



THE SOUTHERN COUNTIES PHOTOGRAPHIC FEDERATION NEWSLETTER - JUNE 2022

Welcome to June's newsletter. This month we welcomed ten new judges to our list and I have taken the opportunity to ask Ken Scott, our judging advisor a few questions about judging. We are always looking for judges and Ken runs courses every year. If you'd be interested in attending a course to learn more, then please email Ken directly. His details can be found under Judges on the Southern Counties Web Site.

I am also delighted this month to bring you the results of the latest PAGB Inter Federation Competition.

We did extremely well, in all cases our average mark for the top scoring fifteen images was above 13.

In the colour print competition, two of our images John Ring CPAGB from Gosport and Keven Sandall from Southampton received top scores for their images Basilica and Girl on a Train respectively, with Basilica being one of the ones chosen for the exhibition. A further 7 images received a score of 14.

In the Nature competition, both Leena Roy with Hawksbill Turtle and Fergus Cowhig with Willet with Food, scored not only 15, but won PAGB ribbons - congratulations both of you. A further four images scored 14.

In the Mono section we scored seven 14s.



Basilica by John Ring CPAGB, Gosport



Girl on a Train by Kev Sandall, Southampton

All images scoring 14 and above were accepted and six of our images are going to form part of the travelling exhibition.

I am extremely proud of this result and thank you to all the members of the selection committee, as well as the clubs that kindly came to the rescue and submitted prints for selection, particular thanks to Winchester and Yateley who really went above and beyond. It was a super collection of images and I really hope that we see more of these prints soon. I will be collecting all the prints from Wales on 4th July, Covid permitting and will contact clubs about return of their prints shortly after. All clubs, who submitted images will be notified of their individual results in the near future. There is not space to show all the images in this newsletter, but I have tried to include the top entries in each class.

Inter-Federation Colour Print Competition 2022

9th SCPF - Southern Counties Photographic Federation Total mark 206.00 Average 13.733

Exhibited– John Ring CPAGB with Basilica

Inter-Federation Mono Print Competition 2022

7th SCPF - Southern Counties Photographic Federation Total mark 201.00 Average 13.400

Exhibited – Tony Cowburn from Winchester – Umbrella Day.

Inter-Federation Nature Print Competition 2022

5th SCPF - Southern Counties Photographic Federation Total mark 200.00 Average 13.333

Exhibited– Leena Roy – Hawksbill Turtle,

Fergus Cowhig - Eye to Eye Mouthful,

Jim Munday – Cuckoo Landing,

Fergus Cowhig – Willet with food.



Umbrella Day by Tony Cowburn ARPS BPE 1*, Winchester



Willet with food by Fergus Cohig ARPS AFIAP BPE*, New Forest

PAGB Ribbon -
Willet with Food
Fergus Cowhig DPAGB
New Forest Camera Club

PAGB Ribbon -
Hawksbill Turtle
Leena Roy
Basingstoke Camera Club



Hawksbill Turtle by Leena Roy, Basingstoke



SOUTHERN COUNTIES PHOTOGRAPHIC FEDERATION

53rd Annual Exhibition 2023

Young Gallery,
Market Place, Salisbury SP1 1BL
during January 2023



"Splash!" by Colin Griffiths, Jersey Photographic Club

FREE ENTRY

Viewing Times

Monday 10am - 7pm

Tuesday and Friday 9am - 7pm

Wednesday and Thursday 9am - 5pm

Saturday 9am - 5pm

Registration for the 2023 Exhibition is now OPEN!

Clubs are reminded that due to limited space, only 35 Clubs can exhibit prints although there are no limits to the number of PDI entries. Please register as soon as possible to reserve your place.
<https://southerncountiespf.org.uk/exhibition/scpf-exhibition-registration/>

JUDGING SPECIAL

everything you wanted to know about judging but were afraid to ask.

This month Ken Scott has agreed to talk to me about judging. Ken has led our judging training since 2011. It is widely considered to be some of the best in the country and this month we are delighted to welcome ten new Level 1 judges to our list and there have also been some changes to other levels, but more details of that later.

Hi Ken, thanks for agreeing to talk to me this month about judging. We have ten new judges who have just completed your latest course and I understand that there are six not far behind. Judging is an interesting topic and having been around a number of clubs this year, I have seen a variety of different approaches. I know that you often get questions from members and are going to cover some of them, but could I start please with some of my own?

Go for it.

Can you really judge art?

Great question and a tough to answer straight. Yes you can, and people do, all the time, but mostly not with a positive intent!

Let's look at the words. Being 'judgemental' is often seen as rather negative, so I am trying to use the term 'judge' less and less. Most of what I do when appraising club images is to coach and to give a critique. Judging only happens when I award a mark or choose a winner, and all club photographers could do those things. So the skill and value we bring (hopefully) is in the 'coaching' critique, which encourages every photographer to be their best own artist.

Everyone has their own definitions for what art is. In my mind the moment we start to apply rules or notional standards to appreciating art then we encourage only conformity.

That is why in our appraisal methodology we have separated Technical, Craft and Expressive Quality (EQ) considerations. Technical and Craft are to a large extent objective, but EQ is highly subjective – what we see in an image, how we respond is a very personal thing. EQ has the most weight because, after all technical and craft matters have been mastered, there is nothing left but what the image has to say.

Great art has something to say.

The Turner Prize short list has recently been announced, I know it's not photography, but which of the four, would you like to see at this stage come away with the award?

Impossible to answer in a cursory way. Art is there to be experienced and I haven't experienced the works as the artist intended them, nor have I considered the artists' statements – which could influence the way I feel about it. To assess them now would be like choosing a Print winner from a low-res PDI.

The artists are also nominated for installations rather than single works – something I'd like to see much more of in club photography, incidentally.

Why do judges refer to photographers as authors not artists?

I wish we wouldn't. We are photographers, or photographic artists.

Do you have to be an amazing photographer to be a judge?

Not at all. Many world-class sports coaches were not stellar players, and most talented food writers are not Michelin-star chefs. Photography critique requires an entirely different set of skills to photography itself, though a sound understanding of photography and a well-grounded confidence in our own work is helpful.

Do you have to have distinctions, or awards?

No, though it can help with credibility in the eyes of some. It is far more important to have the right attitudes and a good way with words. We have four Core Qualities that we teach

our appraisers: Respect, Empathy, Congruence and Motivation. With the foundation of good photography knowledge, these attitudes ensure that we say what we say in the right way.

What would you say to someone like me, who knows what they like, but would struggle to talk for any length of time about the good and bad points?

I think we all know what we like when we see it. But that is not enough when we offer critique. The trick is to say why a photograph 'works' or not, in a way that helps both the photographer and the audience.

We can all develop this skill.

Don't just love it or dismiss it. Consider what the image is about and what it is saying to you, and if that might be what the photographer intended; ask yourself how you feel about the photograph and why; imagine what role would you be playing if you stepped into the image; and look at whether the EQ is enhanced or hindered by craft and technical quality?

We encourage appraisers to expand our appreciation by looking at images from a wide range of sources, especially online, and to think about how we would talk about them if they appeared in a club. We can also usefully develop an 'observer perspective' on our own work.

What's involved in the training, is it a lot of work?

We have a two-day training course, which we have recently adapted for online. The training is mostly practical but also involves some theory and challenging discussions.

As a new judge, are you committing to judging a certain number of events?

No. Everyone has their own life to lead, with work and family commitments. However, there's little doubt that regular practice is the only way to master this, and two or three outings per year is unlikely to be sufficient.

Is there CPD for judges?

Yes. We have a forum, which is becoming an annual event. We also support the community with newsletters and guidelines. We are moving towards making this more visible, to encourage judges to refresh and to stay current with practice.

How do I recognise a computer-generated from a real sky?

We can never know for certain. However, as an experienced outdoor photographer, I do 'know' when something doesn't look right. That something might be an imbalance of light levels or colours between ground and sky – often introduced by HDR techniques – or by ground shadows in the wrong direction.

Recognising it is very different from being able to discuss it sensitively, and there are dangers in making assumptions.

I'm personally committed to landscape being a 'naturalistic' genre, where what we see can be enhanced by the photographic process but, like nature, not changed in a fundamental way. No image presented as a 'landscape' should be permitted to have a replacement sky (imho).

I know birds have claws and ducks have webbed feet, but beyond that I'd struggle to identify breeds. If I'm faced with a bird on a gorse bush (it's got claws, I can see those) what should I say?

We can't expect to have the same expertise as a specialist nature photographer – or sports or whatever other genre. If the title doesn't give me information about a species, again I don't make assumptions or feign knowledge I don't have.

What I can do is to comment on the image from all the perspectives we've talked about: technical and craft (as pertaining to Nature as a genre), EQ, and the 'nature story' – what is the image telling me about this animal's behaviour and habitat.

The Nature 'definitions' put more weight on the nature story than on other pictorial considerations, and I tend to use these to guide me in Open classes too.

I might also say that it would be helpful to know the species from the title ...

Many clubs don't have members who have undergone the training, what would you say to them?

'Judging' isn't for everyone, but for me it is a rewarding way to give something back to the club community. And we always need new people coming through.

Our training is designed to be a safe environment, and we can always arrange a presentation or taster for people interested and for clubs more generally. I do think club members benefit from understanding more about it.

If not going out on the circuit, club photographers often critique each other's work. I am also developing training for clubs that will enable members to give one-to-one and small-group critique to each other in a positive, 'coaching' style. It will also help photographers to receive critique or feedback in a healthy way – because not all feedback is helpful.

Mobile phones v DSLR? – I've been asked whether images from them should only be allowed in specific competitions – what do you think?

Personally speaking, the image is all that matters. A great picture is a great picture, whatever camera it was made with.

I'm a little cautious about preset effects available in phones, but then most compacts have an array of those too.

Is there any guidance on titles? Has the emphasis on the relevance of a title of a photograph in camera club competitions changed?

There isn't, though perhaps there should be. A title can guide the viewer as to the photographer's intention but can also distract – there is no doubt that the title does influence in some unconscious way how I see the image.

The guidance I offer is this: if the title correlates quickly in my mind with the image I see, then the title is fine. If it doesn't then I have a problem – is it a poor title, do I not get it, or does the image simply not well-illustrate the idea?

Irrespective of title, my job is still to appraise the image and to make my own interpretation. Maybe there is scope for us to rethink the use of titles in club images, where we tend to have a 'one size fits all genres approach'. Pictorial images, it could be argued, should be able to stand alone with No Title. Whereas journalistic images often acquire hugely more power from a fuller caption.

Could we allow a short statement from the photographer about their intent for an image? To help us to appraise against that rather than against notional standards?



Food for thought.

With regard to this image - how about: What starts out as yearning, soon becomes manipulated into a manifesto of futility, leaving only a sense of chaos and the unlikelihood of a new beginning?

Not exactly. Possibly a bit too much and too deep for a competition image. I would keep it simple. Remember: as an appraiser I have only just seen your image for the first time, and I have just over a minute to talk to you about it!

In Set Subject competitions, how should the judge deal with images they would consider to be off topic? Could clubs do more to guide photographers e.g. with a brief?

If I believe that if an image does not fit the theme

then it will score lowest, however good it might be in an open or other class.

I take the view that if the club presents an image to me, then it is eligible. I would not expect a club to present any ineligible entries, but they should not limit photographers' interpretations.

A brief can help if it is well set, broad and open to interpretation. Whether or not a club has set a brief, I always research set themes for myself in advance, so that I am prepared for any interpretations that might come my way.

One other thing: I would always advise clubs to avoid narrow, objective set themes – can you image how hard it is for us to comment on sixty images of 'Doors' or 'Brown', and how tedious that can be for the audience!

Some of my favourite set themes over the years have been 'Temptation', 'Blot on the Landscape' and 'Minimal' – challenging and open to interpretation, and hard to raid the file!

Is there a recognised source of definitions for Set Genre / Theme competitions?

Another topic for a Guideline Paper, I feel. There definitely is scope for genre definitions to help us all with a common broad understanding.

In addition to talking to Ken, I've had a chat with a couple of the new judges, about their reasons for taking the course and they both came up with some interesting reasons for deciding to take on the judging challenge this year?

Bob said, "I'm taking on the role of Competition Secretary for my club and thought it imperative to understand the role of an external Judge and the training that they're given, in order to speak knowledgeably with other club members, many of who will naturally disagree with the decision of any judge on principal!"

And Andy said, "One of the clubs I'm involved with has been a bit frustrated with their poor performance, so I was keen to understand more about the SCPF leagues and what it takes to do well in them. I researched a number of different organisations for further insight into what makes a good competition photo, including the Professional Photographers of America. I was a little surprised how hard it was to find good information. Then I came across the SCPF Judging Course.

"I decided to take on the judging course as a way to better understand how the process works and what constitutes successful photos in the SCPF leagues - with the aim of helping one of the local clubs (and me personally) perform better in the leagues."

Asked what was one thing they've picked up from the training?

They were both in agreement the importance of Expressive Quality and what it can mean across different genres was far more important, than worrying about technique and composition, etc.

Both were really clear as to the knock on effect it would have on their own photography too.

Bob said, "I feel I will be better able to critique my own efforts in line with the 70/20/10% split across the factors involved in assessing as an SCPF judge", and Andy said, "I have tended to concentrate on technical issues and now I realise that I need give more consideration to EQ and creativity generally".

So, Ken, both really positive feedback and it is lovely to feel that they have both got so much from the course isn't yet?

Absolutely and it's probably a good time to name all our new judges isn't it, and ask any clubs that haven't got all their judges in a line, so to speak, for this coming season to choose one of the list below, so they can get out there and practice.

With all new Level 1 judges, it's a great help to the advisory committee and ultimately the judges if you can complete a feedback form as soon as possible afterwards. So without

further ado, welcome to our judges list:

Gladys Perrier (Bracknell), Andrew Weatherburn (Spectrum and Prism, both Guernsey), Bob Hart (Winchester), Mike Taylor (Bishops Waltham), Colin (Joe) Bird (Midhurst), Angela Wright (South Downs), Steve McKie (Littlehampton), Ian Pratt (East Wight), Guy Turner (South Downs) and Bo Hansen (Reading)..

There have also been some changes further up the list too haven't there?

Yes, I'm delighted to say:

- Chris Dixon - Horndean is now on our list at Level 2.
- We have a new Level 2 judge Caroline Preece - Chichester.
- And Steven le Prevost - Guernsey has been upgraded to Level 3.

We have been running into a problem for SCPF Leagues 1-3 in that clubs are struggling to find judges to stand for their matches, especially as the Print league restarts. Many of our L3 judges are with clubs in those leagues. As you are aware, it is required that these divisions are assessed by a Level 3 judge, or by a Level 2 judge with prior approval.

To help in this process we are pre-approving a number of Level 2* judges for leagues 1-3. They are:

Peter Crane (Cricklade), Ashley Francis (Fordingbridge), Jason Hyde, Maria Leekblade (Lymington), Glyn Paton (Winchester), Daan Olivier (Bracknell*), Peter Orr (Winchester), Caroline Preece (Chichester), Carl Reeve (Locks Heath), Trevor Prince (Wimborne), Keven Sandall (Southampton)

This does not mean that others are precluded; just that prior approval will still be necessary. The above judges range in experience from those newly accredited to those with many years' experience; hence the leagues should be well served.



Finally. Discuss!

I agree with the words to a point. Art is what we do with what we see, in making the image but most importantly then putting it out there for others to consider it. It's not art if nobody sees it.

But we cannot make others see anything. Everyone sees uniquely.

We can only photograph what we see or conceive. If we have a quality experience with our subject matter then there is a good chance others will see and feel something in our images.

"Photography isn't about seeing, it's about feeling. If I don't have some kind of feeling for what I'm shooting, how can I expect the person who looks at it to feel anything?"

– Don McCullin

And on what we see in images themselves: "[Photographs] are mirrors: you only see in them what you already have inside you."

— Carlos Ruiz Zafón, 'The Shadow of the Wind'

[this referred originally to 'books' – it is my adaptation in brackets].

Thank you Ken, Bob Hart and Andy Weatherburn for agreeing to talk about judging. Ken, I know members often have questions about judging, and you've written a "Frequently Asked Questions" report for the website. As a first port of call where can they look for it.?

Yes, thank you Anne, some members joined us for Judging Question Time sessions recently and last year, where clubs could put your questions to the Judging Team. Some questions have been raised in this newsletter, but a comprehensive set of Q&A is available now on the website in the Judging section:

<https://southerncountiespf.org.uk/2022/06/judging-question-time-your-questions-answered/>

I say comprehensive, but I know that there may be other questions, so if any clubs have any questions about judging, please send them anytime to me. And I'd also love to hear from any member who might like to undergo judging training. It is free, it is not a commitment to judge, although we hope you will go on to do this. As we've already heard from Andy and Bob it does give all our participants a sense of what judges are looking for and I was thrilled to hear that both of them felt it had invigorated their photography, so please get in touch with me, if you're interested in learning more - judging@southerncountiespf.org.uk

Saturday 24th September 2022
at
The Millennium Memorial Hall
The Hall Way
Littleton
Winchester
Hampshire
SO22 6QL

There are a few spaces still available for the September Advisory day.

We know that there are a lot of talented photographers in our region and this is a once in seven years opportunity for you to come and meet the PAGB team who arrange the awards and have work assessed for a future adjudication, or, just come along and see the standard of work required. It promises to be a great day.

Please email:-pagb.awards@southerncountiespf.org.uk for further information or to secure a place.

This will be an in person meeting and not via zoom.

The team are very experienced and will be able to provide you with unbiased opinions on whether you meet the standard of the level of award you are considering.

Spaces for assessment are £15.00 and for observers are £8.00

IN MEMORIAM

Sadly, our final announcement this month is the death of Sheila Read FRPS. Sheila recently passed away, aged 88, in her care home in Salisbury. Sheila was a long time member of both Salisbury Photography Club and Viewfinders of Romsey. Sheila and her husband Peter moved to Salisbury in 1989 from Amersham where they were also Camera Club members. Sheila was one of our first members to receive a roll of honour from the Southern Counties Photographic Federation back in 2008 for services to her club and the federation. Sheila and Peter were well known for giving talks in the southern counties and Sheila's creative photography and ever helpful personality will, I am sure, be missed by many camera club members.

Viewfinders of Romsey Camera Club

presents

The Annual Photographic Exhibition

9th - 17th July 2022

King John's House, Romsey

www.viewfinderscameraclub.org.uk

Opening Hours:

Mon to Sat

10:00 am to 4:00 pm

Sundays

11:00 am to 4:00 pm

Admission Free



King John's House,
Church Street,
Romsey
SO51 8BT

King John's House can be accessed either through
King John's Garden or from Church Street



Lortemore Street Car Park (off Latimer Street)



Image: 'Mistle Thrush' courtesy of Viewfinders member Margaret Cooper