SOUTHERN COUNTIES PHOTOGRAPHIC FEDERATION

NEWSLETTER – OCTOBER 2025

The nights are drawing in, and the new photographic season is now in full swing. Entries for this season's SCPF print and PDI leagues are now closed, and the competitions will soon be starting. We have also closed entries for the AV Championship and have seen a significant increase in entries over last year.

The deadline for entering and uploading images for the Exhibition is also looming and the cutoff is Sunday 19th October. The judging will take place in mid-November, and I plan to share the results in the next newsletter. I hope to see your club exhibiting both prints and PDIs this year!

I previously mentioned that a theme for this year is to get members (back) into printing and more clubs entering our print competitions. We are delighted to see that our "Promoting Print" workshop in November is fully subscribed, with nearly 100 wanting to attend. We intend have further print-related activities during the season and I have included an article this month on ideas your club can adopt to encourage and support print workers.

Also, in this edition of the newsletter, we celebrate two new inductions to the SCPF Roll of Honour and we meet Newbury Photography Club as they celebrate their 80th anniversary.

Stewart Lacey
President

Discovering the joy of printing

As I stated in the last newsletter, a print is by far the best way to appreciate a photographic image. A printed image can be presented in the way that the photographer intended, which includes aspects such as the choice of paper to convey the appropriate atmosphere and even the choice of mount and size of image relative to the mount.

With a projected digital image there is so much that is out of your control. Perhaps the projection is too bright, or the colour calibration of the projector is out – making the image that looked perfectly ok on your own monitor appear washed out or worse. Also, blowing up an intimate image for projection on a large screen can also change the mood and possible expose imperfections that might be hidden on a print.

With prints we can create panels and exhibition galleries, allowing us to appreciate a body of work which is so much more rewarding than a purely digital format

So, why are more club members not printing? Why do we struggle to get more clubs into print competitions?

There could be many reasons for this. Covid certainly didn't help. With lockdown, many clubs moved activities online – there was a hiatus in print competitions. When we came out of lockdown, it was difficult for some clubs to resume print competitions. Many clubs claim that they don't hold internal print competitions or enter SCPF print competitions because they have too few print workers. If there is no outlet for print workers, then how is it possible to encourage more members to get involved?

I believe that all clubs should be "doing their bit" to entice more members to print. You don't need competitions to do that – print evenings, print appraisal sessions, ad hoc galleries would be a good start.

Another obvious obstacle is "I don't own a printer". Why should we expect anyone to invest in a printer if they aren't convinced that they will get on with it? And when printer ink is more expensive by volume than Chanel No. 5 many will question the economics of getting into print. There are many very good print labs available – offering fast, efficient and quality service. I started using a print lab when my own printer started giving variable results. I could get A3 prints more cheaply than I could print them myself, with consistent results and good quality and typically a 2-day turnaround. I would usually get 10 - 15 prints done in a batch to dilute the delivery charge.

If you want to experiment with fine art papers, it will cost rather more, but you can find print labs that offer a range of alternatives. Eventually, those workers who start off using a print lab may become sufficiently enthused to invest in a printer. There are obvious benefits of greater creative control, the ability to produce and refine test prints, and the excitement of seeing your work emerge from the printer.

Of course, the print is not the end – it still needs to be mounted. This also puts some obstacles in the way. Mounting prints requires a level of skill, the right products and the right tools. And of course there is the cost consideration.

Taking the last point first, for the last few years I have mitigated the cost to club members of mount products by bulk buying 50x40cm windowless mountboard from PaperSpectrum (https://paperspectrum.co.uk/). As well as securing a discount, it also distributes the very reasonable delivery charge. Now PaperSpectrum have provided me with a code, which can be used by all club members, which gives a 10% discount on all mount and backing board and printer paper. This code is PSCC10.

The next challenge is to cut windows in the mountboard. Our club is lucky enough to own 2 mount cutters, which can be borrowed FoC by any member, and we also offer appropriate tuition. Larger clubs may be able to afford such an investment. Perhaps members of smaller clubs could pool together to buy a mount cutter – after all, how often do you actually use it?

If this is not a solution, then you can use pre-windowed mounts. These are available with different aperture sizes and ratios. They cost a bit more and constrain your images to specific aspect ratios, but I know many accomplished photographers who prefer the convenience.

In summary, I would like to see clubs putting more effort into promoting printing, offering workshops, mentoring, print appraisal opportunities, ad hoc exhibitions, bulk purchase services, etc. Members who don't currently turn your images into prints should give it a go. Hopefully you will quickly appreciate the joy of holding your own "piece of art". I have several of my own "masterpieces" mounted and framed around my own home, as do some of my family members.

Remember, we have our "promoting print" workshop on 2nd November which will benefit beginners, advanced print workers and appraisers alike; hopefully those who attend will share their experience.

For those of you who are getting into printing, discovering new techniques or hitting printing roadblocks, I would love to hear from you and perhaps share your journeys in future newsletters!

Support for using the SCPF Directory

The SCPF Directory is used for details of clubs, appraisers and lecturers, as well as the uploader for competitions. Access to the Directory requires an account, which is usually requested through your own club secretary.

There have recently been software changes to the Directory, and we have also created a dedicated email for all support issues, be it access, application issues, data issues or even requests/ suggestions for new functionality. Please email directory-support@southerncountiespf.org.uk for all these matters. Sending Directory requests via the webmaster or any other Council member will only slow down the response.

We are currently working on a user manual for the Directory. In the meantime, there are links to informative videos available at https://southerncountiespf.org.uk/directory_static/. These refer to the previous version, but most of the information is still relevant.

Inductions to the SCPF Roll of Honour

The SCPF created the Roll of Honour in 2004 to recognise significant contributions of individuals in support of their clubs and/ or the federation over a period of at least 10 years. I was delighted to recently make presentations to two such individuals.

Kelvin Perry

Kelvin Perry, the current chair of Alton Camera Club has been at the heart of the club's life since he joined in 2010. During Covid, Kelvin ensured that the club kept going – taking on multiple roles at once. Today Alton CC is a thriving club, growing membership numbers and bucking the trend seen by so many clubs.

Neil Purcell

Neil Purcell stepped down as chair of Farnborough Camera Club at the end of last season but remains active on the committee, responsible for practical evenings. He was instrumental in implementing a complete restructuring of the club's internal competitions – balancing tradition with innovation to encourage creativity and broaden the range of members' photography.

Congratulations Kelvin and Neil and a huge thank you for the ongoing commitment to your clubs.

AV Championship

Entry to the AV Championship is now closed. We have a total of 31 sequences entered from 15 clubs. 8 of these clubs entered 3 sequences each and will be competing for the Oak Leaf Salver. Last year there were 24 entries from 13 clubs, so we have an encoraging increase over last year, though this still represents less than a quarter of the clubs.

The event will take place at Blandford CC on Sunday 26th October from 2pm to 5pm. The venue has limited capacity so we can only accept sequence authors and/ or the competition secretaries of the competing clubs. We are planning to live stream through our YouTube channel (https://www.youtube.com/@SCPF-2024). At the event we will only be showing the top twenty sequences. We will hold a Zoom session on Sunday 30th November from 7:30pm to 10:30pm, where you will have the opportunity to see all the sequences. The link for the Zoom session will be sent out in due course.

Meet Newbury Photography Club

What are the origins of the club?

With the end of the Second World War in sight, two Newbury photographers decided to bring together a group of like-minded enthusiasts, and the Newbury and District Camera Club was formed. The inaugural meeting was held at 7pm on Thursday 01 February 1945 at the Tudor Cafe in Newbury (103 Northbrook Street).

Rob Carpenter
NPC President

The founder members were H.H. (Bert) Dennis and Jack Hole; Bert was the Chairman and Jack became President in 1946. The original annual subscription was 10 shillings (equivalent to £28 today), with a charge of 2/6d per evening (£7) for use of the Tudor Café, the purchase of refreshments was extra! A darkroom was available for 3 (old) pence per hour. Members of H.M. Forces could use the facilities of the Club free of charge. In 1946 the Club had 74 members, and The Tudor Cafe remained its home for almost half a century. Subsequently, the Club changed its name to Newbury Camera Club then Newbury Photography Club, moved to several locations, and has recently established a new home in the Wash Common Community Centre on Glendale Avenue in Newbury, a move that marks an exciting new chapter in our development

What is the current membership and trend?

Longstanding members of NPC

We have 40 members and regular club enquiries and great feedback at events and exhibitions. We moved out of previous premises due to a growth in numbers. We are active on social media and looking forward to a website refresh over the coming year with an even slicker look and presentation.

Describe a typical club meeting?

We meet every Thursday at Wash Common Community Centre which offers increased space for screened events and visitors, together with a kitchen and ample parking — all of which make it an ideal home for our growing membership. Since moving, we have already hosted a number of high-profile speakers, including Jack Lodge, a Dorset-based landscape and nature photographer, and Dr Paul Hendley LRPS CPAGB, an experienced SCPF judge. We also had a recent session on mount cutting and prints mounting with demonstrations by experienced members. 22 members entered our first PDI Competition of the season, and it was judged by Peter Orr ARPS who used to be a member of the Club.

What other activities and facilities do you offer to members?

As well as regular workshops, group trips and social meet ups we also offer a summer programme which included a Summertime Ten competition where Members had 3 months to photograph 10 topics which were judged and the winner selected by members. We had many group visits including a trip to Oxford for street/architecture photography which was very successful, sharing our results back at the club to open our new season at Wash Common. Now we are entering Autumn/Winter we have a good relationship with the Newbury Blues Rugby Club and members frequently visit their matches. These events have been well received, setting the tone for the exciting programme of talks, workshops, and competitions we have planned for the year ahead.

The Club has a strong programme of talks and presentations on many aspects of photography by leading professional and amateur photographers. The Club organises special interest groups, practical workshops, discussions, visits to interesting locations and social events during the year. We pride ourselves in catering for all standards of photography, and in helping members to learn and to get the most enjoyment from their photography.

What engagement does the club have with the SCPF?

Andrew Buchanan, NPC Chair accepts PDI league 2 winners award from Peter Terry at Finals Day

The club is an active member of the Southern Counties Photographic Federation, and we enter competitions with other clubs in the Federation. We will be entering the Federation's Annual Exhibition and Club Championship this year. Thanks to the efforts of our Chairman (and Exhibition Secretary), and some of our newer talented photographers, we start this Competition Season in Group 1 for both Prints and PDIs. One of our more experienced members, Ray Hems, is the PAGB Awards Officer for the SCPF.

How does the club work with the wider community?

Newbury Cancer Care Calendar

Following the initiative of our Dr Paul Sievers, for the past 24 years the Club has submitted images to the Newbury Cancer Care Trust from which the Trustees have chosen their annual calendar pictures. The Trustees have decided that 2025 will be the final issue of the calendar which, over the years, has seen the submission of over 3000 images by Club members and around £60,000 raised for the Charity.

D Day 80 Photobook

On 6th June 2024, 12 members of the Club embarked on a project to Photograph planned D Day events both in and around Newbury. This Project started in Hungerford at 08.00 with the Proclamation and covered events in Thatcham, a Newbury care home street party, a service at Greenham Common Control Tower, Bell ringers, Beacon lighting and a finale at the Control Tower. The Project was funded by Greenham Trust which allowed 54 Photobooks of the day's events to be printed and distributed to local organisations and individuals who took part in the events.

The Wash Common Community Festival

We also attended and had a stand at The Wash Common Community Festival for the first time this year which was a great success with many visitors enquiring about club membership and even a visit from the mayor.

The mayor visits the NPC stand at the Wash Common Communitv Festival

Newbury Photography Club's 80th Anniversary

In 2025, Newbury Photography Club celebrates its 80th Anniversary and held a summer long exhibition at Greenham Control Tower featuring 40 framed prints from 23 members, displays of the Club's history, the work of our founder members and other long-term members. It was a huge success with hundreds of visitors who voted for their favourite print. Here are the top three from the voting.

1st place: Welsh Rainforest by Mick Snaith

2nd place: Sweet Treats by Beryl Franklin

3rd place: Stokkness Beach by Ray Hems

Work has started on the preparation of a Yearbook which will document recent events leading up to and including the Anniversary.

What are your plans for the future?

Our recent move to a new venue has opened up a new catchment area and we aim to become more involved with our new local community. We hope our continuous improvement will actively promote the enjoyment of photography, increase the interest and involvement in local practical Workshops and competitions and grow our membership which will allow us to expand our portfolio of speakers and activities.

Rob Carpenter
President Newbury Photography Club