

Melbourn & District Photographic Club

Minutes of the Club AGM held

Tue 31 Mar 2015

Present: David Gray (Chair), Keith Truman (Vice Chair), Jenny Collier (Treasurer), Peter North (Secretary / Webmaster), Nick Holway & Helen Holway (Programme Secs), David Stocks (Competition Sec / Asst Prog Sec), Bob Dennis (Member), Pam Aynsley, Gary Baker, Cath Brooksbank, Sam Buchanan, Rod Bufton, Rosemary Burt, Peter Burt, Karen Butler-Clark, John Cameron, Lynne Cole, Dave Cole, Ken Crane, Gerald Cranwell, David Harper, Penny Harper, Mo Hunt, Eve Maythorne, Jo Norcross, Trevor Marcuson, Paul Ravenscroft, David Reynolds, Pat Rowley, Malcolm Taylor, Anne Truman, Carol Warren.

Apologies for absence: Val Moules, Stan Keen, Roger Care, Carolyn Alexander, Keith Taylor, Monica Gray, Mike James, Colin Fielder, Ian Aynsley.

1. Adoption of Minutes of AGM held 1 April 2014

The minutes were unanimously carried without change nor comment.

2. Matters Arising from the 2014 AGM

Dave Cole requested an update on progress towards a club logo. This is covered under the Secretary's Report below

3. Chairman's Report - David Gray

David warmly welcomed all present and thanked the Committee for their contributions throughout the year and all members for their continued support of club.

He highlighted that the year had been very successful externally in that Melbourn had won both the Royston and Gamlingay battles, the Three Counties Cup and, notably, the Cambridgeshire Competition held at Whittlesford where we came joint second from a field of 36 Clubs. In this competition the winning club, Benfleet, dropped only one point, Melbourn dropped 5 points and the bottom club dropped 25 points.

Turning to internal matters, David thanked all members that had supported the club's battles and activities including the tea rota and meeting room preparation before and after events. He noted that it would help if a few more members could volunteer to clear chairs after meetings.

He noted that club membership had increased relative to last year and announced that the image age limit for internal competitions will be raised from 2 to 4 years. This is discussed further under the Vice Chairman's Report.

David noted that, disappointingly, the club was knocked out of the Melbourn Trophy (MT) in the first round and that the attendance of 45 visitors to the final in March was below our expectation of 50. The disappointment was compounded by the fact that many club members had worked very hard supplying / making cakes, donating raffle prizes and setting up the venue.

The visitors attending were mostly members of the 4 clubs competing in the MT final and a questionnaire has been sent out to all participating MT clubs in order to try and understand how we might maximise future attendance and / or deploy our effort more appropriately. We are also exploring the possibility of including Wisbech, Peterborough and Sutton in the Isle in next year's MT.

The MT final was attended by the President of the EAF, Bob Norris, who raised the possibility of awarding an EAF endorsed Blue Ribbon to individual winners.

David finished his report by inviting members to share any ideas they may have for external speakers and club events and encouraged the membership to take and edit many pictures throughout the Summer in readiness for the new season.

4. Vice Chairman's Report - Keith Truman

Competition Entries, Training and the Pair's Cup Initiative

Keith started his report by thanking David for the valuable role he plays in making the club a close, cohesive and friendly group that continues to improve the quality of its photography both internally and when judged against external benchmarks.

Keith discussed some emerging trends regarding club competition entries and noted that overall submissions were down this year following an increase last year. With reference to PDI competitions, he noted that, out of an average weekly attendance of 33 members, there were 30 members submitting images which is 10% down over the year. Additionally, only 20 members submitted images to the PDI of the Year competition.

Print submissions have followed a similar trend but with even lower numbers than PDI entries with 39, 56 and 51 prints being submitted in the 3rd open print competitions of 2012-13, 2013-14 and 2014-15 respectively. Accordingly, print

submissions are seen as a problem while PDI submissions, although in slight decline, are probably acceptable.

Keith noted that although new members and the more 'digitally experienced' members were keen to submit images, and the standard of the club output had increased significantly, there was still a lack of strength in depth across the general club membership.

In order to identify and understand any underlying issues, a survey was conducted on those members that never submit images and those members that sometimes submit images. Of those members that never submit images, 36% cited computer problems as an issue (of which 75% use the Mac platform) and 22% struggled to find the time to select and prepare images. Of those members that sometimes submit images, 75% stated that either they perceived their images as not good enough or they run out of time to present them.

To help members overcome these obstacles Keith proposed three ways forward. Firstly, Lightroom / Photoshop tuition will still be given either formally, through club presentations, or informally between club members on request. Secondly, the 2 year rule for image age will be doubled to 4 years to address the inevitable lag between members taking digital images and gaining the required editing experience to make the most of those images. Finally, a new Pair's Competition will be introduced in which a more experienced / competent member will be paired with a less experienced member with a view to take, edit and prepare 2 images each for an externally judged competition. During this process the more experienced member will coach the less experienced member in all aspects of the process.

Keith spent some time fleshing out some of the details as summarised below:

- Members will elect to participate or not - it will not be compulsory.
- Members will be rank-ordered based on their average scores per projected image from the 2014-2015 season
- Those members who did not submit any PDIs into competitions this past year will be given a low ranking
- The highest ranked member will be paired with the lowest ranked member
- Ranking positions will not be publicised and will only be known by KT
- Each pair will arrange one or multiple occasions where they will go out to take photographs together
- This is an opportunity to work and learn together and for the more experienced photographers to provide coaching assistance to the less experienced photographers
- Each pair will do their post-processing together which will provide another opportunity for members to learn from each other

- Each pair will submit 4 images into an Open Projected Image competition to be held 1Q 2016 (Normal PDI rules for submissions will apply), 2 images from each member in the Pair
- The Pair with the highest total score will win the new “Pair's Cup”

Club members strongly supported the Pair's Cup initiative and were reassured that nobody would be compelled to participate nor to pair with someone with whom they felt uncomfortable / incompatible. It was also stressed that the subject will be chosen by each pair and will not be the same for all e.g. as in the POV competition. The POV competition will continue as is.

Some club members also volunteered other views and ideas that might influence competition entry numbers. Lynne Cole made a strong argument to suggest that the biggest differentiator in competition success was whether or not the photographer had any editing skills with software such as Lightroom / Photoshop (Elements). She had personally taken the 'editing step' and had found YouTube videos by Terry White particularly good.

Lynne also proposed that, perhaps once or twice during the season, the more experienced software users in the club could set the less experienced an editing task for them to complete in order to stretch their editing skills and confidence. The results could be presented to the club in an instructive, non-competitive way.

Several members recounted experiences of clubs (including Melbourn in the past) that ran 2 leagues to represent the more and the less experienced photographers in competitions. This was generally regarded as a bad idea in that the less experienced league felt like 2nd class citizens and were made to feel that their successes were not as valid as they would have been as part of a more inclusive pool.

Outline Summer Programme

Keith finished his report by outlining the current status of the upcoming Summer Programme which has expanded to 12 events from last season's 6 as follows:

4 May	Car Show Royston / Walk on heath	Keith Truman
10 May	Wickham Fen insects / wildlife	Trevor Marcuson
31 May	Ely Cathedral / River - afternoon to evening	Gerald Cranwell
7 Jun	Rye House Karting	Lynne & Dave Cole
20 Jun	Women's Cycling Tour through Royston	Not Formal event
21 Jun	Garden Centre after hours, flowers etc	Karen Butler-Clark

3 Jul	The Village Challenge	Lynne & Dave Cole
18 Jul	Lea Valley Water Park Rodeo	Mike James
9 Aug	Henry Moore Sculptures	Bob Dennis
16 Aug	London walk / sunset	Jenny Collier
23 Aug	Cromer sunset at low tide	Keith Truman
TBD	Old Warden Airfield	David Gray
TBD	Punting on the Camb & night photos	Jo Norcross

5. Treasurer's Report - Jenny Collier

Jenny circulated copies of her accounts synopsis which is reproduced in full below:

Treasurers Report for the AGM March 31st 2015

Our current financial year ends at the end of the season, which makes it very difficult to prepare accounts prior to the AGM. This was mentioned at the last AGM and it was left for the incoming Treasurer to consider. I have discussed this with Bruce who examines our accounts and proposed to the committee that the end of the financial year be moved to the end of June, giving time for final payments to be made and the accounts to be formally examined before being sent out to members in July. The committee accepted this proposal and therefore this is an interim report prior to the preparation of the final accounts.

Our financial position is looking positive. Additional membership this year has swelled the coffers, and the amount collected in weekly subs has increased. Not all bills are in yet and the final bank statement is awaited, but it looks as if we have made a small profit over the year, probably between £150 - £200 once all outstanding bills are in.

Consequently membership fees for next year will remain the same.

This year as well as paying for ongoing expenses such as hall hire, judges, speakers, EAF membership and insurance, we have also purchased a set of studio lights, a new laser pointer and more print boxes.

The Melbourn Trophy brought in a small income, currently £172.58, although £55 of this is entry fees for next year's competition and we have yet to pay for the hall.

The bank balance currently stands at £2218.26, and while this may seem like a large amount we need to keep a reserve in case of any major equipment failure.

Next year it is planned to upgrade the Club's laptop RAM to 8GB. If you have any thoughts about useful equipment that we could purchase please let us know.

Jenny Collier, Treasurer

Jenny proposed that the end of the financial year be moved from 31 March to 30 June because incoming and outgoing funds will not be in a state of flux at the latter date. Bruce Huett can then audit the accounts more accurately. This motion was seconded by David Gray and the club carried the motion unanimously.

Jenny proposed that the Club's Building Society account, which is less than £2 in credit, be closed and the proceeds consolidated in our bank account. This motion was seconded by Keith Truman and the club carried the motion unanimously.

In closing, Jenny noted that the Melbourn Trophy was £202 in profit of which £75 are entry fees for next year.

David Cole noted that the 2013-14 accounts had not been presented at the end of last season. Jenny responded by saying that she is still chasing some missing records and the accounts are still unfolding. This issue will be resolved during the Summer.

David Gray thanked Jenny for the considerable work involved in managing a dynamic financial situation this season.

6. Secretary / Webmaster's Report - Peter North

Club Constitution

Peter started his report by inviting comments on the draft Club Constitution that had been posted on the Club website since Nov 2014. The Constitution is in need of updating and the EAF have stated that it must now be readily available to the membership as a pre-requisite of our insurance cover.

Rosemary Burt noted that the option of proxy voting on motions would be difficult to justify because the member appointing a proxy would not be aware of the facts and nuances of the debate preceding any vote. Peter agreed with this and proposed that item 9 in the draft proposing proxy voting be deleted.

Peter commented that the draft did not clearly define the proportion of the voting membership needed to carry a motion. He proposed that this be defined simply as 'a majority'. Peter proposed a motion that the Club Constitution be adopted to include the two amendments above, this was seconded by David Gray and was carried unanimously.

Peter confirmed that the amended Constitution will be published on the Club website thus satisfying the EAF requirements.

Information vs Spam

Peter moved on to discussing the dissemination of information to members while addressing the balance between relaying information members actually want to read and the ever increasing nuisance of 'spam' emails.

Currently he gets around 20-30 external emails a week of potential interest to the club. Almost exclusively, these relate to lectures, exhibitions and events at other EAF clubs or private companies advertising 'photographic' holidays in exotic locations.

The club agreed unanimously that these should be treated as spam, deleted and not passed on to members who would prefer to actively seek this information if they need it. Peter will continue to pass on anything he judges of genuine interest to members e.g. valid discounts on photo hardware / consumables. There is a dedicated link on the club website that displays all EAF club events in diary form if members would like to be aware of other club's events.

Club Logo

Following the launch of the Club Logo Competition last year, only 6 entries were received despite two deadline extensions and several reminders. Because the official name of the club is quite long, the original option of including it within the logo make's it too small to be legible and it was agreed that the logo should be just a graphic with the name of the club shown more legibly by its side.

At a recent committee meeting it was agreed to develop the camera-back logo idea submitted by Dave Cole. The camera back will be represented in a more frame-like manner and the club name within the logo will be replaced with a larger, more striking image such as a colourful histogram or a graphic scene. This will be worked on by Peter, presented to the committee and adopted in time for the start of the next season in Sept.

Website

The content of the club website continues to be up-dated at least twice a week although the background slide show is only changed once a year in Sept to reflect the high scoring images from the last season. With the help of Keith Truman, who supplies the images, the site has reproduced all of the high scoring images from all seven of the internal competitions over the last two seasons.

About 30% of the membership have a personal gallery on the site and high scoring competition images from members are automatically added to their gallery. Members that would like to have a personal gallery on the site should contact Peter.

The site attracts about 36,000 hits / year, 90% of which are from the UK, USA, EU and Australia. The most searched for terms are variations of Melbourn Photo Club and Melbourn Trophy, the most popular out-link is EAF and the most popular pages are About Us, Melbourn Trophy and Club Programme.

7. Programme Secretary's Report - Nick Holway

Nick reviewed a very successful and varied programme of external speakers this season with club members responding to each in turn to voice their opinion:

- Wildlife on your doorstep & exciting wildlife from around the world - Lecture by Tom Way
- Lightroom & Elements - Lecture by Ken Payne
- The Exhibitionists - Lecture by Barbie & Rusty Lindsay
- Winter Wonderland - Yellowstone & the Grand Tetons - Lecture by Judy & David Hodgson
- An Evening with Caroline Guthrie - Lecture by Caroline Guthrie
- Aviation Photography - Lecture by Paul Langshaw

There was broad consensus that Tom Way's lecture was outstanding. Nick welcomed any ideas members may have for external speakers for the new season.

8. Competition Secretary's Report - David Stocks

David reviewed the externally judged competitions over last year including the 3 internal PDI, 3 internal Print, Panel Print, Print of the Year, PDI of the Year, one round of the Melbourn Trophy, and the inter-club battles with Royston, Gamlingay and the Three Counties Cup. Melbourn has arranged dates for next year's battles including a fourth with Bottisham & Burwell.

David acknowledged that organising judges can be very challenging and the quality of judging was variable last year and not always predictable based on past performance. He talked in some depth about the different ways judges express their feedback, how they varied in the degree of constructive feedback and how disheartening it can be to have your images scored low especially when the judgement is devoid of any reason for a low score.

David wisely suggested that members should try to see through how comments are made and focus instead on any constructive feedback that is given. Much can also be learned from the judge's comments on other member's images without the frustration and disappointment associated with having our own work judged. The committee are making efforts to review the performance of judges as objectively as possible while being aware that there is a very limited pool from which to choose.

David also announced that there will be an international battle with a Spanish club next year and details will emerge in time for the new season.

Anne Truman asked if there was any correlation between what judges charge to visit and their subsequent performance. David replied that most judges only charge travelling expenses and it was therefore difficult to connect the two.

9. Awards Presentation - David Gray

David Gray presented the end of season awards as follows:

Chairman's Trophy (highest overall competition score)

1st	Peter North	(334)
2nd	Keith Truman	(321)
3rd	Gary Baker	(306)

Ken Clifford Trophy (highest total score for Projected Images)

1st	Peter North	(166)
2nd	Bob Dennis	(160)
3rd	Keith Truman	(154)

J&J Cox Trophy (highest total score for Prints)

1st	Peter North	(168)
2nd	Keith Truman	(167)
3rd	Gary Baker	(158)

Projected Image of the Year

- 1st Dave Cole
- 2nd Jo Norcross
- 3rd Jo Norcross

Print of the Year

- 1st Keith Truman
- 2nd Jenny Collier
- 3rd Keith Truman

Panel Print Competition

- 1st David Stocks
- 2nd Bob Dennis
- 3rd Keith Truman

Points of View

- 1st Cath Brooksbank

Rookie of the Year

- 1st Mike James

10. Re-election of Officers - All

The current officers of the club made it known that they were happy to stand for re-election, no other proposals were forthcoming. The motion for the re-election of existing officers was proposed by Dave Cole, seconded by Eve Maythorne and carried unanimously by the club.

11. Date of Next Meeting

Proposed for 15 Sept 2015 by David Gray

12. AOB

Gerald Cranwell questioned whether we needed the Vice Chairman's, now traditional, email countdown to the new season. The majority thought this was not only done with humour and good intentions, but was a useful reminder to prepare.

Lynne Cole suggested that, for one club night, the club should run an internal PDI competition where the top 5 club scorers do not exhibit images but judge instead. This was supported by the majority of members.

Paul Ravenscroft noted the increasing use of photo-editing software in club competitions and would like to formally know how much of a given image is 'real' vs 'created'. This sparked a wide-ranging debate that centred around how you define the boundaries associated with editing outcomes like 'enhanced', 'corrected', 'tidied up', 'created' etc from a photographic perspective. We noted that some judges are beginning to vocalise their observation of creative photo-editing when judging and, frustratingly, will often mention it even when not present. Notwithstanding these comments, most judges will go on to score the image 'as seen'.

The consensus view settled on the premise that photography is fundamentally a creative art and images should be viewed and judged as they are seen and not how they may have been created. It was suggested that members, if curious, could informally ask each other how competition images were created and enhanced during tea breaks or after meetings.

In closing, Pat Rowley and Malcolm Taylor kindly thanked the committee for their commitment and enthusiasm in support of the club.

Peter North

Club Secretary / Webmaster

1 April 2015