

APERTURE

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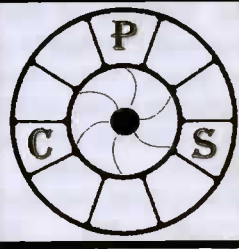
The Newsletter of
Crewe Photographic Society

Still Photography Section.

An occasional series.

ISSUE No.10. 12th November 1997

Golden Jubilee Issue 'A Brief History of CPS Time' The First Fifty Years



1947 - 1997

Foundations

The Society was founded at a meeting in Christ Church Parochial Hall at 7.30pm on Wednesday 12th November 1947 in the presence and under the chairmanship of His Worship the Mayor, R. Peach Esq. and 15 photographic enthusiasts. Mr. J K Baggaley had convened the meeting *"...to discuss the possibility of forming a Photographic Society in Crewe"*

Subsequently, it was resolved *"That such a Society be formed forthwith..."* and it would known as *"The Crewe Photographic Society."*

His Worship the Mayor kindly consented to become Patron and Dr. E Jones accepted the office of President. Mr. J K Baggaley was appointed Secretary and Treasurer and Mr. D K Hockenhall became the first Chairman. All members present at that first meeting were appointed to the *"Inaugural Committee."*

All positions were to be considered temporary and to be reviewed at the first AGM scheduled for January 1948.

Meetings were to be held fortnightly on Wednesday evenings and members were asked to *"...contribute 1/- per meeting.....to defray expenses"* - the equivalent of 5p in coinage today but of much greater value then!

A sub-committee was formed with the remit, *"...to make enquires with a view to obtaining suitable premises for future meetings."*

With these resolutions Crewe Photographic Society was born.

First Steps

The first AGM was held on 7th January 1948 in the Congregational Church Hall where it was resolved that the newly elected committee should draft a set of rules for consideration by the Society. With impressive promptness, a set of rules appear in the minutes of a meeting held just two days later on 9th January and were provisionally adopted by those present.

Constitution

The original Constitution has been revised many times over the years but throughout all the revisions the basic aims and objectives of the Society have remained the same - *".....to promote and to further the interests of Photography in all it's forms....."*

The benefits of the Society must be available to all - *".....the Society shall be open to all persons interested in Photography."*

"Rejection (for membership) must be for sound reasons and not be based solely for reasons of age, sex, colour, class or creed."

The early constitution was modified largely in a piecemeal fashion until 1970 when a new Constitution was approved. It was revised again in 1979 and further changes were needed in 1993 when the Still and Cine & Video sections separated into two distinct and independent groups while continuing to remain parts of Crewe Photographic Society.

The 1970 revision introduced the new committee offices of

Competition Secretary and Equipment Officer.

Interestingly it was noted at the subsequent 1971 AGM that no ladies had been elected and that that was in contravention of the original constitution of 1949 which stated that *"....at least one member of the Committee shall be a lady."*

That omission was soon amended. Today the clause to include at least one lady on the committee still holds. Bigger changes were made in 1979. The Cine and Still Photography Groups were given separate Committees under a General Committee consisting of the President, Vice President, Treasurer and Secretary. The General Committee ran the affairs of the Society especially the finances. The General Committee was retained but in an attenuated form in the next big revision in 1993. It's responsibility was reduced to monitoring the insurance premiums paid by the Society. Still and Cine & Video committees were made solely responsible for all their own affairs including finances, while each still remained part of Crewe Photographic Society.

Original Records

The account of the inaugural meeting appears in the original minute book used to record committee and Annual General Meetings from 1947 to 1967. Subsequent ledgers record later events, which, except for a critical gap during the early eighties, continue right up to the present day.

They provide a fascinating read and I have tried to extract some of the flavour of the contents for this edition of Aperture.

Finances

The finances of the Society have been well handled in general through the years. There have been some desperate times and times of plenty. But the books were always made to balance, usually by raising subscriptions, but also, many times, through the generosity of enthusiastic members freely donating of their time and cash.

First Subscription £1.05

At the first AGM it was resolved that *"The minimum subscription shall be £1-1-0 (£1.05) per annum, payable on 1st January each year or quarterly if desired. Wives of members and junior members under 18 years of age, 7/6 (37.5p)."*

In 1948 £1.05 proportionately was a much greater sum of cash to find than our current subscription of £12 yet the register of membership shows 47 members for that first year. Five members registered as juniors and four as *"wives of members."*

Women Members

"Wives of members" was a curious category in which to place women members but soon women were registering as members in their own right. However the classification remained right into the seventies, before eventually being displaced by *"joint membership"*.

Subs Up

For the first 9 years subscriptions did not change.

Membership dipped to just 28 in 1950 but recovered and climbed steadily to 70 by 1957.

"...an Income Tax Demand for unpaid tax on previous premises.."

Despite that, a 19% rise was deemed necessary - to £1-5-0 (£1.25) for ordinary membership with pro rata increases for other members.

A curious entry in the minutes of February 1953 refers to an Income Tax demand for *"...unpaid tax on our previous premises"*.

The Secretary of that time was instructed to write and ask for leniency! It must have worked as nothing more is recorded.

Projector Fund Raided

In the early sixties a financial crisis loomed attributed to *"....a steep fall in membership and unpaid subscriptions."*

The *"projector fund"* was raided to maintain solvency and subscriptions were raised again, this time by 17%.

"Disaster was avoided only by imposing a one-off levy of 10/- (50p) on all remaining"

But by 1966, while England was winning the World Cup, the Society was again losing members, down to 33, and consequently, revenue.

Disaster was avoided only by imposing a one-off levy of 10/- (50p) on all remaining members! Generosity induced by that World Cup win perhaps.

1967 saw the introduction of *"the attendance levy"*. This was set at 1/- (5p) and helped, as it does today, to defraying expenses for judges and speakers.

Nice little Earner Goes

Decimalization caused some consternation in 1971 but with the decision of the Crewe Fete committee to withdraw permission for us to run a raffle at the exhibition we held at the Fete, which had been a nice little earner, we were again in financial hot water.

So fees went up again. Ordinary members were charged £2-50, wives and juniors £1.25, joint membership was set at £3.75 and juniors under 16 and senior citizens 50p.

The attendance levy soared to 10p! Things remained fairly stable then

until 1977 when increases all round were again implemented. There is no record of the membership numbers for this time but the 1977 AGM minutes the sales officer at that time Josie Morris, reporting a turn over of £1400!

Membership numbers must have been pretty high in order to sell that amount of film and paper.

Membership Falls—Again

Membership fell steadily throughout the eighties and nineties. From 53 in 1987 down to 29 in 1995 and further rises in subscriptions were necessary in 1988, 1989, 1991 and in 1994. The attendance levy was increased to 50p in 1993 and to £1 in 1994. 1993 saw the separation of the financial affairs of the Still Section and Video Section of the Society. Each was allowed to set their own subscriptions and to manage their finances independently. In the following year, 1994, Still Section raised subscriptions to where they are today and, though membership recruitment remains a problem, our finances are now relatively stable.

Premises

First meetings were held in the Congregational Church Hall, then in 1948 a move to the Vine Inn in Earle Street was made.

"..frequent appeals to keep the darkroom clean and tidy.."

Four years later the tenancy of the rooms above the Co-op in Hungerford Road was taken and this venue served the Society until 1975, a period of 23 years.

The facilities were variable but included a darkroom and although Committee minutes over the period refer frequently to appeals to *"....keep the darkroom clean and tidy..."*, it must have been a huge asset to members.

The minutes also periodically record volunteers being called for to clean and redecorate the rooms and on at least two occasions, to buy chairs and other furniture.

It is also recorded that in 1953, Coronation year, the Society allowed

the residents of Gresty Terrace to use the premises for a coronation party. £2-0-0, the suggested charge was reduced to £1-0-0 on "advice" from our Landlords and then dispensed with entirely on further advice!

Home to the Library

However, by 1974 alternative premises were being sought, mainly due to a large increase in the rent demanded by the Co-op. Useful income had been obtained by sub-letting the rooms to other clubs but in 1975 the Society moved to Haslington. This proved to be an unsatisfactory venue (although membership went up from 59 to 68) and in 1976 the final move to our present home of Crewe Library was made.

Programmes

Internal Competitions

Competitions have been a major part of programmes from earliest times. However internal competitions as we know them today were rare at the beginning.

Instead, "Print Nights" were arranged and experienced photographers, initially from the Society's own ranks, were asked to comment on the work submitted.

Gradually the competitive element increased until today's competition scene evolved.

*"..beginners
submitted 214
slides,
Intermediates 40
and Advanced*

During that time our extensive collection of trophies increased to fill a greater and greater number of competitions and classes. Initially there was just a single class for monochrome prints, but this soon divided into advanced and beginner classes and eventually an intermediate class was added.

Competitions for slides followed a similar path.

By 1974 competitions were well supported. Slides were, as now, the most popular class. For example, in that year beginners submitted 214 slides, intermediates 40 and advanced workers 69 while there were 50 beginners prints, 69 intermediate and 24 advanced prints. This from a total of 60 members - quite an expression of the vigour and enthusiasm of the Society at that time.

The first colour print competition was introduced in 1975 and produced 29 high quality prints from six members.

Competition Rules Revision

A regular feature of the minutes concerning competitions was the continual refinement and revision of the rules.

New classes, new definitions of classes, revised points systems, eligibility of entries, numbers of entries permitted, print sizes etc. were all discussed extensively and intensively. Things haven't changed today!

External Competitions and Battles

External competitions, battles etc., were non-competitive in the very early days but evolved into the points battles we have today. Battles against Stafford, Chester, Whitchurch, Congleton among many others are recorded.

We entered the L&CPU club competition as early as 1952 and in 1956 were placed 6th and had three prints retained for the folio. The eighties and nineties saw our domination of the 5-Towns trophy.

Exhibitions

The most important feature of the season and the most frequently mentioned in the programme minutes was the annual Exhibition.

The first Exhibition was held in 1951 over three days. The venue was the Sea Cadets HQ in Edleston Road.

An Exhibition became a fixture over the next 8-9 years and was held at a wide variety of venues including Heath Street Assembly Hall, The Corn Exchange, Christ Church

Parish Hall, The Odeon Cinema, and Kingsley Girls School as well as the Society's premises at Hungerford Road.

'Fete' Steps In!

A great boost in the numbers of viewers of the Exhibition occurred when the Society was invited by the Crewe Fete committee to exhibit at the Fete in 1960.

*"..the event
evolved to include
a highly lucrative
raffle."*

Fete Exhibitions were mounted up until the early seventies and were all highly successful.

As mentioned before, the event evolved to include a highly lucrative raffle but also additional events, organised by members, included demonstrations of photographic wizardry, instruction for visitors in photographic techniques and assessment of photographs.

Speakers

As today speakers were sought out who presented demonstrations and who exhibited high quality prints and slides.

A feature worth noting is that many more members than today were willing to present programmes to the Society and to act as judges at competitions.

Cine&Video Section

In 1957 the growth in popularity of cine cameras provoked the suggestion that a Cine Group be formed within the Society.

Later in 1958, the committee of the day drafted rules to allow the formation of a Cine Group. Unfortunately these "rules" were rejected by the Cine enthusiasts as being much too restrictive and the idea died.

It was not until 1969 that an inaugural meeting of a Cine Group within the Society was held. The Chairman was our immediate past President Ron Reade. In accordance with the agreed constitution of the new group, he was elected to the main committee as Secretary of the

Cine Group, serving in that office until his election as Chairman of the main committee and subsequently President. He was a major driving force in the group's foundation and development.

Much later the Cine Group was granted extra representation on the main committee and then in 1976, granted a full committee under the Society's new constitution which came into force in that year. 1993 saw further separation of the group into one of the two independent parts of Crewe Photographic Society.

Founder Members

I have been able to contact just one founder member, Mrs. Baxter-Booth. She has recently moved from Crewe to the Channel Isles but before she left she donated some useful equipment to the Society and some interesting photographs of some of the Society members taken in the fifties.

Her husband, also a founder member, served on the original Committee and became President in 1950. He was an accomplished photographer and much sought after as a judge.

Two of our Trophies are named after prestigious founder members.

The Miss. D M Willis Memorial Trophy.

In 1950 Miss. D M Willis became the first lady to serve on the Committee. In 1952 she was elected Secretary a position she held until 1956.

"...she was the first member to be granted Honorary life"

The minutes she wrote are neat, precise and above all clear and unambiguous. She continued to serve on the committee until 1957 when she was elected once more as Secretary but ill health compelled her to resign the position the following year. Again she was elected onto the Committee where

she served until her death in 1969.

She was held in deep affection and respect by the Society so much so that she was the first member to be granted Honorary Life Membership in 1958. After her death the Miss Willis Memorial Trophy was introduced and awarded for the best Documentary or Travelogue series of images lasting not more than 15 minutes. Later the competition was opened to members of the Cine Section and today the trophy is still held by the Cine and Video group.

The Marcus Liddle Cup.

Dr. Marcus Liddle served for many years on the Committee and was elected President in 1949, 1951-53, 1956, 1957 and 1960. His trophy is still awarded for the best monochrome print of the season. The current holder is Howard Edwards ARPS.

Present Long Serving Members

Our immediate past President **Ron Reade** joined the Society in the fifties and, as noted above, became a founder member of the Cine Group. He served as Secretary of that Group until 1976 when he became Chairman of the Society. Subsequently he was elected President in 1980, under the new constitution, a position he served in with distinction until retiring in 1994. He was made an Honorary Life Member in 1995 in recognition of his service to the Society.

Bert Meeres joined in 1964 and was elected Social Secretary in 1965. In 1966 he became Chairman and in 1971 Vice-Chairman. He is our Social Secretary today, a position he has held since 1976.

Tom Warburton's name first appears as a committee member in 1979, then as Vice Chairman in 1980. He was Chairman in 1981 and 1982 and subsequently served as Treasurer in the late eighties and early nineties.

Plans for the Golden Jubilee Celebrations

The first event is the Golden Jubilee Dinner. This will be at the Waverley Hotel in Crewe on 12th November 1997, the date being the actual anniversary of the founding of the Society. The guest of Honour will be Bob Dennis, President of the L&CPU. The arrangements for the Dinner have been made by the Jubilee Celebration Committee, led by our PRO John Thompson. They are also progressing a programme of events for the Jubilee Exhibition which will be on 16th and 17th January 1998.

Crewe Library will be the main venue over the two days. The Mayor has been invited to open the proceedings and to judge the photographic competition, the theme of which is "The Environment and the Community". Prizes for the winners, adults and juniors, have been promised from Crewe Camera Exchange. A second competition sets the task of designing a New Millenium Logo for the Society.

Schools in the area have been circulated with information about both competitions to encourage junior level entries.

The photographic content of the exhibition will be designed to encourage visitors to join the Society. Members will be asked to exhibit not only their best work but examples of their early work to show how they have improved; work with faults and mistakes with an accompanying commentary explaining the how and why of the errors; work demonstrating before and after treatments.

In this way is hoped that potential recruits will not be overawed by the excellence of our best work and be convinced that they too can progress from beginner to photographer!

Other events in the pipe line include, digital manipulation demos, darkroom demos and trade stands.

There will be also an 'normal' photographic exhibition in the Market Arcade over the two days of the exhibition. Watch this space for developments.

One commodity we will need in super abundance will be volunteers to run the show.

Hope you will be one!