



THE SOUTHERN COUNTIES PHOTOGRAPHIC FEDERATION NEWSLETTER - AUGUST 2023

Welcome to the SCPF August Newsletter. This month we are very lucky to have two members sharing with us their success in recent RPS and PAGB exams - Sabine Tillie-Davidson ARPS CPAGB and Michael Palmer FRPS. I am sure you will agree with me that all these panels are breathtaking. Over to Sabine first who is going to talk about two distinctions in two months!

Two distinctions in two months.

by Sabine Tillie-Davidson CPAGB ARPS

I did not set out to attempt two distinctions in the same year! It was the competition secretary at my photography club who convinced me to try for the CPAGB distinction at the same time as I was submitting for my ARPS. And I am glad he did!



Let's begin at the start...

A little about me

I grew up in Belgium and moved to the UK in 1987 where I have lived ever since. I have always loved photography and took it up more seriously a few years before I joined Basingstoke Camera Club In 2017.

I cut my teeth on self-imposed projects such as taking a picture-a-day and a street portrait per week for a year. Creative portraiture is what I enjoy most.



I achieved my first distinction (Licentiate of the Royal Photographic Society) in 2018 on my second attempt. It taught me a lot about the technical aspects of taking good photographs, attention to detail and the importance of a coherent panel (the '11th' image).

ARPS

Soon after, I started working towards the ARPS (Associate of the Royal Photographic Society) distinction. I needed a strong project to support my 'Statement of Intent', one of the most important parts of an RPS submission at the Associate and Fellowship level.

In the run-up to Brexit, I had become a British citizen. I felt that interviewing and photographing people in a comparable situation to myself would make for a strong panel. In the end, I had to give up because I just found the interviews too distressing. So, I went back to the drawing board for a new topic.

During lockdown, I had plenty of time to think. Sitting in the garden in the sunshine, I listed everything I like to do, subjects important to me, and how I could combine those in my photography.

I had, for some time, been working on creative portraits, using friends and family as photographic models. Realising that one can make striking portraits without working with young professional models, I wrote the Statement of Intent to show what I wanted to achieve. Getting the distinction would depend on the degree to which I would fulfil these objectives:

STATEMENT OF INTENT

Society constantly pushes the narrative that beauty is reserved for the young. As a result, women become increasingly 'invisible' as they age.

With this panel of images, I aim to empower women by presenting them as confident, engaging, and beautiful without resorting to post-processing the years away. I want to challenge the notion that passing years diminish a woman's ability to look striking and gorgeous. I want to convey to the viewer a message of body positivity.

I combined my passion for portrait photography with my love of crafting and sewing, making outfits and accessories. The models are all friends who trusted me to style and photograph them in a way less often done with women 'over a certain age'.

I will exhibit this set of portraits to convince people (especially women) that the older woman still has much to offer as a photographic model.

The next stage was to design the panel. I considered both the layout and structure to ensure cohesion of my 15 prints (see opposite).

Since all the images would be portraits and the pandemic prevented me from having people come to my home studio, I used self-portraiture to do test shots of the outfits I designed and made. I considered whether the portraits would be full-length or close-up, looking left or right, etc. Creating the panel design consisting of alternating black and white backgrounds took a while. As the pandemic restrictions relaxed, I could finally photograph the models.

Once I had the material I needed, I booked a one-to-one with one of the assessors of the distinction panel which proved invaluable. There were obvious problems with my images that I just had not noticed and less obvious ones that, on reflection, also needed changing. I reprocessed 3 images, reshot one and replaced two with new images. I agonised over every little detail, the colour of mounts and whether to have another one-to-one. In the end, I just went with my gut and submitted my panel. No matter what would happen, I was proud of my work!



During the assessment, the images were closely examined by 3 assessors. The chair asked for an initial vote and 2 members of the panel were asked to make comments. The responses were objective and well-considered. Then the assessors were asked for a final vote, and I was delighted to hear that all my hard work had paid off and I had been successful!

CPAGB

Preparing for the Credit Award of the Photographic Alliance of Great Britain was a quite different process. All images are scored individually by 6 adjudicators. Whether you submit prints or PDI, the images are only displayed briefly before the scores are given, so it is important that they have an instant wow factor.

I chose my ten prints with help from a respected SCPF judge from the ones that had done well in club competitions. I had a place booked on an advisory day, but a bout of Covid prevented me from attending. However, our competition secretary kindly took my prints in my place and took notes of the advice given.

I ended up reprinting a fair few of my images to lift a shadow here or darken a highlight there.



The adjudication day arrived and initially my images scored rather low. It did not look like I was going to reach the total score of 200 needed to succeed. But after the coffee break (the beneficial effect of coffee?) I started getting higher scores and, to my great delight, I had a comfortable pass in the end.



What next?

I have worked out that I like working on longer projects. Therefore, the RPS distinctions suit me better.

I do not currently have 15 images good enough to achieve the DPAGB distinction. It will take some time... However, I am already thinking about working towards FRPS. Why? Because it is fun! Honestly! It gives me something to work towards and it makes me aim to be the absolute best that I can be.

I learn so much doing these distinctions that I can apply in all aspects of my photography. The letters after my name are a nice bonus, but it is the process of getting them that is the most rewarding!

I'm afraid, it with great sadness that I have to report the death of Alan Willis, a long serving Overton member, who passed away last week. Known locally as "Alan Kingfisher Willis", he was widely considered by many locally as the king of kingfisher photography. An ambassador for Sony cameras, he was very generous with his time and advice when it came to photographing these remarkable birds. A great friend of his was Steve Williams DPAGB, an Overton member who said in tribute,

"Last Thursday I lost a great friend in Alan Willis the king of Kingfisher photography. I met Alan through Sony as he was an ambassador for them, on my enquiry, as to which camera and lens I needed for wildlife photography. We met up and he advised me of the gear required - always Sony, and to join Overton camera club to learn how to use it.

"It would not be far off the truth that Alan's fine Kingfisher photos kept Overton near the top of the tree when it came to the Southern league competitions. The judges would all remark Overton was synonymous with great kingfisher photos; one of his won all the top honours at national level. More than this he was a great guy who would share his hides at no cost to anyone interested in seeing his beloved Arthur, a male he swore was the oldest kingfisher he knew. He named the various partners of Arthur in alphabetical order as they quite often changed yearly but Arthur was a constant. He wrote a book "The Queen of the River" which contains a collection of his beautiful photos and tells the story of Queenie, a fascinating observation of kingfisher behaviour. I was so happy to help get him the one photo he always craved - the underwater shot. It was the last tick in the box for him.

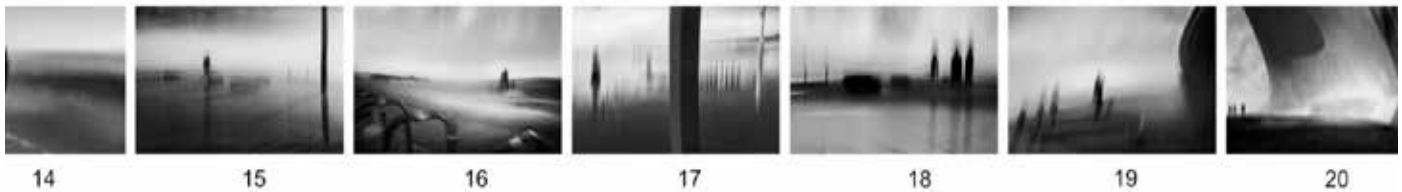
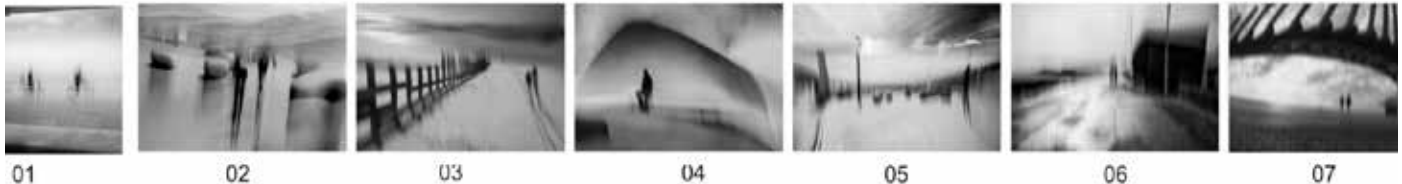
"We had further plans for him to video my kingfishers as video was the new direction he wanted to travel. As ill health prevented the arduous walk to his favourite spot on the river, mine would do nicely. Sadly our plans never came to pass as his health took a rapid turn for the worse. I shall really miss Alan and Arthur his pride and joy." Steve Williams DPAGB.

Our second successful distinction in April was Michael Palmer FRPS who was awarded a fellowship award for his outstanding contemporary panel.

FELLOWSHIP: presentation layout

Assessment date - April 27th 2023
Category - Contemporary

Michael Palmer ARPS



Michael, tell us about your journey to Fellowship

A long, long time ago in the distant world of yesteryear I, like many other Dads, had a camera to primarily record the growth and progress of their children as well as an aide memoire to places visited. I did not have the luxury of always having a mobile phone in my back pocket, just a film camera that was expensive to run!

Decades later I retired with no real interest to keep me occupied. I decided to buy a camera to take some proper photographs and not just the record shots as previously mentioned. Not knowing what I was doing, or what to buy, I deliberated long and hard in the dark and eventually decided on an entry level bridge digital camera for the princely sum of £277. It was a financial outlay that I wondered, no doubted, if I would ever be able to justify. Looking back, it wasn't a good choice but hindsight and all that...

My main passion at that time was The Blues so I packed my bags and flew to Chicago. From there I took the Amtrak City of New Orleans to, you guessed it, New Orleans for the 2012 Mardi Gras. And then back to Chicago by rental through Louisiana and Mississippi to Memphis - Route 61, the Blues Highway. I treated my camera with reverence believing that it was going to raise my photography to stratospheric heights, but I was bitterly disappointed. My pictures were mostly rubbish. Clearly, I had an awful lot to learn. The following period was an intense learning curve helped along by joining the local camera club.

At the end of that year, I visited Cuba, in particular Havana to see and photograph those fabulous fins and chrome 1950s American cars that remained there in a time warp after the withdrawal of the Americans from the country. My camera craft had improved making me very pleased with my Cuban portfolio. The photography bug had well and truly bitten.

I discovered the Royal Photographic Society and its distinctions from other members of the club and decided to have a go. As it was when I bought my first digital camera, I had no idea what I was doing but, this time, I listened to others and gained the entry level LICENTIATE (the L) distinction in 2014. I rewarded myself with a Sony A7, a grown-up's camera.

My eyes were now firmly fixed on the next level – the ASSOCIATE (the A) so armed with my new camera I started in earnest trying to produce a body of work to help me achieve that goal. After one project was rejected, quite rightly, by a highly qualified club member I opted for my backup project to present to the Society in 2016. It worked! Incidentally, the subject of that project was architectural abstractions.

Not content with the A, the ultimate prize a FELLOWSHIP (the F) was now my burning ambition. Gaining the F presented a challenge on a much higher level requiring a portfolio of 20/21 themed images showing originality, technical skill and, in the contemporary category that I fitted, creativity – complete with a Statement of Intent that defines the purpose of the work, clearly identifying its aims and objectives.

After one hopeless attempt (with a portfolio of work totally different to that of my successful panel) I wondered if I would ever find a worthy subject to have try again; fortunately, I did.

During lockdown, June 2020 to be exact, I developed a style of photography which reflected my mood and state of mind at that time. It was bleak and grey and accurately reflected just that. My camera club decided to hold a book competition in June 2021 so I put together a collection of my isolation period images, produced and entered a book entitled STAY LOCAL. Much to my surprise it won, prompting two eminent members of the club to suggest that my pictures were worthy of a Fellowship panel.

Including many of the images from that book I put together a panel and in November 2021 made my 1st attempt at the FRPS. It was, in my humble opinion, the best that I could do, but it failed and, to be honest, it deserved to partly due to being in the wrong category. After nearly a year, in which it was squirrelled away in a box, I used some of those unsuccessful images to show in the Chichester Camera Club North Mundham Exhibition. Again, the feedback from many of my peers was so positive that I decided, there and then, to try again at the Fellowship but this time in Contemporary. I made massive changes to the selection of images and corrected few minor technical issues - both perceived and obvious!

STATEMENT OF INTENT

PERIODS OF LOCKDOWN: they were not normal times, initially almost surreal.

My state of mind at that time was troubled and despondent. A mind full of anxiety and confusion made worse by living alone, trapped in enforced isolation and very disorientated. Feelings of loneliness and despair were never far away.

The worries of the coronavirus were constantly on my mind and gradually, as the situation became more serious, the colour dropped out of my now greatly shrunken world forcing me to view my surroundings in a different light.

The guidelines and elements were constantly changing unlike my mood which was steadfastly troubled and despondent. My mind had become increasingly 'darker' - this unwittingly influenced my photography which had turned bleak, experimental and 'eccentric' as portrayed in this body of work. It should be noted that the 'blurring' effect was done at the taking stage and not in post processing.

During those awful protracted periods of lockdown, I managed to walk or cycle locally most days, struggling to keep within the strict guidelines imposed on us all. People fledted by making no eye contact, cars had largely disappeared. My camera was always with me. It became my life. My salvation!

Odd thing is, I miss those strange early days of lockdown.....almost devoid of cars and people and so still!

I think that's a really powerful statement, can you tell us a little about some of your favourite images?



Panel image No.10

This resonates with me the most, the image that kick started the whole project from book to successful F panel. It also happens to be my favourite picture of the set.

We were all going through something that was in total contrast to our normal way of life, a period that was strange and threatening. Some coped with it more easily than others.

I got the impression from the woman sitting alone on the promenade wall that it was very

difficult for her. She was there for a long time, hardly moving, giving me plenty of time to take this picture. From memory there was nobody else about but she was so obviously lost in her thoughts that she did not notice me. It is a haunting image, the feeling of isolation is overwhelming.

Panel image No.6

A deserted prom with two people clearly not adhering to the 2 metres apart rule, maybe they were a married couple, who knows.

The point being we were all suspicious and wary of who and what was happening around us, who was toeing the line and who was not!





Panel image No.04

This was taken towards the end of the 1st period of lockdown, a time when we had grown weary of the threats to our health and restrictions on what we could, and could not do, the uncertainty of it all.

This lonesome chap epitomised just that and I empathised with him completely.

Can you perhaps say a few words about your technique, I'm sure the question on everyone's lips is "How"?

I am a creative photographer, striving to find something new one way or the other. Many people have asked me how these images were taken and my stock answer is always – I experiment with the capabilities and limits of my camera, with filters (often home-made),

I strive to see things differently, I did not use ICM on this project but sometimes Unintentional ICM reared its blurry head! Other than converting to B&W (although some were taken in mono) post processing including cropping etc. was kept to the very minimum to preserve the honesty and atmosphere of those horrible times.

Thankfully my hard work and perseverance paid off and I became a Fellow of the Royal Photographic Society on the 26th April 2023. It was a journey lasting approximately 3 years from conception to accomplishment – a very challenging, extremely rewarding and immensely satisfying experience.

Congratulations to both Michael and Sabine, both worthy recipients of your awards and thank you both so much for sharing your images and stories with us. They are both really inspiring.

Dicentra Demystified

At this time of year, we are aware there are changes in committee members and new competition secretaries are faced with the daunting task of using Dicentra for the first time. This year Jason is also running a "Dicentra Demystified" course on the morning of 17th September between 9.00am and 11.00am, everyone is welcome.

So if you would like to know how to use the system, where to find the information you need and ask shed loads of questions then let email president@southerncountiespf.org.uk or webmaster@southerncountiespf.org.uk and we will send out a link.



Following the Dicentra training session there will also be an opportunity for competition secretaries to have a go at running dummy league matches, so they can see how to randomise images for the judges, how to set up screens and show test images, where to find downloadable, score and hold back images and how to produce reports. And just to make it even more realistic, some of our new judging contingent have agreed to judge these dummy matches for us.

These matches will probably be scheduled over six nights in October (9th, 10th, 11th, 16th, 17th and 18th October).

There will be a further chance on the 17th September for Jason to deal with any questions you might have about the uploader.

SCPF ANNUAL EXHIBITION 2024

This is an inter-club event, open to all member clubs. The print exhibition will be held in the Young Gallery, above Salisbury Library, showcasing 35 panels of our clubs' work (six images in each) alongside a panel from our judge. We also have a television screening all the PDI entries.

The dates for 2024 are Saturday 6th January to Saturday 27th January 2024 during library opening hours. Our 54th exhibition will be opened each year at a preview evening on 5th January 2024.

This year's judge is the lovely Alan Walker MPAGB, ARPS, EFIAP, MPSA, BPE4*

There are several individual and club awards to be competed for: ·

The Herbert Dennis trophy for best colour print
The Woolston Shield for best club print entry
The Federation Trophy for best monochrome print
The Federation Shield for best club PDI entry
The Philip Conway Memorial Trophy for the best projected digital image and
The John Hodge Memorial Trophy

There is an entry fee of £15.00 for each class.

Places for the print exhibition are going fast, and are on a first come, first served basis. So please make sure to register as soon as possible.

You do not need to upload entries at the same time. Images used in either the league or Championships can also be used in the exhibition. But images used in a previous exhibition will be diallowed.

Your PDI and Print entries need to be loaded by midnight 31st October 2023 latest, and your print entries brought to the Club Reps meeting on Friday 9th November 2023 at Littleton Millennium Memorial Hall

A Digital Catalogue will be produced following the Preview Evening.



SOUTHERN COUNTIES PHOTOGRAPHIC FEDERATION
54th ANNUAL EXHIBITION
at the Young Gallery,
above the Library,
Market Place, Salisbury SP1 1BL
Saturday 6th January 2024 - Saturday 27th January 2024



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FREE ENTRY
Viewing Times
Monday 10am - 7pm
Tuesday and Friday 9am - 7pm
Wednesday and Thursday 9am - 5pm
Saturday 9am - 5pm
<https://southerncountiespf.org.uk/exhibition/>



SCPF Audio-visual Championship 2023

It is with great pleasure that we can announce that this competition will be run for the first time since 2014 when Alton CC were victorious. The Oak Leaf Salver is presented to the best club entry and there will also be certificates for the runners-up and the best individual sequences. Even if your club has only one member interested in audio-visual it is still strongly recommended that they enter.

AVs are a set of predominantly still images with an accompanying soundtrack. A limited number of third-party images, graphics and video may be used but most, if not all, of the images should be the original work the author. Up to three sequences of 2 to 5 minutes duration from different authors or co-authors may be entered by a club. Members of any fully-paid up SCPF club may enter. Entries must be received by the 1st of October. Full rules will be published shortly on the SCPF website.

As judge we are delighted to have secured the services of esteemed AV producer Martin Fry FRPS FBPE EFIAP/d2 AV-EFIAP/b APAGB.

The main event is on Sunday 22nd October 2023 at Cliddesden Millennium Village Hall RG25 2JQ, with Basingstoke CC kindly hosting. The pre-judged sequences will be shown between 2 and 5pm with a presentation by Martin who will also present the awards.

For further information email av-info@southerncountiespf.org.uk.

The July 2022 SCPF Newsletter contains a useful discussion of the genre with several tips. <https://southerncountiespf.org.uk/2022/08/july-newsletter-all-things-av/>

You might find the work of Mark Allen MPAGB/AV <https://www.youtube.com/@Almarkdotnet> or Ian Bateman FRPS MPAGB AV-AFIAP APAGB <https://www.youtube.com/@IanBateman> of interest as well as tutorial videos from Barry Beckham <https://www.youtube.com/@BarryBeckhamVideos>.

This should once again prove to be a very special championship with entertaining sequences filling the afternoon. Good luck to all the competitors.