

OSPS newsletter

The newsletter of the Ordnance Survey Photographic Society
In its 64th year.
spring 2017 special edition



John J Philpott MBE FRPS

Editor's thoughts

At the end of February we received some very sad news. John Philpott, a founder member of the Ordnance Survey Photographic Society, had died. Looking back through the archive of newsletters I found that John had made numerous contributions, so I've assembled them in this special edition together with some memories and tributes from club members, and the piece below which he wrote in 2003 for our 50th birthday.

Mike Stacey

Memories of a little club

Like thousands of other photographers I have spent many happy and instructive evenings at camera clubs. In my case it has been the Ordnance Survey Photography Society, of which I have been a member since its original meeting, 50 years ago. Through good and bad times the club has continued to attract some very fine photographers and been able to compete very successfully. In recent years we have twice represented the Southern Photographic Federation at Connah's Quay in the PAGB championships. We have at the moment a membership of about 25 or so, and when you consider we compete with big clubs such as Winchester, Southampton, Portsmouth, Basingstoke etc., we can justifiably feel quite proud.

I joined the Ordnance Survey Office (as it then was) in 1947 from school and my first job was in a wet plate studio. This meant operating a camera big enough to accommodate negatives up to 48"x36"x1/4". The glass was first of all coated with Collodian and then washed in a bath of Silver Nitrate until black. This, still wet glass, was then placed in the camera back and exposed. It is quite amazing to think that this method was still in partial use at OS until the mid 60's.

It was during this time that the club decided to mount an exhibition entitled 'Southampton in the 60's'. The photographs, depicting all aspects of life in Southampton, were displayed in the Edwin Jones department store and afterwards given to the city to be kept in the archives. A very ambitious project for such a small club. If my memory serves me correctly, all the prints were in black and white, but there were some transparencies as well.

These days many of the members have changed from chemical printing to digital printing with excellent results. I hope there will always be a place for the many different methods and it is my fervent hope that this grand little club I have spent most of my Tuesday evenings at, will continue to thrive and turn out more photographers like Leigh Preston, Bob Elliot, Roy Fisher and Maureen and David Toft.



MBE FRPS.

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President	<i>Position vacant</i>	Competition sec	Niall Tyler
Vice President	<i>Position vacant</i>	Programme sec	Jenny Harding
Chairman	Barbara Beauchamp	Membership sec	Mike Stacey LRPS
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Secretary	Alan Harris	Committee members	Kevin Ramsell
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			Ian Miller

Cover picture: John cutting the OSPS 60th birthday cake © Mike Stacey

A view from the Chair

John Philpott was a well known judge and speaker in the photographic clubs around the area, and this is how I remember him.

He was an astute, informative judge, who always managed to say something encouraging about every photo he judged. His talks were something else, full of good photographs and wonderful anecdotes. Here is one of my favourites.

While one of his daughters was away he had charge of her dog. John was never certain who was leading who when they went out. The dog was keen to chase and run about. One day the dog had wind of something and was about to give chase. John quickly wound the dog's lead round a young tree, to give extra weight to the command 'stay'. Seconds later, the dog, John, and the uprooted tree were giving chase. John did not go back to that park again.

His anecdotes were mostly funny, but always well told, and on his last visit to the club he commented very gently that some of the presentations were not as well prepared as they could have been. I have never forgotten those words, and on the few occasions when I do show my work and talk about it, I prepare and prepare and rehearse.

Thank you John.

Barbara Beauchamp

Memories of John

One of the nicest guys you could ever wish to meet, his infectious humour and lively conversation lifted everybody's spirits when he was around. Long before the digital age arrived, I knew John, and he was one of the best black and white print workers in the club, particularly in portraiture. He never really embraced the digital camera age but was a chemical wizard in the darkroom, and his expertise in dodging, burning and toning of his beautiful 20x16 prints (yes, imagine that size now!) was second to none. However, he once said to me that no two prints could ever be the same, as a lot of experimentation went on.

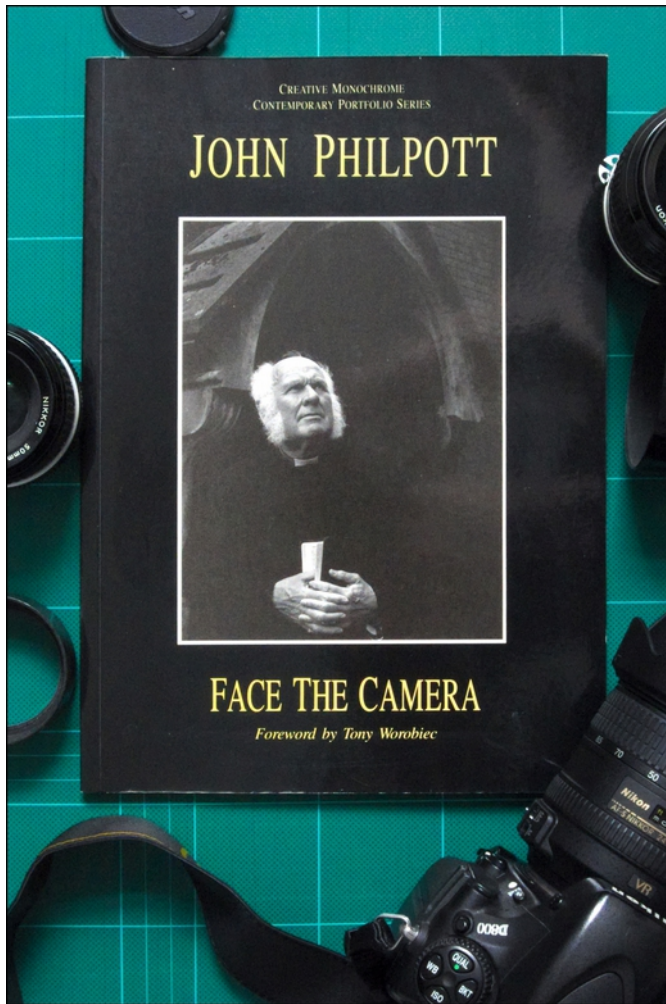
He was a real 'socialite' and, quite apart from the quality of his work, he had that rare ability to put any of his portrait sitters totally at ease, from a boiler man to a beautiful lady, and could always bring out the character of the subject.

A little anecdote; before PDIs took over, a group of us presented 'slides and music' sequences using Purlock Duo Fade. At that time John worked downstairs in the PLC Repro department and I was a draughtsman in Carto. I assembled several 'title' and 'end' names for my shows on positive film offcuts using filmsetter type on 24x36mm panels and would pop them down to John 'under the radar', and he would process them into perfect film negatives which then required minimal photo spotting and cutting to fit Gepe mounts for projection. It all seems quite primitive now compared with the magic of Photoshop, but it was fun!

In the days when we had visitors filling an evening with huge piles of prints, some could be laboured and overlong and last for hours! However, when John presented an evening of prints you could be sure of a thoroughly entertaining evening with a commentary full of quips and little stories. Long may the memories last!

Martin Williams

Face the camera (first published 1994)



'Face the camera' is a collection of 42 of John's portraits, shot on location as well as in the studio, all in black & white. It was published in 1994 by Creative Monochrome.

At last John Philpott's book has landed on my desk. I had John committing suicide in front of my car as I was driving home from work, as it turned out, to persuade me to part with a paltry £7.50 for this marvellous paperback!

As I manage a company that specialises in reproduction, in both colour and black & white, I can honestly say that the quality of the reproduction of John's work has been handled with supreme skill. As John tends to use the full range of the blacks available to him on photographic paper, shadow detail causes horrendous problems for the printer.

As we all know, John does not use one word when eight will do! However, he has managed to keep his written element down to two pages, thus leaving space for 42 of his pictures to speak for him. And what pictures! I've personally known John for about 14 years (is it really that long?) and thought I had seen the best of his work. All I can say is get yourself your own copy, you will not be disappointed. I'm sure John will bring a few along to the club if you ask.

One minor criticism; why do a Geoffrey Archer and use a twenty-year-old picture of yourself in the introduction? After all John, grey hair becomes you.

Alan Whittaker

John remembered

John was a much respected member of OSPS. He was the font of all knowledge regarding monochrome prints and monochrome darkroom printing. He introduced me to the terms 'liquid sunshine' and 'sparkle'.

'Liquid sunshine' was 'ferry liquid', a photographic chemical used to enhance the highlight areas of monochrome prints. I think its chemical name is Potassium Ferrocyanide. You will have to check my facts as I am no chemist! This could produce the 'sparkle' but he always emphasised that LIGHT was vitally important in photography. He was friendly and approachable and helped 'new boys' like me a lot. He was an inspiration and really you cannot give higher praise than that.

Roy Fisher

In the beginning there was Cyril (first published 1998)

Mention has already been made that John was a founder member of the Ordnance Survey Photographic Society. The earliest written records we have of club activities date from 1966, so this, John's description of those early days, is a valuable glimpse into the club's beginnings, with that first meeting being held in 1953.

As John points out, it was very different then. If you're puzzled by the reference to London Road (in Southampton), that's where Ordnance Survey was before the move to Maybush. Of the names mentioned, the early members and fellow founders, one may seem familiar to you. Herbie Cox has a trophy named after him, originally for slides and now PDIs. And if you're wondering about John's first camera, the Dacora was a German-made folding camera shooting 120 roll film. A little online research suggests John's choice was the 'mid range' model with an f4.5 lens and Vario shutter.

I had finished National Service and had bought myself a 'Dainty Dacora' camera for £16, over a month's wages in those far off days. It was rumoured that a camera club was to be started at London Road, complete with darkroom. Eventually the first meeting took place, and I was there. Because of my innate shyness, (which as you all know has never left me!!) I sat at the back clutching my 'Dainty D' in my hands and not saying a word.

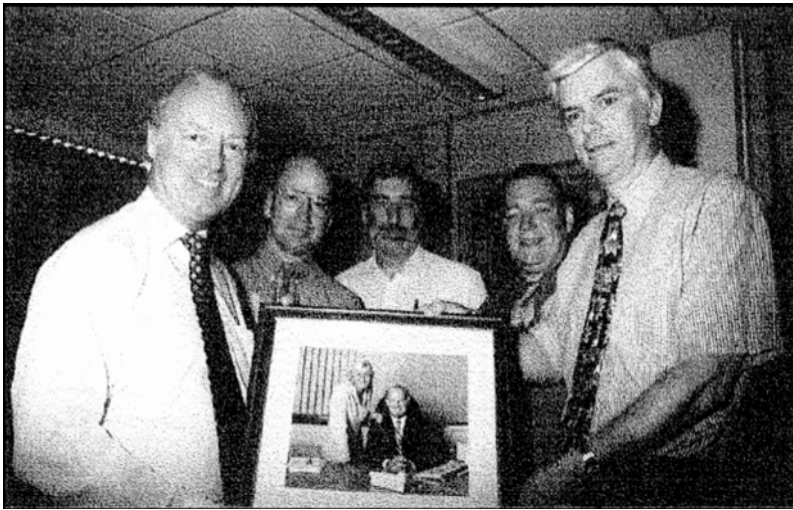
Most of the talking was done by Cyril Limburn, who took it upon himself to be the first Chairman. Since he was the proud owner of a Leica (almost a year's salary in those days), who else could we choose? That first year we had no programme, every evening was ad hoc with Cyril doing most of the talking and showing us his postcards, all of which, according to him, were 'promising'! They didn't look very good to me but then who was I to judge? Perhaps the most important member was Jim Peters (Officer in charge of Repro), who was instrumental in getting us the darkroom and, I believe, most of the equipment and a constant supply of fixer. Others in the club in those early years were Doug Metcalfe, Jack Venner, Jack McKenzie, Jack Dawson, Cliff Kear; later on Vince Willstead, Alan Smith, Herbie Cox, Ken Blackman and Fred Evans. These last two were the first 'stars' of the club. Ken didn't stay with OS for very long as he left and joined Martins by the old bus station, and then after a few years set up his own commercial studio down near the docks. Fred Evans gained an ARPS with a set of prints (B&W) of Salisbury Cathedral. His premature death was a sad loss to the club.

It is interesting to note that distinctions were very few and far between in those days. In Southampton CC, Donald Herbert and H.C. Hickman were Fellows, and Fred was an 'A', but Courtenay Hosking, another member of OS who was highly regarded throughout the Southern Federation, never achieved a distinction.

I had my first entry in the Southampton CC exhibition in 1959, and looking through the programme nearly all the entrants with letters after their names were from abroad. These days practically every exhibitor has 'letters' of some sort. I suspect that Cyril Limburn would be amazed at the achievements that this wonderful little club has enjoyed over the 45 years since he first showed his postcards. Without this club I would not have achieved what I have in life. I have learnt something from all of you over the years and I have enjoyed your friendship. May I say a big "thank you" and wish you well for the next 45 years.

John Philpott MBE FRPS

Farewell to our patron (first published 1998)



When Professor David Rhind left Ordnance Survey on 31st July for pastures new, we felt it only right to acknowledge the contribution and support given by him as our club patron. What better than to give him than a photo (of David and his wife, Christine) and who better to take it than our very own man of portraiture, President John Philpott? On David's last day, the splendid portrait was presented by Chairman, Stewart Bowler, seen with other club members.

From left to right: Professor David Rhind, Mike Stacey, John Williams, Finlay Fraser, Stewart Bowler. (Apologies for the poor quality, but this is a scan from a printed copy of the original newsletter.)

A pair of jacks (first published 1999)

Two of the early members of OSPS back in the sixties were Jack Vermer and Jack Mackenzie. In those days no print competition was complete without some pictures of the Common. Both the 'Jacks' were well able to take advantage of the early morning mists in the autumn and the various activities that took place on the three lakes.

Jack V. worked in the studio and we became friends. I remember on several occasions he took Margaret and I to the dances down at the pier. Not many of us had cars in those days, so it was quite a treat. All of this took place whilst I was working on the OS site in London Road, but on moving to Crabwood I didn't see so much of Jack. When I learnt he had entered hospital to have his foot amputated, I was devastated. He didn't live long afterwards but he remained cheerful to the end. I shall always remember him as the person who showed me how to print and use a darkroom.

When I joined the OS at sixteen I began playing for the football team. This was where I first met Jack Mackenzie. He must have been nearly 40, but was still a good, hard, left back. The trouble was he had a fiery temper and, since I was playing left half, I invariably became embroiled in his 'punch-ups'! It was some years later when I met up with him again at the camera club. Strange how someone with his temperament should choose to take such wonderfully delicate pictures. I can remember on one occasion I was Chairman and we had a lecture about home-made extension tubes. Can you imagine someone talking for an hour and a half about reconstituted cocoa tins and showing the same three pictures over and over again? Jack, who always sat next to me, began to snore. I knew if he woke up he would have something rude to say, so I kept him at half snore by gently digging him in the ribs every 30 seconds. I can't remember what my vote of thanks was like, but I do remember the two 'Jacks' with great pleasure and I will always be grateful for their encouragement and faith. I hope I have not let them down!

John Philpott MBE FRPS

Dear departed (first published 1999)

If one looks at the history of Southampton Camera Club over the last 30 years, it is surprising to note just how many Ordnance Survey people have been stalwarts of the club. Perhaps the most influential of these was Courtenay Hosking, who incidentally reminded me so much of Yehudi Menuhin! He was a great artist as well as a photographer and, with the demise of Donald Herbert, Hickman, Bruton and Beck, he steered the club through a worrying time. It was during this period he drifted away from the Ordnance Survey, although he was always willing to help in any way he could, and gave great encouragement to young people from both clubs. It is sad to think his death was both premature and distressingly painful; a man so immersed in photography and his feeling for Southampton Camera Club that on his deathbed he charged Jim Mansfield (another Survey man) with the upkeep of its history and the keeping of archived prints of all its great members, a task Jim continues to do to this day. (And he gives a lecture on it!)

Another member who drifted away from the O.S was John Roberts. John went to Southampton CC at a time when the International Exhibition was beginning to flag. He took it over and raised it to the status it holds today. He was a very serious man to whom photography was his first priority. He was a prime mover for 'Southampton in the Sixties', an exhibition Ordnance Survey mounted and which many of you may remember. I recall him telling me once he had to go without food sometimes to enable him to buy photographic paper. There was a morbid side to his character which was reflected in his work, much of which was taken in cemeteries. Sadly he eventually look his own life – a great loss to us all.

Arguably the best photographer the Ordnance Survey has spawned and was allowed to drift to Southampton was Alan Brindle, now a brilliant wedding photographer. I'm sure if he had kept up his creative work he would have had a hatful of gold medals by now. A sad loss, but then weren't they all!

I can think of at least a dozen others, perhaps I'll save them for another time if you are interested.

John Philpott MBE FRPS

The magic combo (first published 1999)

At the beginning of the sixties, one of the people who gave the OSPS stability was Bill Holt. He was one of the nicest men you could ever wish to call a friend.

He was not a well man, as he had been gassed in the 1914-18 war and, as a consequence, suffered badly with his breathing. Little did I know then, that I would share many happy and memorable days with his son (who also worked at OS) in the T A. He too was called Bill, and served many more years than I did, even though I did 12 years' service.

My abiding memory of Bill senior was his constant search for the magic combination – of film, developer and printing paper – that would give him the perfect result. I used to say to him to use one film and one developer and stick to them, adjusting your development time to suit your exposure meter (not on camera in those days). He never took my advice; but then, why should he? After all, he had been at it a lot longer than I had!

I do think, however, that his great joy was not in winning the monthly print competition, but in trying to find that magic combination. There are many ways of enjoying a hobby, and that was how Bill got his kick. I cannot remember one print he ever made, but I do recall his enthusiasm and friendship, and the glee with which he would tell me about his latest experiments.

There were no great photographers in the club in those days, but by golly, there were some characters and Bill was one of the nicest.

John Philpott MBE FRPS



Another character!

Sharing

John was a founder member of OSPS and, in his book, observes that the greatest impact on his work was the camera club meeting, sharing experiences, skills and mutual encouragement. Be true to yourself, make mistakes and discover what works for you.

For Maureen and I his influence was huge. Get in close, ALWAYS be aware of distractions in the background. If cropping, is there anything in the cropped area of any interest, for example, sky (usually boring) and move your shooting position to find the best composition and the best LIGHT (cannot overemphasise). We spent happy hours in his or our conservatory chatting about photography and looking at pictures.

His talk was a highlight, amusing and informative. When OSPS came second in the national slide championships at Warwick, the Lancashire and Cheshire Photographic Union (L&CPU) invited OS to give a full day's talk to them. Afterwards they said they had no idea a Saints centre half could be so funny. Typical John!



David and Maureen Toft

Photo courtesy of Mike Smith

My inspiration (first published 2000)

The Christmas before last I was asked to give an after dinner speech at the Andover Camera Club Dinner. I have had a long and happy association with the club and was delighted to accept. I decided to try and explain what in my early life had influenced my love of photography and my compulsion to take pictures of people.

From about 1935 my mother and I went to live with my grandparents in Dibbles Wharf, Northam. They lived in a four-bedroomed house within the yard. This was because of my grandfather being the foreman shipwright. From about the age of five, I had the biggest playground of any boy in Southampton.

There was a night watchman who came on duty at about 5 o'clock. He had this wonderful hut with a big stove in the middle, on which there was always a big pot of stew heating up – salmonella had not been heard of in those days! I spent many evenings sharing a plate of stew and then accompanying him round the yard checking that everything was all right. There were lofts that we had to climb up into, containing sacks of sugar, there was a sawmill, giant heaps of coal and coke, weighing machines, offices, a wonderful array of things for an impressionable young lad to poke around in.

Almost every day my Aunt Dolly visited us. She thought the world of me and was always taking my photograph. She only had a Kodak box camera, but the interesting thing is she never took me just where I happened to be, but would find a location and dress me up in all sorts of costumes. One day she turned up with an all-in-one costume that made me look like a cross between an aeroplane and a pilot, complete with goggles. Not content to take the picture in the yard, she dressed me up and took me on the bus over to the flying school at Hamble, and got permission to take my picture standing beside one of the planes, (a Tiger Moth I think). Imagine how I felt on the bus with everyone looking at me. The funny thing is that until I started to write the speech for Andover, it had not occurred to me that it was Auntie Dolly who sowed the seeds that gave me the style that had given me so much pleasure over the years.

One other interesting fact is that one day when walking around Northam with Tony Clark, I showed him where I had lived before the war, and he told me he also had connections with Dibbles. He had been to sea before coming to Southampton, and used to bring coal to the wharf from Rotterdam. Funny we should both finish up as Fellows of the Royal, and who do you think gave the Christmas speech at Andover the year before me? Why, Tony Clark of course!

PS. Northam was badly bombed one Tuesday afternoon and again on the Thursday of the same week. When we came out of the air raid shelters there was devastation everywhere. Supermarine had taken a direct hit. We could see the remains, just a mass of twisted metal across the water. That was the last day we spent at Dibbles; we moved in with Auntie Dolly and after another terrible raid on the Saturday night we all moved to Wimborne. I was nine years old. I never saw my friend the watchman again. His hut and the house are no longer there.

John Philpott MBE FRPS

Who are those people? (first published 2002)

Many years ago, an occasional series began in the OSPS newsletter called 'Who are those people'. These were profiles and sketches of club members, and the second in the series was John J Philpott MBE, FRPS, from an article which first appeared in an RPS Pictorial Group newsletter.

At school I wished I was clever so as to avoid the beatings and detentions, but that was not to be. At the same time I wished that Valerie, my next door neighbour, would let me kiss her more often, but that was not to be either! In the summer holidays I went to work on a farm, picking

radishes for a farthing a bunch. It was there I met Jane Russell playing the part of a land army girl called Ruby. She wouldn't let me kiss her very often either, so at the grand old age of 14 I gave up women to concentrate on football. My overriding ambition was to play for Southampton but after 3 years at the Dell I realised the chances of ever playing for the first team were pretty remote, so I left to concentrate on my job at the Ordnance Survey.

I was not the best map-maker in the world, but I hung on until at the age of 49 I was asked to take over as staff photographer: So, I became a professional with my own studio, darkroom and offices. A refrigerator full of film, cameras from 35mm to Sinar. The 'Scheimpflug rule'! What's that?? I never did understand how it worked but I used it quite well in my way. The sheer beauty of a perfectly exposed 5x4 transparency takes some beating. For eleven years I had perfect job satisfaction. There were moments when I didn't sleep a wink worrying about the results. Royalty, MPs, Heads of State, VIPs of all walks of life would come to see how the best maps in the world were made. The OS would expect pictures of everything for the archives. How do you explain to the Director General that the picture of himself with the Queen did not come out? 'Better luck next time sir!' Or, having been sent to Scotland at great expense to get some once in a lifetime shots, it rains the entire three days. Once you build a reputation, people think you can do anything and once again I wished I was more gifted.

On the occasion of a seminar for SE region, the man in charge wanted a picture of everyone together, all 300 of them! I had to climb on to the roof to get the shot. A job at Carnoustie, where the American Survey had set up a wonderful piece of equipment for measuring accurate distances, was fixed to the back of a large transporter with a flood light on each corner. Thinking we had finished shooting for the day I was in the bar enjoying my third G&T when in bursts the boss. 'Get the camera – there's a great shot to be had in the moonlight!'. I can remember the exposure time to this day – 15 sec at F22, with me running and leaping around flashing the Metz as much as I could. The result was one of the best pictures I ever took.

One difficulty I found was basically still being a civil servant and the necessity of observing protocol and rank. No matter how high up the tree people climb they can still be very shy and nervous, and it is up to the photographer to put them at their ease whilst throwing in lots of 'sirs' and 'madams'! Royalty, of course, can't be directed or spoken to so you just have to make the best of what they give you. My big bonus was the friendship shown to me by the Director General, Peter McMaster. It was often just him and I waiting to greet some VIP, he always introduced me and was proud to announce that I was a Fellow of the Royal. If there was a formal picture to be taken of him, he would bring several suits and ties and ask me to choose which one he should wear! There are OS offices all over the country and we often had to visit them. On many occasions he would be my chauffeur, we would stay in the same hotel and share an evening meal together. At other times life was made difficult by other people. I watch press photographers battling against one another on the TV and remember what it was like trying to get a shot with elbows and shoulders banging into you. The lady whose photo I took in her office in London with a big window as background showing the Houses of Parliament, she made me retake it because the first time I made her



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smile. Another lady was opening an exhibition at O.S. and whilst making a speech broke off to tell me not to use any 'pix' of her with her glasses on. In the main though, people were very nice and did all they could to be helpful, like the lady executive director who offered me the use of her Paris flat! 'OOH. LA. LA!'

Thank goodness I was given the opportunity to do a job which I loved. I don't know what became of Valerie or Ruby, the Land Army girl, and when I see the lads I was at school with they don't seem

to remember what a dunce I was. Southampton F.C. have managed without me – just! However, my wife Margaret and family, and photography, have made my life magic and given me some great memories.

John Philpott MBE FRPS

JP

It has been my privilege to have known 'JP' for many years and to have known him as a good friend for most of that time. When he retired he lost access to the darkroom facilities at Crabwood House. As a result I threw my darkroom open to him and we subsequently spent many hours working on images together, sharing different techniques to our mutual advantage.

Although I was younger than John by some 5 years, we had many mutual friends from our younger days, mostly through football. We enjoyed many chats about the 'good old days' when top-paid footballers were earning just £10 per week!

We all know John as being a superb photographer, particularly with people photography. He had a very enviable knack of putting sitters at ease and bringing out their personalities. Oh how I wish I had that sort of skill. But for all his undoubted abilities he remained a very modest and shy person who never had a bad word to say of anyone.

John, it has been my supreme good fortune to have known you. You are sadly missed.

Brian Jones

John Philpott MBE FRPS

John Philpott was one of life's gentlemen, an exceptional portrait photographer and a highly acclaimed darkroom worker. He was 85 when he died recently, leaving those of us who knew him to recall his remarkable ability to portray character and humour in his work.

A lifelong member of the Ordnance Survey Photographic Society, his environmental portraits gained John a Fellowship in 1989. He was awarded the MBE for services as the in-house photographer at the Ordnance Survey – he photographed Royalty and a diverse collection of visitors from John Betjeman to Russell Grant, in his own style, one that made you believe you

Despite his talent, and contrary to the acclaim he received, John was always uncertain and reserved about his work. A portfolio of his dramatic, assertive images, was published in 1994 and he joined Arena at the request of Joan Wakelin.

Sad and sorrowful though John's passing is, he led a full life, travelled widely, laughed a lot and inspired many. He leaves a wife – Margaret, to whom he was married for over 60 years, his daughters Vicky and Joanne and his three adored grandchildren.

Leigh Preston FRPS

In case you're wondering about the other character in the centre, the camera is a Sinar 5x4 monorail, though the exact model is elusive. The chunky metal tripod is also courtesy of Sinar.

So much more

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to progress and in the mid 90s shot a portrait of a mountaineering friend in Ruigh Aiteachain bothy, in the Cairngorms. I was really pleased with it, and then John judged it in a club competition and described it as 'a little gem'. That was such a boost to my confidence!

Much, much further down the line, with 6 years as an OS staff photographer and some 2500 corporate 'head shots' under my belt, I'm still in awe of John's abilities. There's so much more to a portrait than just being there and correctly exposed, and John knew exactly what that magic ingredient was and how to use it.

Mike Stacey

I've got no trousers on!! (first published 2002)

The 'battle of Connah's Quay' took place in October 2002, when we represented the SPF in the big national competition. It's not the first time we've done this, but it was daunting never the less. John tells the story.



Maureen and David picked me up on Friday 26th October at 1.00 pm. and we proceeded with our prints to contest the 2002 print championships of the P.A.G.B. at Connah's Quay. Our first destination was Chester, where we were booked into a small hotel overnight. The journey took about 2 hours longer than we expected due to more than average hold-ups on the M5/6. We eventually arrived and booked in and were given our room keys. I immediately made a mistake and tried to gain access to the wrong room. After much huffing and puffing the door opened and Den Holdaway's face appeared around the corner and informed me that he was changing his trousers and was not wearing a pair at the moment. Oh dear! Later, I was informed he had come up on the train with Cliff Pinn from Winchester C.C.

Saturday morning saw us all down for breakfast, 'booted and spured' and ready to get to Connah's Quay by 9.15am. Den and Cliff had intended to go on the bus but David said we could all get in his car. So, with Den in the front and Cliff, Maureen and I 'bonding' in the back, we made it to Deeside College bang on time and lo and behold Martin and Claire were there to greet us.

Having handed in our prints we had ample time to talk to friends from other clubs, notably Bournemouth and Launceston. Maureen knew one of the judges and I was well acquainted with the other two, but it made no difference to the result of the important first round. We could only finish 16th out of the 33 clubs entered. Bournemouth finished 5 points ahead of us, so just missed out on the top 8 spot. The top 8 clubs contest the second round to decide the winners. The rest of us then competed with 5 prints each for a silver plate. We decided to go for broke and change 4 of our prints to go with Maureen's 'Dreamboat' which had scored 13 in the first round, but all to no avail – we finished tenth! However, our friends and partners from the Southern Fed, Bournemouth, won the Plate. The two ladies who we all knew very well, were so delighted, it was almost as if we had won it ourselves .



Did I say who won the Federation Championship? No, I don't think I did. Sorry about that. If I remember rightly it was a club called Smethwick P.S. Never heard of them myself!



This was not the end of the story however. When we saw Den again it was to learn that he and his friend Cliff who had booked to stay another night in the hotel in order to have a look round Chester on the Sunday, were trapped by the bad weather and had to book in for a third night. Oh dear! what an expensive weekend, but what wonderful commitment to the club. Good on you Den!!

John Philpott MBE FRPS with photos by Den Holdaway

Memories

John was a creative and talented photographer who was one of my most important influences in my early years. His ability to place his subjects in context showed his mastery of the craft of photography. His darkroom skills were legendary.

During one of his talks in the late 1970s, John showed a photo of a young boy dressed in a cowboy hat. It was not a particularly creative shot, however, he did describe his home in the 1960s; a large flat in Highfield which he used as a studio. The picture was of the son of the tenants, the Tizzards.

That struck a chord with me as I was, at the time, living in a large flat in Highfield with an elderly family, the Tizzards, who had a son in his 20s. I asked John afterwards and he told me it was an old converted mansion, 28 Highfield Lane. This was my home at the time. Such a coincidence!

Dave Perkes

50 years! (first published 2003)

Dear members

As this is the 50th year of the clubs existence, I thought I should, as your President, give a small summary of those years. As with all clubs there have been ups and downs. Perhaps one thing that has always been a great help is that we have not had to pay for a venue and that we have been able to offer darkroom and studio facilities. Also the OS Sports and Social Club have helped with expensive items when needed. However, the strength of any club is reliant on the friendship and personalities of the members.

Looking back over the years I warm to the memory of colleagues long since gone who were not necessarily very good photographers but who enjoyed the Tuesday night lecture and happy banter of the members. Many of course moved on to Southampton C.C. where, perhaps because of their experience at OSPS, have become known nationally and have taken high office in the Southampton club. Whilst they remain the premier club in the area with many 'star' performers in their ranks, it is true to say we have given them a good run for their money over the last two or three years.

Which brings me to the present membership. Sadly there is no longer any recruitment from Ordnance Survey itself, in fact Mike Stacey will shortly be the only member still working there.

However this means that the rest of us have chosen to throw in our lot with OSPS and what a joy it is to have you. I think it is true to say that everyone in the club this year has contributed either to the programme or to the well-being of the club. New faces that have been to us this year have remarked what a friendly club it is. I must say I agree with that view and I would like to thank all of you who have chosen to join OSPS and made it such a joy and honour to be your President.



Contributions

With life can come acknowledgement and I'm sure you will have noticed the letters after John's name. His RPS fellowship was achieved in 1989 for a portraiture panel, then in the 1991 New Year's Honours List John was awarded an MBE for services to photography, and in 2007 he was inducted to the SPF roll of honour. There was good reason for all this.

'Pillar of the community', 'cornerstone', 'linchpin'; I know these are somewhat cliched and overused terms but sometimes they are applicable. John was a founder member of the OSPS, but if you look through club records you find he was a lot more than that. John's contributions were many and widespread, both in support and participation. In later years he became known (humorously) as 'president for life', but as well as being club president he also served as vice president, chairman, vice chairman, darkroom maintenance secretary, programme secretary, catering secretary (yes, really) and ordinary committee member. He presented lectures to the club, held darkroom tutorials, demonstrated studio techniques, acted as an ambassador to other clubs and judged at international exhibition level.

In terms of participation, you could be sure John would be entering his prints in club competitions, submitting them for consideration to represent OSPS in events such as the SPF league and gaining acceptances in various exhibitions. If you look at the results for our internal competitions during the 90s, for example, you will find that John was dominant in B&W prints, repeatedly winning the NOY senior category, open print and consistency awards. But while he is primarily known for his B&W work, he was not averse to shooting in colour. If you look at the slide consistency trophy you will find his name on it. If you look in the calendar that the club produced in 1985 you will find a wonderfully atmospheric image of Ovington Mill on the page for December, shot by John Philpott.

Looking through committee meeting minutes I noticed a couple of interesting comments. In June 1976 the secretary noted that 'Mr Philpott had made an indefinite loan of some portrait lights, which any member could use'. Then in May 1977, the minutes record 'Mr Philpott's photograph of the Director General is now hanging on the wall featuring photographs of the previous Director Generals in North Block'. And that was John; a generous, helpful, enthusiastic and enormously talented photographer.



Mike Stacey

Contrasts

Around about 2003/2004, OSPS assembled a set of images in preparation for a possible exhibition, to be held at Ordnance Survey or at an external location. The project never reached a conclusion, but two of the prints that John submitted showed an interesting contrast in styles and his awareness of how the subject of the portrait, the sitter, can influence the resulting image.



The image above is entitled 'Made in England'. I know that John told us the story behind this portrait during one of his lectures, though to be honest I don't remember the details. But does it need an explanation? Not really. It's a hard, gritty portrait and B&W is the ideal medium.

The second image is entitled 'Underpass'. It too is B&W, but that's all it is. There's no considered use of tones from black through to white, it's either black or white. This 'soot and whitewash' style is hard in more ways than one but again, it suits the 'punk' subject.

Mike Stacey



Into battle! (first published 2003)

12.30 pm sharp, David and Maureen picked me up for the drive up to Chester with our very valuable prints to compete with all the best clubs in the country. Our real victory was being there at all, but our great aim was to be in the top eight. We felt with Fiona and Barry contributing we were stronger than last year, so, maybe!

After a seven hour journey we found our accommodation for the night, a wonderful pub/hotel called the Owen Glendower. As we went into the bar, there was Barry and Fiona, drinks on the table next to a roaring fire. Nothing has ever looked more inviting after 7 hours on the road. A lovely pub meal and several glasses of the grape and we went to bed early to face the challenge at Connah's Quay in the morning.

Don't other clubs' prints look good when there is so much at stake? Fiona's 'Woodpecker' scored 14 but the rest of us seemed to stick on 12/13. Never the less, we finished 15th so we did slightly better than last year. We went to lunch a little bit down but our minds were on the competition for the Plate. This is for the 30 odd clubs who don't finish in the top eight and who, after lunch, slug it out for the no.9 club. At this stage the clubs are allowed to change the prints. We decided to go for broke and introduce four new prints while keeping Fiona's 'Woodpecker', thus making up the 5 prints required.



Mine was the first up and scored 13; disappointing, but not bad. Then Maureen got a 14 – things began to look up. A second 14 for The Woodpeckers' and we were in with a chance. Tears of joy were beginning to flow when Fiona weighed in with yet another 14. What would David score with our 15th print? He, who had missed his lunch choosing the prints and making out all the forms. Well, he scored a whopping great maximum 15!

Oh unconfined joy!, we were home and dry with 4 points to spare. The ninth best club in the country! Just think how many clubs we beat just to be there. Fiona's portrait of a little black boy received a silver medal and the gold medal we got for the Plate we gave to David for his devotion, hard work and that wonderful 15.

Well done everyone, after 50 years with OSPS this was my proudest moment.

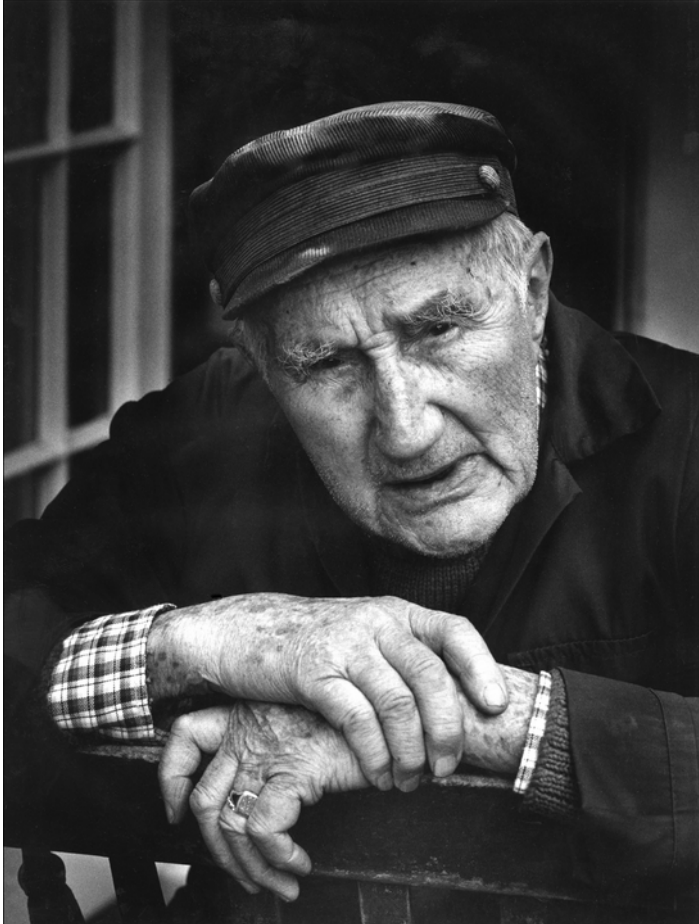
John Philpott MBE FRPS

The story behind the picture (first published 2008)

Some years ago an occasional series was started in the newsletter that looked at the stories behind various pictures. Photographs can be extremely powerful communicators in their own right, perhaps showing intense emotion, a dramatic or historic moment, or something humorous. Such pictures can stand on their own and need little by way of explanation, but sometimes the story can add an important extra dimension. It maybe that the image is quiet, reflective, less obvious, but no less important. Indeed, some stories should be told and can make a significant difference to our understanding. This is the story behind one of John's B&W environmental portraits, taken in his garden in 2007, in his own words.

My wife's Uncle Fred

What a sad decline in the respect we have for the elderly these days. There are elements in our society who are quite happy to kill, frighten, rob and terrorize old people. Go back 50 years and those old people were heroes. Many won medals for acts of bravery beyond the call of duty; some such as Cheshire, Bader and Guy Gibson had films made of their exploits. The vast majority, however, were unsung. For 5 years many were transported from one battle to another, never knowing quite sure why. Each day wondering if it was to be their last; seeing their friends killed beside them and all the while wondering how their loved ones were coping back at home or, indeed, if they would ever see them again. Such a man is my wife's Uncle Fred.



Fred Cole is 89 years old now. He spent most of his working life at sea – his father for 50 years and his 3 brothers for much of their working life. Both of his grandfathers were in sailing ships so like many Southamptonians the sea was in the blood.

Born in St. Denys (Priory Road) near the rowing club, the river ran along the bottom of the garden and he was 'messaging about in boats' almost as soon as he could walk. So, it was natural for him on leaving school to join the Merchant Navy and the 20's & 30's found him sailing into all the big ports of the world, sometimes having a reunion with one or other of his brothers who were similarly engaged in the big merchant ships of the day.

Naturally when war came Fred was in from the start. His first adventure was Dunkirk. He journeyed 5 times across the channel and back helping to save thousands of lives in what was perhaps the most telling act of the war, although at the time it did not seem that way.

After Dunkirk HMS St. Briac was commissioned as a patrol boat and Petty Officer Cole was one of the crew escorting convoys to Scotland. Returning to Dundee on one occasion in March she struck a mine. Ten men were adrift in a small life boat for 22 days in the North Sea. Fog made visibility nil. There was also a hole in the boat and as Fred was the only one wearing rubber boots it was his foot that blocked the hole while the others did the baling. As the fog lifted they were eventually picked up by a ship coming out of the fog which nearly cleaved them in two. Sadly there were only 6 of them left alive. Fred was sent to a military hospital in Scotland and was told that as the result of frost bite his foot would have to be amputated. However a young Canadian doctor asked if he would submit to a new method of electrolysis which happily save the foot.

After recuperation and survival leave, his next ship was the Prince Charles. After the defeat of Rommel the ship's duties were to ferry commandos and supplies up and down the coast from

Alexandria to Tobruk and Sicily. These 8 to 10 months passed without incident.

Next he was returned to Nelson Barracks, Portsmouth, and eventually CPO Cole (as he was then) was sent to America with 20 men to help commission HMS Dasher – a small aircraft carrier. When she was ready they sailed from New York to Halifax, Nova Scotia, where they picked up a convoy of oil tankers and escorted them to England.

As part of the crew of HMS Dasher, Fred sailed for Russia via Scapa Flow and Reykjavik, destination Vladivostock. On returning to Scapa Flow fresh orders came to hunt the Western Approaches and the North Atlantic for German U boats. The Dasher struck a mine off the coast of Scotland and sank within 7 minutes. Fred found himself in the water swimming as hard as he could from the sinking ship. The high octane fuel from the planes aboard the carrier suddenly ignited and the sea exploded into a great wall of flame. Fred, being a good swimmer had got a fair distance away but the wind was blowing the fire towards him. But at the last minute, however, it changed direction which saved his life. Not so 900 other crew men who perished in that dreadful inferno. At the point of exhaustion he was plucked from the sea by a coal ship. It was discovered his shoulder was broken in diving into the water, so he again finished up in hospital and subsequently on survivors' leave.

He was next ordered to report to HMS Shrapnel, which is better known to Southamptonians as the South Western Hotel, but during the war was the HQ of Naval Command in the South. From there on to HMS Ulster Monarch and out to the Mediterranean.

His next adventure was landing American Rangers on the beaches at Anzio in small landing craft, whereupon he was wounded again this time with shrapnel in the back and shoulder. After a spell in a military hospital in Gibraltar it was back home to prepare for D Day!

Amazing as it may seem, CPO Cole went over the night before D Day with some Canadian engineers to clear the approaches to Arramanche of pineapple mines. These were stuck on poles and at night when the tide was down they were exposed to view and could be defused.

The rest of the war was spent ferrying troops and supplies back and forth across the Channel until VE Day.

Recently, Fred was getting a lot of pain in his back and feet. On being X-rayed the doctors told him that he still had some shrapnel in his back which was inoperable. He did not complain and 50 years after the war and at the age of 89 he still grows all his own vegetables. Perhaps not officially a hero, but certainly a man England and we, his family, can be proud of!

John J. Philpott MBE FRPS

Acknowledgements

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to this special edition of the OSPA newsletter, especially John. The photographs on pages 16,17 and 19 are © John Philpott MBE FRPS. Other photographs are either © Ordnance Survey Photographic Society or as credited.