN-SITU
SEM XRM XRD AFM OPTICAL
EBSD BEAMLINE



COMPRESSION
BENDING **TENSILE**
TORSION
HEATING **COOLING**



E-BEAM
INSTRUMENTATION



BEAM BLANKING **PELTIER**
CHAMBERSCOPIES
COOLING **HEATING**
STAGE AUTOMATION



DETECTORS
SEM TEM



CATHODOLUMINESCENCE
PCD **STEM**
TEM CAMERAS
EBIC **BSE**

