

COLCHESTER PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY

COLCHESTERPHOTOSOC.CO.UK



"Surprised by the Street Entertainer" by Steve Ball

Members' Booklet

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

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Section 1 - Introduction

Welcome to Colchester Photographic Society! Our club meets on Tuesday evenings from September through 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 in 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 practical session that you may wish to take part in.

Section 2 - Taking Part

Our meetings are about the 'image' and our aim is to stimulate your learning about photography by showing you 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. Naturally 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 and one where you perhaps feel most comfortable. There is more information about this and 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 try 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 'workshop' 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 shortly after the start of the season and then essentially evenings where members images are reviewed and discussed outside of judging environment where suggested improvements might offered for consideration.

Section 3 - 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! Please try not to be shy If in doubt just approach one of the committee members, all of whom will be only too willing to help and chat with you ...honest! 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!

Section 4 - The Programme

Upon joining you will be given a copy of the current seasons programme booklet and which also contains competition rules and other important information relating to the club. This document can also be found on our website <https://colchesterphotosoc.co.uk/>

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 and usually other events in addition to that stated in the programme.

Section 5 - 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, unless you wish otherwise. 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](#).

Section 6 - 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.

Section 7 - Tuesday evening meetings

Meetings are held most Tuesday evenings and commence promptly at 19.30 sharp during the season at Christchurch, Ireton Road, Colchester, Essex, CO3 3AU.

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 and you are most welcome to offer assistance. Refreshments served during the interval in the entrance hall are also prepared by members on a rota basis. Your help with all this would also 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 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.

Section 8 - 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 the work. Through the judging, you will increase your perception of what makes a good image and hone your skills to improve your pictures. Please bear in mind that the judge on a competition night is not the final authority - you are! He or she will simply be expressing a personal opinion only and you and others may not agree. Photography is very much a form of art and as such is very much subject to one's own thoughts, likes and dislikes. 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 and the various links to be found there.

There are two main types of competition. '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. Please refer to the club programme for details relating to the timing and rules associated with these competitions, as well as many other events. In a competition images 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. The subject matter of these competitions is "Open" meaning anything of your choice.

In addition there may also be 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.

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. These and other competitions should challenge you to get out of your comfort zone to shoot things you perhaps wouldn't otherwise!

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 one of our Competition Secretaries or any one of the other Committee Members.

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 season in one evening. The choice of images to enter is up to the member of course but they must have been previously entered in one of the other competitions during the current season.

We urge you to read our Competition Rules carefully to avoid any misunderstanding and potential disappointment. Please feel free to speak to The Chairman or one of the Competition Secretaries if you are unsure or have a question.

Section 9 - 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. Details and dates are contained in the programme. Data Protection Laws mean that we are required to seek your permission before using any of your images in an "external" competition. We naturally assume that you are happy for us so to do. However if this is not the case and you do not want your images to go before the Selection Committee can you please inform the External Competitions Secretary accordingly.

Section 10 - 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. 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 withdraw 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, as mentioned previously, 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 you - 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 it have a message, tell a story and/or create emotion and feeling? 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 judge's 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.

Section 11 - 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 the 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 skilfully 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!

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 is 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!

Section 12 - 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 in the Programme and also on our website. Please always read these as they may change from one club season to another.

Please submit upload your PDI completion images by using PhotoEntry 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. If you haven't done this before please speak with the PDI Competition Secretary who will be only too pleased to help you. 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. Also it is essential that you also provide a digital PDI file of the images you have entered, again using the PhotoEntry system.

Section 13 - 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 we would prefer images presented 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. We do however allow entry of pictures where the image covers the whole surface area of the mount (this is called a "full-page bleed"), however there is a risk of damage and also images presented this way would not be able to go forward into external competitions.

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.

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.

Section 14 - 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:

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).
FIAP	International Federation of Photographic Art.
AFIAP	'Artist' of FIAP - achieved by international exhibition acceptances
EFIAP	'Excellence' of FIAP - for further exhibition acceptances
MFIAP	'Master' of FIAP, the top award.

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