

COLCHESTER PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY



Members' Booklet

We would like to thank London Camera Exchange who have kindly sponsored production of this Members' booklet

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Introduction

Welcome to Colchester Photographic Society! Our club meets on Tuesday evenings from September to May and is here to help you improve and enjoy your photography. Whether you are new to photography or already have some experience, you are equally welcome. This booklet is to help you get the best from your membership and to understand more about the club. It will introduce you to some of the challenges and enjoyment of photography, if you haven't discovered them already.

You don't have to be an 'expert photographer' to be welcomed as a member of CPS. All you need is an enthusiasm for photography. Our aim is to encourage you to develop your interest and skills, as well as to provide a place to mix with a range of like-minded, friendly people who share your interest and, most of all, have fun!

We have many excellent photographers among our membership, who are always willing to share their expertise. Some hold nationally and internationally recognised distinctions from organisations such as the Royal Photographic Society (RPS), the Photographic Alliance of Great Britain (PAGB) and the International Federation of Photographic Art (FLAP).

What equipment do you need? A camera, of course, but any camera will do - it doesn't have to be the latest super-duper model! Remember that it is not your equipment, but how you use it that is the key. Some of our members take excellent images with compact cameras, or even with Smart phones. You will not, however, need to bring your camera to meetings unless we are holding a studio or other practical session that you wish to take part in.

Taking Part

Our meetings are about the 'image' and our aim is to stimulate your learning about photography through showing your pictures, with critique from judges (in competitions), discussion with other

members, or explanation from other photographers about their images.

We encourage you to take part in competitions, as entering your photographs and receiving an appraisal of your work is one of the quickest and best ways to learn, although it may seem daunting at first. You won't agree with everything the judges say but, if you take on board some of what you hear, you will develop your photographic perception. You will be able to compete at your own level, as most of the competitions are divided into two groups -'Intermediate' (which includes novices) and 'Advanced' for more experienced photographers. On joining the club, you will be allocated to the group which best reflects the level of your ability. There is more information about competitions later in this booklet.

The club does not aim to teach you how to use a camera as part of the regular meeting programme, but we do aim to help you develop more specialist skills through demonstration evenings focusing on specific techniques. These usually assume a basic level of knowledge and experience, but even if you are new to photography, it can be very advantageous to attend. We also hold occasional 'teaching' evenings aimed at less experienced photographers. These are on a different day to the normal Tuesday club night and usually include a special 'new members' evening and a basic 'camera knowledge' workshop, which aims to explain how to set up and use your camera.

Getting Help

You will probably have numerous questions when you first join, especially when you want to enter your first competition. If you feel you need assistance, please ask! This will be willingly given and our members have wide ranges of interest, experience and skills. If there is something you'd like to know, we can almost certainly find someone in the club who can help you or there is a wealth of information on the club website on the Advice page.

We recognise that your first weeks of getting to know club members can be difficult! We have a Membership Secretary who has been appointed to help you when you first join. In the first few meetings of the season, he or she will be sitting at a dedicated table in the entrance hall. Please make yourself known when you arrive at your first meeting. Other committee members are also very willing to help and you should be able to identify who they are by their badges. We take pride in being a very friendly club and we ask existing members to engage with newer members but it takes time and effort to integrate — be patient and talk to people!

We want our club to be welcoming to all, without prejudice or exclusion. Please try and mix with others and remember that it is *your* club and, therefore, your open and honest comments to the committee are always welcome, as are any suggestions for improvement, ideas for the programme, etc.

We are a lively and enthusiastic club and whatever your photographic experience and ambition, if you are looking to improve your photography, we will have something to interest you. We want you to enjoy your membership, so if you are unhappy about anything, please do not hesitate to say; the committee works hard to ensure you get great value!

The Programme

Our programme booklet is published at the commencement of the season and can also be found on our [web pages](#). We aim for variety and the programme includes talks from high quality speakers, 'workshop style' evenings to enhance photographic skills, and serious and informal competitions. It also includes friendly contests with other clubs, when we welcome their members with their images or we travel to them. We do recognise that social activity is important so there is time to chat at the tea break and perhaps on arrival prior to the commencement of the meeting. We also have a Christmas meal, a pub evening and a night out with your camera each year!

CPS Website

Our [website](#) is a very important part of the club, which the Webmaster works hard to keep up-to-date. You will find the programme there, plus the competition rules and scores, hints & tips, as well as extensive galleries of members' images for you to view. Once you have entered a few competitions, you will have your own gallery. Please check the website regularly for updates and news about what's going on, especially if you are not able to attend the club every week. You will also find inspiration for your photography on our social media sites, [Pinterest](#), [Facebook](#), [Flickr](#) and [Twitter](#).

Club ENewsletter

The club has a newsletter, called '[InFocus](#)' that is circulated to members in electronic format. The aim is to issue this at intervals and is designed to inform our members of things that they will hopefully find of interest such as upcoming programmed events at both the club and elsewhere, latest news, hints and tips, etc. Contributions are always welcome - please send these by email to the [Newsletter Editor](#).

Affiliation

The club is affiliated to the East Anglian Federation of Photographic Societies (EAF), which in turn is affiliated to the Photographic Alliance of Great Britain (PAGB). These bodies organise their own annual competitions and exhibitions, where the standard is always extremely high. Many club members enter these to learn from the best photographers in the country and to test their work against them.

Tuesday evening meetings

Meetings are held most Tuesday evenings at 19.30 during the season at Christchurch, Ireton Road, Colchester, Essex, CO3 3AT.

An exception to this may be on Print competition evenings when it may be necessary to start earlier so please check on the web site. If you are arriving at the venue by car, normally the spaces on the right (against the Church) are reserved by the Church and only the spaces on the left as you enter the car park are available to members. Please park with your bonnet facing the wall and not with your exhaust to the wall. Doing this is part of our agreement with the Church to minimise noise and exhaust fumes for our neighbours. When leaving the area please do so as quietly as possible. If the car park is full, there is further parking along Ireton Road.

You can arrive from about 19:00 when volunteer members prepare the room according to what type of activity is to take place. Refreshments served during the interval in the entrance hall are also prepared by members on a rota basis. Your help with this would be much welcomed and appreciated, as well as help at the end of the meeting by stacking chairs and leaving the room tidy.

The Treasurer deals with membership subscriptions and visitor fees and may have items for sale brought in by members. The Membership Secretary is available to answer any questions you may have and to help you settle into the club when you first join. He or she may be contacted on most Club evenings or by email.

If PDIs (Projected Digital Images) are being shown, the projector and screen will be prepared by the Internal PDI Secretary. When prints are being shown, the display stands will be organised for prior viewing by the judge and the prints will be displayed on a light box on the stage so that all can see. This will be done by the Internal Print Competition Secretary.

A raffle is usually held during the evening in aid of club funds; the draw takes place at the end of the interval prior to the second half of the evening. We break at about 20:30 for refreshments and we aim to complete around 21:45, although we sometimes run until 22.00.

Competitions

Competitions are an important part of our activity. They are there to help challenge and inspire you by showing you the work of others and hearing the comments and critique of experienced photographers when they appraise your work. Through the judging, you will increase your perception of what makes a good image and hone your skills to improve your pictures. However, please bear in mind that the judge on competition night is not the final authority - you are! He or she will be expressing an opinion only and you and others may not agree. It is important to make pictures for your own satisfaction and enjoyment and, if a judge is not in tune with your image, that does not invalidate it in any way. Scoring a high mark in a competition is always gratifying, but a low mark does not make an image 'bad' or unworthy. Try to see a competition as a forum for viewing images - winning is great but it is about sharing and enjoying pictures that is most satisfying.

We do encourage members to shoot images for competitions, as this is a good way to learn about photography. It helps you consider your whole approach to image making whilst taking the picture. This can include choosing the appropriate settings on your camera to achieve the effect you want or how to find the best angle and viewpoint to make a good composition or design. You can find inspiration on the club website; follow the links to the 'Pinterest' site where members have provided links to their favourite sites and also examples for 'Set Subjects', to give you food for thought.

There are two main types of competition - projected digital images (PDIs) and prints. During the club season, there are four main PDI competition evenings and six main print evenings, but there are also special and themed evenings, plus 'fun' competitions, which are less formal. PDI competitions are easier and less costly to enter as images can be produced using only a camera and a computer and hence are a good place to start.

However, if you would like to enter prints (and you are encouraged to do so providing you are a full member), you will need a printer capable of 'photo quality'. If you don't have one of these, it is acceptable to have your work printed commercially, which can be done quite cheaply. Should you be uncertain as to how to prepare your work for competitions, there is always plenty of practical help at hand, from either our Membership Secretary or other committee members. There is also a lot of information on the [CPS website](#) - look under Competition — Competition Rules. See also the '[Competition Checklist](#)' section in the club programme. In addition, most members are very happy to share their expertise and tips and even to help you get your images ready.

Two main competitions run through the whole season - 'PDIs' (Projected Digital Image), where the image is projected via a computer onto a screen and 'Prints' where a print is presented on a colour-corrected light box. These competitions are scored with a maximum of 10 marks. All images receive a detailed appraisal from the judge, who will usually be an expert photographer from another club in or outside the county.

In the main PDI competition, there is an open section (the term "Open" means any subject of your choice) running over four evenings and the main open Print competition is over six evenings. At the back of the Programme you will find full details of the competitions and associated rules, as well as the way various winners are decided. There are other competitions with themes. These can be fun and entertaining, although often with a serious element. They allow members to show and talk about work they might not otherwise enter into competitions. As the subjects for these will vary from season to season, please see the Programme or website for details. There are [trptych](#) and 'three-on-a-theme' competitions, which require a photographer to demonstrate skills in presenting 3 images that explore a single concept. These and other competitions should challenge you to get out of your comfort zone to shoot things you perhaps wouldn't otherwise!

Towards the end of each season, there are Image of the Year competitions for both PDIs and prints, which bring together the best work of the year in one evening. The choice of images to enter is up to the author, but they must have been previously entered in one of the other competitions during the year.

Our competition rules allow the use of an image or similar variation thereof can be entered twice through the season, namely once only in any two of the club's three formal club competitions (colour, monochrome and PDI). The above rule does not apply to the Image of the Year, Three-on-a-Theme or those shown during the occasional informal "fun" evenings allowing you to experiment first if you wish. You could even get a completely different response from each judge, so if one doesn't rate it highly, the other might - and vice versa of course!

There are four main categories of print competition throughout the season - Advanced and Intermediate in Colour and Monochrome. You will need to check the programme for details of how many images you can enter, as the number of prints allowed and the mix of colour and monochrome may vary each time.

The PDI competitions are open and in two sections, Intermediate and Advanced. Two entries are allowed each time and both can be colour or monochrome or one of each.

With both prints and PDIs, each image will receive a detailed appraisal from the judge, who will give a score out of 10. High scoring images are usually re-shown at the end of the evening and their authors credited. Individual scores for all images are published on the notice board and the aggregate scores of the top ten entrants in each of the main competitions are maintained on the website, so that you can see who is in the lead!

Inter-club Competitions

CPS enters a number of external inter-club competitions each year, pitting our work against the best from other clubs in the area and nationally. Work for this is selected by a panel from the high scoring images in the previous year's competitions. Three of these evenings are hosted by us; our 8 x 8 Print Trophy; a round of the MIPS (Mersea Island Photographic Society) national Challenge and an annual competition with our twin town, Wetzlar, in Germany. These are great opportunities to see different ideas and gauge where we are as a club against top workers from other clubs. We have performed very well over the last few seasons, reflecting our strong membership of skilled and varied photographers.

Judging and Judges

Judging competition images is not an easy task; a judge usually gets less than 90 seconds to evaluate, appraise, score and provide entertaining comment on each image. Unlike 'X Factor', there is no right of reply but, of course, members may still disagree with the comments! What we hope and expect from a judge is an informed and constructive critique about each individual image, but it should always be remembered that it is their personal opinion and each judge will see things differently; they all have personal preferences and sometimes prejudices. We see this in external competitions, where the same image might get a low score from one judge whereas another might give it a maximum mark. This merely reflects their differing viewpoints - image appreciation and scoring is a very inexact science!

We aim to invite judges who are experienced and entertaining. When a critique of images is made, we would hope that it is done politely and in a constructive manner, but very occasionally it is not. Of course, your work is very personal to you and we are aware that some potentially good photographers are disappointed by the comments of judges and either with-draw from competitions or even leave the club. Please do not be offended or take such critique personally, we have all been there! Judges have a difficult job, and do their best. Remember, art is very subjective, judges are human, sometimes make mistakes and have

'good and bad days'. The overriding consideration should be to make pictures for yourself - if they do well in a competition, that is a bonus!

However, do listen to what judges have to say and consider their reasoning. Could you have increased your shutter speed? Would a bigger aperture have made for a less distinct background? Does your image have too much or too little contrast - are there any technical faults? Does cropping the image improve its composition? In fact, cropping is one of the points frequently raised by judges. It is very easy to experiment with the crop tool when processing in imaging software such as Photoshop and it is amazing how often improvements can be made — try it!

Please also bear in mind that judges work for the benefit of the members of photographic clubs; they are not paid a fee and receive travel expenses only. Their time, for both travelling, which can be up to 100 miles each way, plus the hours doing the judging, is all given freely.

For all that we recognise that judging can have shortcomings and we do support the Federation's on-going efforts to make improvements. This will take time; in the meantime, the majority of our judges *are* very good and, by listening carefully and taking appropriate comments on board, you can learn from them.

Images that do well in competition

Successful images in camera club competitions nearly always have a strong pictorial expression. Conversely, images that are simply a straightforward literal record of a subject tend to score less well.

Judges are looking for the added value that the photographer has created through composition, lighting, capturing mood and atmosphere, storytelling, demonstrating beauty, colour, conveying drama or emotion, vision, originality... the list goes on! So, a simple object taken with creative lighting, a well-known landmark viewed in a different way, a fleeting moment captured forever, a moving picture of a person or even an image of daily life skillfully seen and recorded can all reflect the photographer's talent.

Creativity can be equally applied after the image is taken in what is called 'post processing' and any amount of manipulation with digital software is acceptable in our competitions. Almost always, the image straight from the camera can be enhanced, but you will need some processing software for this, such as Photoshop Elements, Photoshop CC or Lightroom. These will enable you to control colour and tonal contrast, remove blemishes and unwanted small objects, convert your image to black and white and much more. However, please note that judges are much less predictable in their response to abstract images, so our advice is to ensure that such images retain some elements of a photograph.

Nature or Natural History photographs often have all of the elements just begging to be photographed and these often do well. In our competitions, you will see a great variety of excellent images of all sorts of flora and fauna, sometimes taken very close to home, that achieve high marks and win! Some judges do identify with the challenge of obtaining the picture, hence a rare animal in its habitat or a difficult to reach location may have a special value.

When people and judges talk about pictures, you may hear them speak about things such as 'rules' of composition, for example by 'placing the main interest on the 'thirds'; 'there should be a focal point'; 'the subject should not be placed centrally', etc. These *can* be useful guidelines in helping you think through how to approach image taking and improve your photography, but the fact that so many great images ignore these 'rules' makes photography the challenging and interesting subject it is.

Technical quality (camera and production craft) is an important element of photography; sharpness, accurate exposure, pleasant colour and toning and even the quality of the print mount can all influence the score. Judges will, though, often forgive some technical failings in a really strong image and are usually more sympathetic to images in the Intermediate class and so users of even the most modest equipment can do well.

Of course, we are all 'judges' and, just as our opinions may be diverse, different judges' opinions can also vary about an image. However, good

images with a degree of interpretation and creativity will always communicate more than those that are just literal records and will tell you something about the photographer as well as the subject.

Finally, you will always produce the best images with subjects you enjoy and have an empathy with, whether it be pictures of people, landscapes, flowers, railway engines or what have you! But do try other things too - don't be frightened to experiment and you could be very pleasantly surprised! That is what makes this wonderful hobby of photography so stimulating and fascinating. The important thing is not to let other people's ideas get in the way of doing what you want to do — make pictures for yourself and 'from your heart' and enjoy it!

Entering images for competition

If you aim to enter competitions (and we hope you will providing you are a full member), the requirements for entering each of the types of internal competitions are to be found on the [Competition Rules](#) web page and in the Programme. Please always read these as they may change from time to time.

Please submit PDI images to the PDI Secretary by e-mail by the Thursday evening prior to the date of the competition, in order that they can be checked for compliance, the running order prepared and the number of entries confirmed. We use special software on a laptop with a high-quality projector especially designed for photographic use and project onto a 6ft projection screen. Hence it is important that you observe the specific image size requirements, colour space and the correct addition of data to your image ('metadata') to enable the competition software to correctly display your image and credit you with the points! Our equipment has been carefully calibrated to ensure that the colours are accurate, so if your image seems to be the wrong colour, please seek advice.

Prints must be submitted to the Print Secretary at the meeting one week prior to the competition date, or earlier, in order that they can be checked for compliance, the scoring sheet and running order can be prepared and the number of entries is known. Usually,

announcements are made at the club or by email to remind members when competition images are due and these dates are available on the web site.

Printing and Mounting your Images

Printing an image is a specific skill, and is one of the most satisfying forms of photography. You can print good photographs with the many reasonably priced A4 'photo quality' printers available on the market. However, these printers are generally not best suited to monochrome images where a dedicated A3 printer gives better quality and more flexibility. Unfortunately, this is a considerable investment and you may want to consider having monochrome (or even all of your images) professionally printed. There are a number of online suppliers of this service.

You can purchase some extremely high quality (and expensive) photographic printers, but if you are new to photography, it may be better to develop your photographic skills and camera kit first before considering this option. CPS is keen to encourage and support any new member who would like to enter a print competition and we can provide help with the printing process or with mounting.

For competitions, prints must be mounted on a 50cm x 40cm mount. This is a universal and specified size of print mount that has been established amongst clubs to facilitate viewing and avoid damage caused by smaller mounts to other prints when transported or placed in a pile prior to judging.

For the Advanced competition, prints *must* be in a window mount i.e. mounted behind a card mount, with a window cut through for viewing. To cut a window mount, a purposely designed mount cutting machine is advisable. However, it is possible to buy mounts already cut with a predefined window size and you then simply size your print accordingly. It is advisable to back your mounted prints with thin card, again to minimise the risk of damage.

For those in the Intermediate section, we strongly recommend the use of window mounts as above. However, we do allow the alternative of surface mounting a print on a standard mount, but note that this increases the chance of your prints getting damaged. Please also note that, because of risk to other entries, prints would have to be remounted in a window mount if selected as part of the club's entry into external competitions.

The club operates a "bulk buy" scheme for mounting materials, including backing card and framers' mounting tape. A committee member usually makes an announcement and takes orders a couple of times during the season. This way you can obtain 50cm x 40cm plain mounts in a range of colours at good prices. We do also keep a small stock of pre-cut mounts with an A4 size window - please request these in good time.

For advice or practical help with printing or mounting, or any other matter, contact the Members' Secretary on a club evening or by e-mail or any other Committee member.

Finally, we sincerely hope you will thoroughly enjoy your membership of CPS. Remember, the more you put in, the more you will get back, so do try and join in with as many of the club activities as you can.

Photographic Abbreviations

When at the club, you are likely to hear words and letters that don't mean anything to you. Here are some of the better known abbreviations:

CPS	Colchester Photographic Society
EAF	East Anglian Federation of Photographic Societies
PAGB	Photographic Alliance of Great Britain
CPAGB	'Credit' of PAGB (the first distinction level of the PAGB)
DPAGB	'Distinction' of PAGB (the second distinction level)
MPAGB	'Master' of PAGB (the third and highest distinction level)
APAGB	'Associate' of PAGB (awarded for meritorious services)
Hon PAGB	Awarded for exceptional services
RPS	Royal Photographic Society
LRPS	Licentiate of the RPS (the first distinction level)
ARPS	Associate of the RPS (second distinction level)
FRPS	Fellow of the RPS (the third and highest distinction level)
BPE	British Photographic Exhibitions
BPE* to BPE***** etc	'Stars' are awarded for numbers of exhibition acceptances in certain UK exhibitions. Above the '5 star' level, there is ABPE (Associate) and FBPE (Fellow).
FLAP	International Federation of Photographic Art.
AFIAP	'Artist' of FLAP - achieved by international exhibition acceptances
EFIAP	'Excellence' of FLAP - for further exhibition acceptances
MFIAP	'Master' of FLAP, the top award.

Sponsors

We are grateful to London Camera Exchange for their assistance in producing this booklet. Please support them when possible. Up to 10% discount is available on production of your Membership Card.

The club officers below can be contacted for information and queries.



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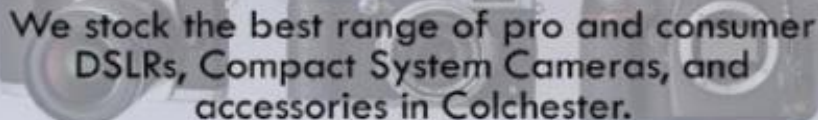
Quest was established by Colin Westgate in 1993 and has a reputation for excellent value, friendliness and great locations. These include Northumberland, Scottish Highlands and Islands, Ireland, India and our most popular destination, Iceland, where there are normally two trips each year.

For our current programme, please see www.questphoto.co.uk or email: questphoto@btinternet.com


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