

Competitions Report 2016-17 Season

This year saw 21 members entering PDIs and 13 entering prints. That doesn't tell the full story though; a number of members were not able to complete a full season of entries.

Strong work was seen from new members and we would doubtless have had a really great season had everyone been able to compete. Having said that – we saw a step up in energy, variety and quality from our stalwarts that had us awestruck. These positives helped greatly in keeping our heads above water in external competitions.

The change we made to the rules in 2015, allowing an extra nature section in the prints, was not well supported, with about half the entry we saw last year. We need to keep an eye on this as a low entry means that those who do enter may automatically gain higher marks and give an imbalance between the two colour print competitions. Perhaps it would be better to average the marks between the two when we compute the Photographer of the Year Award.

The change in 2016 of allowing only new work into the Portrait Competitions in a current year saw a big fall in entries, though since members can subsequently use the entered images in the next season the change will take a further year to work through. We were also only counting “best 3” from this competition in the PotY award and this may have had its toll.

Nevertheless our smaller band of competitors provided us with such quality work that we held up well in all our external competitions; versus Sandbach, Alsager and Nantwich, in the Great British Cup, the L&CPU Knock-Out, Club Annuals and the North Cheshire PS Challenges. We did not enter the Chester Print Competition this year.

In our own competitions the successes of individual members is detailed in the Awards report and in the results published on the website.

1600p x 1200p

One change that we do have to make is to switch to 1600 x 1200 for the PDIs – it would just be too difficult to have to seek new versions of all the work selected for external competitions. We will not actually see a benefit as our projector is 1400p x 1050p.

Some concern was expressed that low marks may discourage beginners but the Committee did not agree that restricting the range would help. If we have beginners in the competition I do indicate that to the judge and ask that they are given an appropriate comment. I also start the season with asking for a range 12-20. This range is usually not used – our work is so good the judge rarely goes below 13. Once the first League comp is

over I modify my instructions to say what the lowest mark has been – this is to try and bring in some parity between the marks for the League competitions.

It might be noted that members have the club Flickr site, Forum and Facebook on which they can post pictures for comment and that all important “seeing work as others see it”. We might also usefully spend more time during meetings discussing competition work if members would like to do that.

Inter-Club Competitions.

We won against Sandbach (539 to 489) but lost, narrowly, to Alsager (484 to 491), whilst Nantwich’s victory over us, by 1 mark showed how closely matched we are.

Great British Cup

The outstanding thing was Wallace Baxter gaining a bronze medal for “Splits on the Beam”. We came 6th in the Small Clubs section. The nature section is not for club entries and next year I propose to make no attempt “make up” the entry to 10 images just to get a club score.

L&CPU Competitions

We came 11th out of over 40 clubs (and 900 works) in the PDIs and 10th out of 29 clubs and 635 works in the prints.

North Cheshire Challenges

6th out of 13 in the prints and 8th out of 16 in the PDI KO. The entries for this usually popular competition were down considerably this year.

Although these external competitions represent a lot of extra work and travelling they give members a view of how their work stands up regionally and nationally. It is a pity that so few members are able to get to the judging and exhibitions to appreciate this more fully.

In the end competitions are a bit of a two-edged sword; encouraging some types of work at the expense of others and perhaps attaching too much importance to surface qualities but this tends not to influence us as a club too much. We enjoy seeing the work on display which represent a quality of presentation we can aspire to and a variety of meaning and content which we can value.

John Royle

Competition Secretary April 2017