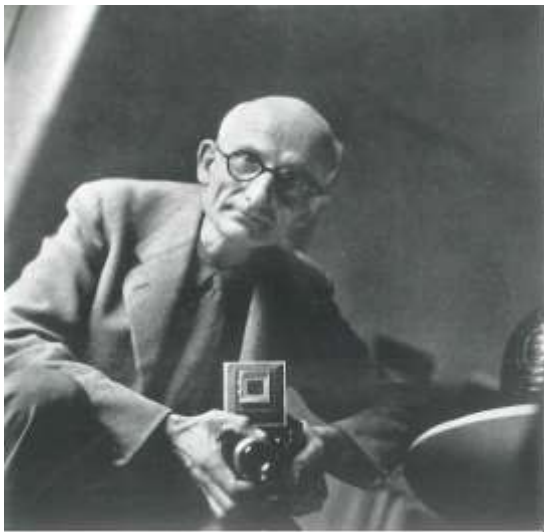


Hugo van Wadenoyen (1892 – 1959)

Hugo van Wadenoyen, who worked as a photographer in Cheltenham between 1933 and his death in 1959, is regarded as a pioneer of modern landscape photography. Both The Wilson, Cheltenham's art gallery and museum, and Cheltenham Library's Local and Family History collection have good examples of his work, including many historic images of Cheltenham during the 1930s and 1940s.



Hugo's life



Hugo was born in Holland, but moved with his family to Barry in South Wales in about 1900. His father, a keen amateur photographer, opened a photographic studio in Cardiff in about 1911, where he was soon joined by Hugo, who went on to become a Fellow of the Royal Photographic Society in 1919.

By 1923, Hugo was a regular visitor to Whiteway, between Cheltenham and Stroud, where his brother Jakob had a 'holiday home' in a converted railway carriage, and where Hugo later built himself a house out of asbestos sheeting.

Self-portrait in a Mirror

No longer working for his father, Hugo joined H. J. Whitlock & Sons in 1926, who had a chain of photographic studios across the country. In 1933, however, he had decided to set up his own business in Cheltenham, and three years later opened 'Studio Hugo' at 79 Promenade, where he also lived when he was not at Whiteway. The house, which became part of the Municipal Offices in 1956, now has a Cheltenham Civic Society blue plaque commemorating Hugo's time there.



Cheltenham Promenade, 1935

In 1956, Hugo moved his studio to 34 Rodney Road, but spent much of his time at Whiteway, as his health and eyesight deteriorated. He died in Cheltenham General Hospital on 1 March 1959, aged 67.

Hugo's photographs

Hugo's photographs fall into two major areas – portraits and landscapes, in both of which he was something of a pioneer, and on both of which he wrote books for the Focal Press, namely *Photographing People* (1939) and *Wayside Snapshots* (1947). He also contributed to the Focal Press's Photo Guide series, and

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his work influenced many contemporary photographers.

Portraits: A major part of Hugo's commercial work involved taking portraits of paying clients and their families, either at his studio or in their own homes; his photographic portraits, particularly of children, are characterised by their relaxed informality. Hugo also took many photographs of his friends and associates, including Whiteway residents and contemporary artists and craftsmen.

Landscapes: Hugo's early landscape photographs followed a traditional 'pictorialist' approach, in which the photograph was intended to resemble an engraving or impressionist painting in black and white, using 'soft focus' or 'touching up' by hand to create the desired image. Hugo later rejected this approach in favour of a more direct 'photo realism', in which he let the camera, which he once described as 'an extension of the eye', speak for itself and record exactly what it saw. This resulted in many fine, almost abstract, photographs, including his evocative views of Cheltenham and the Cotswolds.



Belgrave House, Imperial Square, about 1950

To find out more about the Wilson collection and archives held by the museum contact: The Collections Manager, The Wilson, Cheltenham's art gallery and museum, Clarence Street, Cheltenham GL50 3JT
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Visit our website: <http://www.cheltenhammuseum.org.uk/>