

**HARROW
CAMERA
CLUB**



DIAMOND

60

JUBILEE

**1933
March 21st
1993**

A LOOK BACK IN FOCUS

Once upon a time, there was a theatre in Harrow called the Coliseum. It was in Station Road opposite a pub now transformed into the Moon on the Hill. The theatre has been pulled down and replaced by Gateways Supermarket to cater for the stomachs of Harrovians rather than their minds.

But it was there, in the theatre restaurant sixty years ago, that Charles Johnson suggested to his friend, Reg Mason, that they should start a camera club in the area. At the inaugural meeting on 21st March 1933, Charles Johnson (Johnny to all who knew him) said he thought that a 'Camera Club' would attract more members than a 'Photographic Society'. So, the Harrow Camera Club was founded. Johnny was the first Honorary Secretary, and continued in that post for many years.

At first, meetings were held in the Heathfield School for Girls in College Road. The Club flourished until the war and continued as best it could during the ensuing years. It was already thirteen years old when I joined along with Keith Joyce. Keith was the Projectionist for forty years although, as he often reminded us, the post was originally called the Lanternist. Keith's name lives on: you will find it on the darkroom door.

Ron Norman was a member even then. The Club met in the old Air Raid Wardens' Hut by the Metropolitan Line station, and it was the men who made the tea, on a rota basis. We were all photographers who rolled up our sleeves, and put our hands in the developer (hoping not to confuse it with the tea). Films were processed in home brews, and the 35mm camera was only just becoming popular. Negative size, grain and definition were topics hotly debated at meetings. Trade processing was for other people using Boots the Chemist, and there was nothing automatic about cameras: they were sturdy instruments and only did as they were told.

Our meeting place varied quite a lot in those days. Still on a Tuesday, we moved in 1946 to the Vale Farm Baths, Sudbury: meeting not in the water, but in the café. In 1947 we moved again, now on a Thursday, to the Kenton School of Ballroom Dancing. The annual subscription was fifteen shillings (75p) - excluding dancing! On again in 1948 to settle for six years in the beery atmosphere of the Wealdstone Social Club and Institute.

In 1954, Alec Pearlman elevated proceedings to the assembly rooms of the Railway Hotel, Wealdstone. There were carpets and leather armchairs, and tea in the interval served by waitresses. Alec's name also lives on, attached to the Club's premier trophy for pictorial prints. After fourteen years, the Hotel was wrecked by 'The Who', a group famous for smashing their guitars. So, in 1968, it was back to Heathfield School, and on a Tuesday again.

Another fourteen years, and Heathfield School was knocked down to make way for the St.Anns Shopping Centre. St.Anns also put paid to plans for a new theatre in central Harrow, which led in turn to the first Arts Centre. So, in 1982 the Club was welcomed to Harrow Weald where members of the Club did much of the refurbishing work. Six years on and Harrow Weald was required for the education service. In turn the Arts Centre moved to Hatch End where the Club has continued as a major contributor.

Johnny always had considerable influence over the Club which he founded. His enthusiasm for photography led him to turn professional. He was a Fellow of the Royal Photographic Society and of the Institute of British Photographers; Assistant Editor of the Amateur Photographer, where Reg Mason was the Art Editor; and Editor of the New Photogrammes of the Year. He was elected to the London Salon of Photography, and became its Secretary. He had prints accepted for exhibition nation-wide, but was concerned that they should also be shown at the Club.

Club Exhibitions have been held annually except for the war years, which is why our Diamond Jubilee will not also see our 60th Exhibition. The Exhibitions were often at the old Technical College, near the Coliseum theatre. With its central location, attendance was good, and the evening events were crowded! The selection committee would meet on a Saturday afternoon, and Johnny would always arrive late with a parcel of newspaper under his arm. He would put this aside and squat down to look through the pile of prints already rejected. Picking out the more avant-garde ones, he would exclaim with his usual twinkle, "There's some good stuff this year". Now, he knew they were the rejects; and we knew that he knew; and he knew that we knew... It was a little pantomime each year, and he usually got his way. When asked if he had any prints, Johnny would unfold his soggy parcel and produce some superb prints which he had just made. He would lay them out, still wet, on the carpet, and arrange them with the toe of his shoe.

Charles Johnson died suddenly in 1961 at an early age. His death stunned the Club. A memorial fund raised a considerable sum, which was used to make the Charles Johnson Award for many years to follow. Despite the passage of time, his personality is curiously stamped on the Club in a way that newer members cannot now appreciate. The Exhibition selection committee still meets by tradition on a Saturday afternoon, and for many years was entertained to tea by Will and Eva Wray.

Another member who died young was Ron Wake ARPS. He made his own cameras, and was a popular raconteur on the club circuit. His memorial is the annual competition between those local clubs which subscribed to have one of Ron's own cameras mounted as the trophy. Harrow has won this trophy only twice: once in 1971 as a Club entry, and once in 1982 by 'Pip' Pippard FRPS. Pip was technical director of Johnsons of Hendon, and developed their Photocolor range of chemicals: he was a member for only a short time before his death.

If I have to pick just one outstanding event, it would be a President's evening by Ron Norman. He asked the four members who were Fellows of the Royal Photographic Society to debate the future of the Club. Charles Johnson, Gordon Barber, Alec Pearlman and Gerald Stollery did this in great style but found the Club wanting. There followed a magical and memorable vote of thanks by Dr Gerhard Schoenewald, a medical man and only an Associate of the Royal, who declared that the body had been examined by experts and pronounced dead. Like other bodies he had known, it refused to lie down: it insisted on recovering, and it flourished.

It flourishes today. May it continue to do so.

Harold Harley

MISCELLANEA by *Ron Norman*

Over 60 years, the Club has had
42 Presidents; 14 Hon.Secretaries; 9 Hon.Treasurers.
9 Fellows of the RPS and many ARPS and LRPS.

From 1951 to 1991, the average number of entries in monthly competitions ranged from 24 in 1987 to 50 in 1982 (49 in 1952) for prints; and from 19 in 1951 to 101 in 1984 for slides. In 1971, a slide competition evening attracted 107 entries.

In 1948, a slide evening had an attendance of 200.

The lowest Club membership since 1945 was 97 in 1968/9; the year we moved to Heathfield School and changed meetings from Thursday to Tuesday.

1933 - A CATALOGUE - 1993

21/3/1933: A General Meeting when the Club was formed.

24/5/33: First AGM. Subscription 5/-.

1934: Meetings at Conservative Hall.

1935: First Annual Dinner. First Annual Exhibition. Double membership agreed.

1938: Membership 100. Committee asked to keep a Club history.

1940: Meetings at Kodak Works PS. AGM at Gayton Rooms, when one Mr.R.Causebrook seconded a motion!

1941/2: Meetings at Heathfield School. E.Gordon Barber published "Pictorial Composition".

1943: Meetings at Bridge Schools.

1946: Meetings at Conservative Hall from 1945. Membership 125, the highest to date. Subscription 10/6d. Founder member of Middlesex County Photographic Association.

1947: Meetings at Vale Farm. Subscription 15/-. Alec Pearlman is the Club's first FRPS. Won the Southall Victory Trophy including the Best Print.

1948: Meetings at Wealdstone Social Club.

1949: Average entries in monthly competitions 65; highest 116. Several weekly attendances over 90. Won the R.H.Mason Inter-Society Challenge Cup.

1950: Submission of entries in the week prior to monthly competitions discontinued. Won the Inter-Society Challenge Cup again. Won the Southall Victory Trophy.

During the early 1950's the Club had 4 members on the Council of the RPS; including the Chairmen of the Colour Group and the Minature Camera Group; and on the Selection and other Committees and the Admission Panel.

1951: Membership 131. Subscription one guinea. Won the Inter-Society Challenge Cup outright against 26 clubs.

1953: Affiliated to Harrow Arts Council.

1954: Meetings at the Railway Hotel.

1955-57: Won Southall Victory Trophy. 5 members amongst the 38 authors accepted for the RPS and London Salon exhibitions.

1958: Average membership in previous 12 years was 126. Colour Cup presented by E.N.Bliss. Sets of Slides competition, and the Record section started. 3 separate classes for slides considered impractical! Annual Exhibition extended to 2 weeks and special events introduced.

From 1936 the Club regularly had many acceptances in the CAPS Annual Exhibitions, and frequently appeared in the top 6 of the Switch Shield from 170+ entries.

From 1948 the average acceptances in international exhibitions was 7pa at the RPS and 8pa in the London Salon.

1959: Membership 148. Subscription 25/-.

1962: Competition Rules delegated to Committee, and a points system considered. Charles John Memorial Award inaugurated.

1963: Membership 156. One-third turnover in membership.

1964: Entered N.W.Fed. for first time. Subscription 30/-.

1965: In N.W.Fed. Final

1966: Financial year changed to end-September. Joint winners of N.W.Fed.
1967: Subscription £2. Won N.W.Fed.
1968: Meetings at Heathfield School on Tuesdays.
1969: First Ron Wake Memorial Trophy Competition.
1970: Subscription £2.50. Hand-coloured prints approved. Won Southall Victory Trophy. In N.W.Fed. final.
1971: Won Ron Wake Trophy. 1st overseas visit, to Bruges.
1972: Average 86 entries in monthly slide competitions. "Photography for Pleasure" exhibition for Greater London Arts.
1973: Won the Brent Festival Pictorial Panel Trophy (now the Club's Brent Trophy).
1974: Competitions marked out of 20; the best 10 scores used to determine trophy winners.
1975: Membership 156. Subscription £3.50. 114 attended the President's evening. In N.W.Fed. final.
1977: Membership 180. Average monthly slides 100. Won N.W.Fed.
1978: "Four Seasons" production. New rules for Ron Wake Trophy. Membership 177. Subscription £4. 165 at Annual Exhibition event. 96 on coach outing.
1979: In N.W.Fed. final; Peter Gurnhill wins best print. Subscription £5.
1980: Pip Pippard wins best print in N.W.Fed. Subscription £6.
1981: Won CAPS Trophy. 2nd in Switch Shield (193 clubs) with 38 prints and 29 slides accepted.
1982: Meetings at Harrow Weald. 3rd in CAPS Switch Shield with 25 prints and 49 slides accepted. 2nd in Wastrell Trophy, and gained several awards. Pip Pippard won the Ron Wake Trophy. 2nd in N.W.Fed.
1983: Golden Jubilee celebrated. In N.W.Fed final; Steve Brahner won best print. Carl Wallace won Portman Building Society Trophy.
1984: Membership 174. Subscription £9. Ray Pavett won Portman Trophy.
1986: Subscription £10.
1987: Subscription £12. Clifford Jones award started. Trade processed prints allowed. Joined Chilterns Association. Won slide trophy at N.London Exhibition. First entry to PAGB knockout competition coming 3rd in CAPS.
1988: Meetings at Hatch End. Reached National finals of PAGB/Minolta competition, coming 9th. 2nd in N.London Exhibition. 3rd in Chilterns Rosebowl.
1989: N.W.Fed best print won by John O'Connor; and best slide by Tony Hopkins.
1990: In N.W.Fed. final. Resigned from Central Association. Country member scheme introduced.
1991: Again in national final of PAGB competition. 2nd in N.London Exhibition slides competition.
1992: Won Wycombe Trophy; best slide by Margaret Lynch. In national final of PAGB competition. Won N.London Exhibition enprints and 2nd in slides.
5/2/93: The Club's 391st Committee meeting ratifies the organisation of the Diamond Jubilee event.

Compiled from the Club records by *Ron Norman*

Extracted pages from Harrow Camera Club Diamond Jubilee leaflet, which included a catalogue of the Print Exhibition shown at Harrow Arts Centre.