Explanation of the numbering system used by the GWW and Co. and dating of images

Issues surrounding the dating of GWW and Co. images:

- There are no business papers for GWW & CO. therefore there is no definitive list to accurately date images.
- Originally images would have been numbered consecutively and in chronological order, however the system is not straight forward, even at the beginning of the company.
- Each glass plate negative size (Stereoscopic, Imperial, and Cabinet) had a separate numbering system. So a stereo plate could be numbered 500 and show a view of a church but a cabinet plate could be numbered 500 and be a view of something completely different.
- When the company introduced dry gelatine plates the numbering system for all of the types of plate size were given the same cataloguing number, superseding the previous system.
- Popular views were often re-photographed to keep the image up-to-date, but the image retained its original number, so two plates with the same number can show the view of a location from different years, often decades apart.
- Some early plates were cut down to create different print sizes, the plate was then given a new number, so the same exact view can exist with two different numbers.

Help dating images and general guidance:

- A small amount of images captured by staff photographers were listed at Stationers Hall in London and these images have their dates listed on their catalogue records.
- In Roger Taylor’s publication ‘George Washington Wilson, artist and photographer (1823 – 1893) appendix 1 and 2 provide a list of some images and their potential dates.
- 44 Stereoscopic view were first listed by GWW in 1856
- The first series of Stereoscopic views were introduced in 1858/9
- The first cabinet views were introduced in 1861
- The first album views were introduced in 1863
- The first carte-de-visite views were introduced in 1868
- The first imperial views were introduced in 1875

Locations

- Plates numbered 0 – 15,000 are usually of general views
- Plates numbered in the 20,000s are usually of England
- Plates numbered in the 30,000s are usually of Australia
- Plates numbered in the 40,000s are usually of South Africa
- Plates numbered in the 60,000s are usually of Gibraltar

Rough Dating system

- Plates numbered 2000 – 6000 are usually from the early to mid-1880s
- Plates numbered 7000 – 8000 are usually from the mid-1880s
- Plates numbered in the 9000s or the 20,000s are from the late 1890s
- Plates numbered 10,000 – 13,000 are usually later than 1890s
- Plates numbered 14,000 – 15,000 are usually c.1900 – 1907
- Plates numbered in the 21,000 are usually c. 1900.