



e-news

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IAN PLATT FRPS MFIAP HonPAGB HonEFIAP



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Photographic Alliance of Great Britain

President; Howard Tate MA ARPS AFIAP APAGB

The President of the PAGB has duties to perform which are often very welcome and enjoyable, such as presenting Awards to deserving individuals.

At other times there are tasks to carry out that are certainly not enjoyable. One such task is contributing to this issue of **e-news**, which is dedicated to Ian Platt, mostly in relation to his continued support of Clubs, Federations, the PAGB and International Photography throughout his photographic career.

I first met Ian in April 2004 when I joined the PAGB Executive as the Representative of the YPU. Even then, Ian was one of the elder statesmen of the PAGB and had served as President 1999-2001. He made me most welcome and, over the following years, I very much enjoyed his wit and his wisdom, both socially and in discussions concerning the running of the PAGB and of FIAP.

I got to know him even better when I attended the FIAP Congress in Slovakia with Ian and Patricia in 2008. At this Congress it became apparent to me that, not only was Ian held in high esteem by the PAGB, but he was also very respected by FIAP and additionally by many member organisations of FIAP.

The present situation with Covid-19 has unfortunately ensured that a get together to remember Ian will have to be organised at an indeterminate date in the future. The PAGB will be actively involved in ensuring such an event will be a fitting honour to this great man.

In this issue of **e-news** you will no doubt obtain an insight into the legend that was Ian Platt. Please enjoy the issue and try not to dwell on the passing of Ian but instead look upon it as a celebration of his life.

Our thoughts are with Patricia and the family Ian has left behind.

Stay safe.

Howard G Tate MA ARPS AFIAP APAGB
President - PAGB

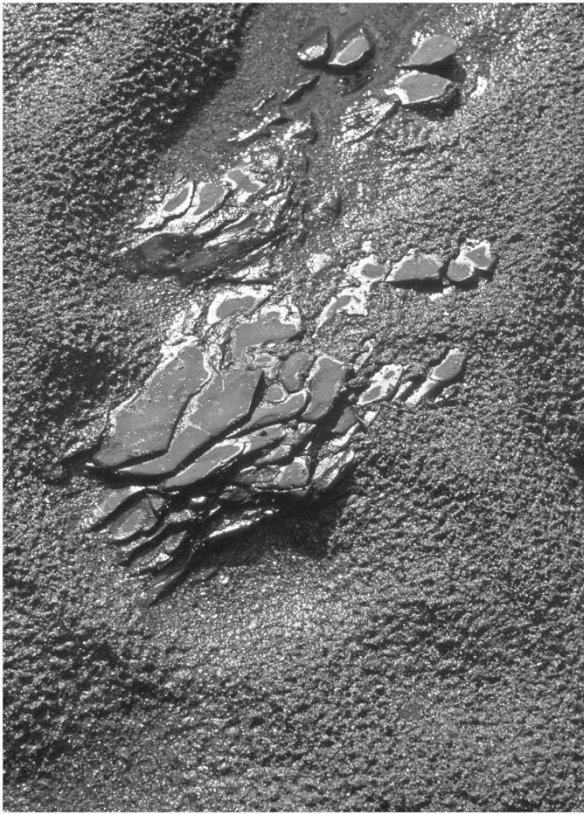
Ian's serious interest in photography started in the early 1960's and was at first limited to making black-and-white (b&w) prints. He joined a local camera club in 1961 but became frustrated at the lack of any feedback on competition entries due to the method of judging employed. Spotting a small advert in a photographic magazine that described the advantages of the club that came to your own home, he joined United Photographic Postfolios (UPP) the following year because it gave each member up to 15 written appraisals of work entered. Just the sort of help a complete beginner needed. He has been a member ever since!



'Winter in the City' was taken in 1969 on an invited visit to Oslo to attend the local Kamera Klubb's major international exhibition. The photograph was taken on a Pentax camera with 135mm lens from an elevated viewpoint, (the top floor of a central hotel). On return home, the negative turned out to be extremely difficult to print for a variety of reasons and only 3 copies were ever made. One was retained for a planned print talk and the other two were given outings in the London Salon and RPS International Print Exhibitions in 1970. Both accepted the work, but they returned to Ian in such a poor condition that they couldn't be used again.

Fast-forward to the digital age. The original negative was scanned into Photoshop, and the outcome was a series of unexpected results when sent round the exhibition circuit of the time. It won Gold Medals at The Scottish Salon of 2004, and also Golds at South Shields, Edinburgh, & Swansea plus H/M.'s in Smethwick and Southampton. Wow!

Cover Picture – "Ian Laughing" by Patricia Platt. Ian chose this picture to be remembered by.



kilve beach, somerset

'Kilve Beach' was taken many years later during the time he was also working on his Open University Geology studies. Many pictures were taken to illustrate scientific significance, but at the same time more pictorial shots were sought and this view of shale rock, surrounded by pock-marked sand from a recent rainstorm, was included in his successful Master of FIAP panel.

Ian was keen to explore the creative possibilities of colour via the medium of slide and, in 1967, he gathered a group of like-minded photographers through UPP, to exchange ideas. Among its luminaries were Lady Doreen Pollock, with her husband, Sir George, and Edwin Appleton, the last two later becoming Presidents of the RPS.

Ian explored many areas of creativity including the use of shallow Depth of Field, and 'Dream' is an early example taken in his front garden in Worcester of hybrid white bluebells, through a haze of honesty plant in flower at the time. For 'Springtime' taken on a Smethwick club outing, he used an Acer tree as an out of focus foreground to a shot of some spring growth.



ream



springtime

Other techniques involved multiple exposures on the same frame such as on 'Leaf Design'. This was eventually extended to 32 exposures, on waterfall shots some of which involved 11 exposures through red, green and blue primary filters. Bas relief, solarisation in both b&w and colour were also techniques tried.

In his early b&w days Ian took a lot of candid outdoor pictures and, although this activity decreased over time, here are two more recent examples, 'Nuns at Pisa' was taken on a FIAP Congress visit to that iconic location. And, much more recently, whilst walking down a little used road in Salisbury, and with only a semi-fisheye lens on his camera he stopped to talk to this lady. She was happy to allow him to take her picture, 'Companions'. When returning, some months later, to present her with a print, he discovered that she was in sheltered accommodation.



leaf design



Companions



Nuns at Pisa

Most photographs taken using this type of lens are ephemeral, but one that has stood the test of time is 'Chimneys' largely because what started out as counterpoint of slender sun-lit chimneys against the darker larger gas holders, became something much more sinister, with the artificial curvature of the large containers giving them a predatory look.

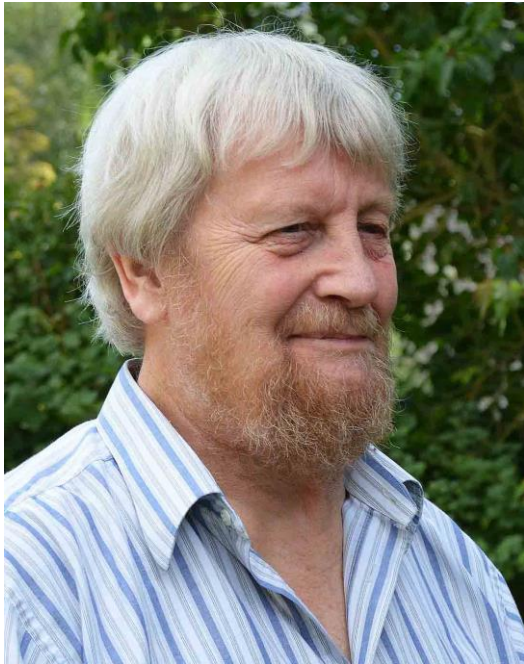


chimneys

IAN PLATT FRPS MFIAP HonPAGB HonEFIAP

As mentioned earlier, Ian first joined a Camera Club in 1961 and very soon after that he joined the United Photographic Postfolios (UPP), where he remained an enthusiastic member for the rest of his life.

He joined Smethwick PS in the early 1970s, when he moved to Worcestershire to work at the Air Traffic Control Centre at Pershore. He quickly became highly active in club affairs joining the management committee.



In 1974 Ian suggested that the club run a colour slide International Exhibition under PSA Patronage – FIAP Patronage was not available at that time as the PAGB was not a member of FIAP.

The First Smethwick International, a great success, went ahead in January 1976, with Ian as Chairman.

He became the President of Smethwick from 1976 to 1977, after which he went on to become President of the MCPF from 1979 to 1980. In 1979, Ian also became the MCPF representative on the PAGB EC, but the Civil Aviation Authority then moved him to the College of Air Traffic Control in Bournemouth in 1981, so his time on the EC then was brief.

In 1984, Ian was invited by John Hill, the President of the PAGB, to attend meetings as a co-opted member, to take over the FIAP Liaison Officer's job from Don Morrison. Ian took that job in 1984 and continued in the role until Dave Coates took over in 2011.

He was elected as an Honorary Life Vice President of the PAGB at the 2010 AGM, in recognition of his valuable service and as a recognition of the expertise and wisdom that he would continue to bring to our meetings.



Shifting Sands

<< “Shifting Sands”.

Another shot from Death Valley, where the strong wind made taking pictures difficult and airborne sand was a major problem.

Ian Platt and UPP Circle 36.

In 2000 I was invited to join Circle 36 of the UPP, along with Leo Rich and David Eaves. Accepting that invitation was one of my better decisions, although, at the time I did not realise how prestigious C36 was.

C36 was formed by Ian Platt in 1963 as a *Colour Slide Circle*. He was its secretary from 1963 until 1969, and then again from 1995 until September this year. I well remember many duels with Ian for first place, more often than not Ian winning out.

I also remember that if I were to put in a slide that was 'below par' you were quick to find out, but never in a way that caused offence.

As this century got under way, so the Digital era gained momentum and of course the use of slide film declined. It was not a fast or sudden change. I made my first inkjet print around 1999 but took and entered slides in competitions until 2010, when I transitioned over to prints rather than PDI. It was the same for Circle 36. Led by Ian, the Circle more or less unanimously decided, in 2011, to change to a *Large Print Circle* rather than turn it to PDI. It has run successfully ever since.

Even during the Pandemic, whilst activities were suspended for a short time, once members felt safe to go to Post Offices, Ian resumed our activities and we have run successfully since May/June of this year.

UPP was Ian's personal passion. It was the very last thing that he gave up and he made it clear that he hoped it would continue. It gives me much satisfaction that we were able to engineer this and appoint a successor in Leo Rich and Ian knew and approved of this before the end.

Dave Coates

Many of you may have heard Ian's story about lying on a bed in a private room in hospital, festooned with wires and sensors attached to various parts of his body for monitoring purposes, when an attractive nurse came in and went to wash her hands at a basin.

She said to him, over her shoulder, "As soon as I'm washed, I'll come over and take everything off."

That, he said, was when he had the heart attack.

Peter Young

We were delighted to welcome Ian and his wife Patti to East Anglia when the Federation hosted the Awards for Photographic Merit in Colchester over the weekend of 25th/26th November 2017.

Patti, of course, was part of the PAGB Team, and Ian sat in the audience with Andy and other members of the EAF during the assessments.

We both enjoyed his company over the weekend and witnessed his enthusiasm for the Awards even though he was no longer Chairman, having passed that role over to Rod Wheelans in 1997.

Daphne & Andy Hanson

Many years ago, there was a fine International Exhibition held in Camberley, Surrey. It had print and slide sections, and Ian entered it a few times with mixed results. However, on one occasion his report card from the exhibition informed him that one of his entries had won the top award. Naturally, he was delighted, and made special efforts to attend the opening night of the exhibition. In those far off days there were few medals or options for a top award, but he hoped that they would run to a nice plaque, or something similar.

It turned out the two top awards for best print and slide were to be granted free entry for life to future exhibitions. They never held another International Exhibition in Camberley!

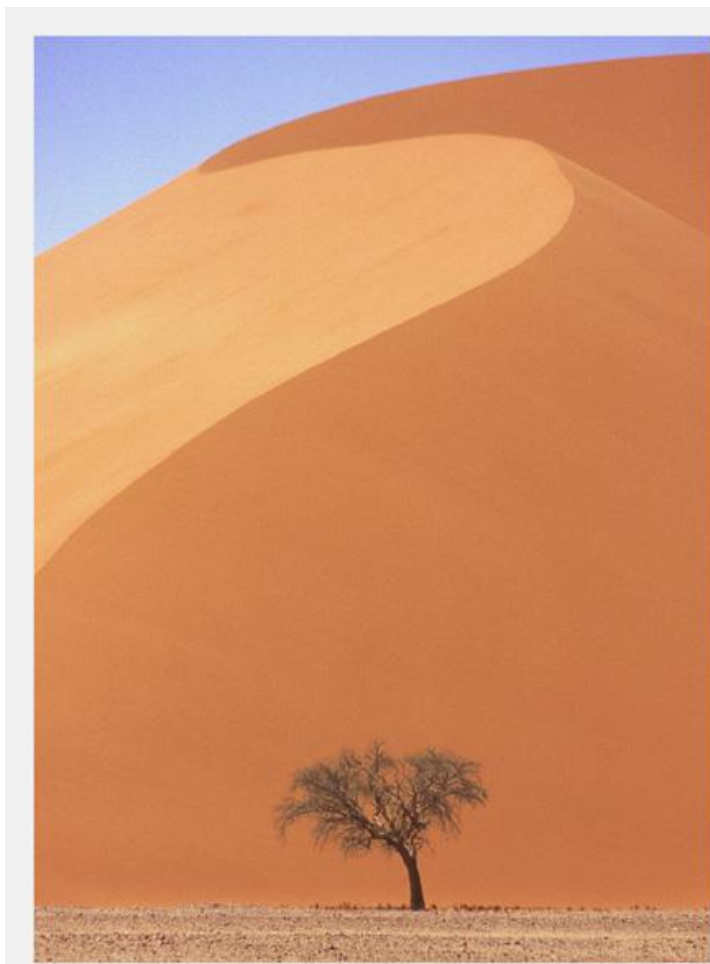
Ian also explored Ultra wide-angle effects, such as 'Death Valley Sunrise' taken with a prime 17mm lens, as was 'Blue Mood Death Valley'. He had long been a lover of the colour work of Freeman Patterson, and when he won a judge's medal at a Northern Counties Exhibition, he was doubly delighted to learn that Freeman was the judge and he was also able to receive the award in person at a later event that both attended. Both pictures were taken of a similar area of Death Valley, and both at similar times early in the morning. The difference is that the second image had direct sunlight hidden by the nearby mountain range and, for a very short period, sunlight was being reflected from the blue sky with only indirect light reaching the scene.



Death Valley Sunrise



Blue Mood, Death Valley



dune, namibia

At the other end of the focal length range, when decamping from a minibus to look at a lovely Namibian scene of a golden dune and thorn tree 'Dune, Namibia', Ian decided his present location was exactly right for the shot he had in mind. Moving any closer would change the perspective of the two components and this led to a very long wait until all the other photographers left his field of view. Taken with an 80-200mm f/2.8 lens plus x2 tele-converter at its maximum 400mm focal length.



Ian, with Gerry Froy, at the 2016 Print Championship

Longer lenses became Ian's preferred option for many landscape pictures, and a zoom 70-300mm was used taking 'Bison in the Mist' in Yellowstone. This is one of a modest number of 'tweaked' landscape pictures – the Bison taken on another day and imported to a suitable place.



bison in the mist, madison river

As was the case with 'Desert Traveller', another landscape from Namibia, into which an Oryx was placed from an earlier shot, scaled down to suit the new background.



desert traveller, namibia

A different kind of creative effect was used on 'Grasses, Escalante' with two exposures on the same frame, one with a very shallow depth of field and the other with a much greater depth.



grasses, escalante

American Aspen trees turned out to be a major source of inspiration with 'Aspens near Vernal' completely orthodox, and 'Aspen Impression' providing a more creative approach, As too 'The Sapling', where the young tree was completely surrounded by more mature plants, and this was emphasised by desaturating all but the sapling to emphasise the contrast.



Unaltered landscape images that were high on his list of favourites are, 'Buckskin Gulch', a small section of a slot canyon in Utah where earlier rainfall has dried out into intriguing shapes lit by late sunlight.



Buckskin Gulch, Arizona

In the case of 'Abandoned Farmhouse, California', the camera lens had to be placed right up against the glass to avoid unwanted reflections. The clearly visible decay inside the building is a delightful counterpoint to the back room, still laid out with crockery for an anticipated meal.



abandoned farmhouse, california

I first met Ian through UPP, the photo club that operates by post. We both joined UPP in 1962, when Ian was living in St. Neots. A few years later, his job as an air traffic controller brought him down to Sussex, which is where I lived at the time. We both had young families and we used to see each other at fairly regular intervals.

Photography was, of course, our common bond, although we approached it from different directions. Ian was a very creative and innovative photographer, whereas my interest was mainly in the landscape. I can recall his showing me the magic of polarising filters, where he would combine two of these to make the most amazing colours, patterns and designs by shining light through such items as cellophane and clear plastic. After he moved from Sussex, a number of years later, we only really saw each other at the annual UPP Conventions, but thankfully, we never lost contact.

Ian's enthusiasm and willingness to share his techniques inspired many photographers. Within just two years of his joining UPP, he formed a Circle for colour slides and was Secretary of this Circle for 30 years and a member for an amazing 56. He resigned only when his illness made it impossible for him to carry on, just a few weeks before he passed away. Over the years he was a member of several other Circles, including the International Anglo-Australian print Circle and a 'Contemporary' Circle, the latter being an ideal forum for his style of photography.

He was a very successful exhibitor, gaining his AFIAP and EFIAP, but his major achievement was when he was awarded the Master FIAP (MFIAP), the very first UK photographer to achieve this. Ian was also very active within the PAGB and I can remember working with him for one of the very early PAGB Awards for Photographic Merit (APM) weekends, when Eastbourne PS were the hosts.

Ian was always ready to help others and to share his knowledge and experience. I will greatly miss him as a friend and mentor and will be forever grateful to him for sharing our respective journeys through photography. Rest well, my friend.

Colin Westgate

When I joined the PAGB Executive as the Scottish member in 1990, Ian was already well established as the energetic FIAP Liaison Officer and as an influential figure in the world of organised amateur photography. I held him in some awe as he was the only UK photographer at the time to have achieved the almost mythical Master of FIAP award (MFIAP). In the years to follow, we worked together on several projects, ate together and drank together. He was helpful, entertaining and liked a joke. He and Patricia were always great company.

He led the team that set up the PAGB Awards for Photographic Merit. I was part of that team and, although I had some initial doubts about the value of the scheme, I was inspired by his enthusiasm and I have been proud to be involved ever since. When I took over the chair from him, he and Terry Chapman remained on the team reading titles and scoring. One of my more difficult tasks was to quieten their *sotto voce* comments, even when I wanted to giggle!

Long after he had given up an active role in the APM, he continued to attend every Adjudication, holding court in the front row. He did a magnificent job as FIAP Liaison Officer, earning respect at home and abroad and assisting many club members to achieve FIAP Distinctions. He was also well known for his work with UPP but I consider his most lasting legacy to be our Awards for Photographic Merit. He was a key factor in the development of the scheme and his influence is still present in the way we manage it today. He set the tone and we follow.

I will miss you Ian.

Rod Wheelans



farmhouse, andalucia

'Farmhouse, Andalusia' in southern Spain was attractive because the light emphasised the ploughed patterns surrounding the small building. And not every good landscape has been found abroad, here we have 'Tree, Rannoch Moor' with its frozen foreground, small loch, host to an iconic tree, complete with icicle, and misty early morning light.



tree, rannoch moor

Returning to b&w, 'Beyond Repair' is a shot from Bodie ghost town, where an abandoned Gold and Silver mine has been kept in a state of preservation. Ian said that the light reflected from one particular window gave him the distinct feeling that there was a ghostly presence still looking out.



Beyond Repair

United Photographic Postfolios of Great Britain



IAN PLATT AND THE UPP by Francis Ouvry, UPP President.

One of Ian's special passions, and the last one he finally had to give up, was The United Photographic Postfolios of Great Britain (UPP), the largest postal photographic club in the country, divided into semi-autonomous Circles, each run by a Circle Secretary.

Ian joined UPP in March 1962 in a print Circle, followed shortly afterwards by a slide Circle, and was an active member for over 58 years. Less than two years after he joined, he set up a new Circle (36) for 35mm colour slides. He was Circle 36 Secretary for 5 years, and again took over as Circle Secretary in 1995, continuing for a further 25 years, only giving up a few weeks before he died. In 1968 he set up yet another Circle, for contemporary and derivative slides, and was Secretary for 8 years, followed by a second spell in 1984 to 1985.

In 1974 he became a Vice-President of the Club, a post he held until 1988.

He belonged at various times to 9 Circles in total, sometimes up to 4 simultaneously, comprising Circles for small prints, large prints, general colour slides, creative colour slides, colour prints, plus an Anglo/American and an Anglo/Australian Circle.

He took over as editor of the Club's bi-annual magazine in 1973, a role he continued for 6 years. He readily attributed his photographic progress from beginner to photographic distinctions (MFIAP, FRPS, APSA, EFIAP/p) to the help and advice he received through his UPP membership, and he was always keen to help and inspire others. He was a prolific contributor to the magazine throughout his membership, right up to 2020, on various subjects, including photographic techniques, judging, distinctions and vintage cameras. In 1972 he delivered the prestigious evening lecture to the UPP AGM.

Not unsurprisingly, Ian featured frequently in UPP's honours list in the Club's Annual Exhibitions. Between 1968 and 2007 his Circle 36, to which he was a strong contributor, won the award for best Circle 16 times, and he personally won the award for best picture in his Circle 12 times, plus 19 Highly Commended in the UPP Annual Exhibition and the top award for "Best in Exhibition" 4 times.

For over half a century he was a wonderful friend and generous contributor to the Club, and he will be greatly missed. Of all the activities in which he was involved, UPP was always dearest to his heart.



LOOKING BACK

The Little Man, Summer 2017

2017 marks my 55th year of membership of UPP, and this anniversary initiated a series of reminiscences some of which I would like to share with you. The reason I joined in the first place was due to the method used by my local camera club in St. Neots on competition nights at that time. Being my first experience of any club, I was unaware that the system in use was unusual to say the least. The year was late 1960, and I was only just starting out into 'serious' photography utilising exclusively monochrome prints in those days. My camera equipment was an Asahi Pentax H2 35mm model, and I had a Gnome enlarger onto which I fitted the highly regarded Taylor, Taylor & Hobson Lens. I vividly recall that on a club outing one weekend, my small format negative size was a cause of considerable curiosity among the many fellow-members, most of whom were toting twin-lens reflex cameras, and even 5 x 4's.

Print competition evenings were an extraordinary ritual. All the prints from the two classes - Beginner & Advanced - were laid out on trestle tables for scrutiny by everyone who turned up. One or two of the more senior members were to be seen muttering comments to each other as the prints were subjected to close inspection, and after a good 30 minutes had passed, we were all issued with voting slips, including the non-photographic wives who were regular attendees. We were reminded that we had to choose a 1st, 2nd and 3rd, and also any other prints considered worthy of a Highly Commended mention, each photograph being identified with a pencilled number on the mount. You can visualise the scene for yourselves; two trestle tables, one for the Beginners prints and the other for the Advanced class, with about thirty members shuffling round like a slow march, as they circulated again and again whilst trying to determine the prints they preferred and eventually noting down the identifying numbers on their voting slips. All this done in near silence except for the sound of shoes scraping on the wooden floor of the hall.

Eventually, after a further 30 minutes had elapsed, and all the voting completed, the ubiquitous tea-break was arranged, and one of the members with a knack for numbers could be seen 'translating' all the votes into some sort of accumulated score. As I recall, the system allocated 1 point for entering, 3 for an HC, and suitable higher scores for the top three on every voting slip. After the cups and saucers had been cleared away, the Chairman solemnly read out the scores, to intermittent desultory applause.

And that was it! No commentary, no advice on how to improve one's entry next time – of particular value to a beginner such as myself, and no outside opinion in the form of a visiting judge, that was clearly the norm elsewhere as I later learned. At the Club's AGM I stood up and asked if it would be possible for one of the advanced photographers to give some sort of comment on the beginner's prints. 'Oh. That's a good idea. Would you be prepared to make similar comments on the advanced workers prints Ian?'

I was still in the R.A.F., at the time I joined UPP, but not long afterwards I concluded my 12-year short service commission and started training for my new role as a civilian Air Traffic Controller. This involved me moving round to various locations – including one particularly delightful 3 months in Guernsey, where I managed to attend a few meetings of the highly regarded Spectrum colour slide club. But in the main I was without a local camera club for 18 months, and to compensate for this I arranged to join a second UPP print Circle and a colour slide Circle. The plan being to have a box of photographs to look at every week or so. It was a good idea at the time, and only occasionally went awry when three boxes turned up in the same week!

Initial training completed, I was allocated to the staff at Gatwick Air Traffic Control in 1963, and later that year attended my first UPP AGM in London. On hearing that there was a waiting list of some 10 people hoping for a place in otherwise full colour slide circles, I offered to act as Secretary to a new circle if this would help. The UPPer crust at the time gave me the go-ahead with the proviso that I try to recruit a 12th member so, Circle 36 was 'born' in November 1963.

I persuaded my Dad to join, as a pre-war year's club photographer, now only taking holiday slides. He was no makeweight however and won the Circle Certificate in 1965.

Gatwick, in common with most major airports, operated 365 days a year 24 hrs/day and the air traffic control shift system, resulted in limited evening time off. So, my regular camera club membership whilst I was working there, was split between Lancing, who specialised in colour and as a founder-member of Haywards Heath. I had also tentatively started entering a few exhibitions from 1964 onwards mainly using colour slides. This rapidly became an addictive activity, despite some extremely modest results to begin with. Also, in 1964 I joined the Royal Photographic Society, and obtained my ARPS with a panel of slides in 1968 and my FRPS with a panel of monochrome prints in 1971.

The subject of FIAP (International Federation of Photographic Art) came to my attention at about this time also. Various exhibition catalogues listed the names of successful authors with FIAP distinctions after their names, and enquiries revealed that many photographers from countries all over the World had these distinctions but very few within the UK. It was later shown that those UK holders, were all country members of the Photographic Society of Ireland (PSI) because the UK was not a member of FIAP in its own right. FIAP had been initiated as the brain-child of a Belgian amateur photographer who wanted to establish an organisation that coordinated activities across national borders, and in the 1950's he had set about this initiative with some vigour. Over 40 countries had signed up to his idea and joined FIAP, but the Photographic Alliance of Great Britain (PAGB) was not one of them at that time. The FIAP awards available then – AFIAP- where the 'A' stands for Artist, and EFIAP – the 'E' translating to Excellence, were based upon gaining specific numbers of exhibition acceptances over a minimum period of 8 years and this suited my activities in that area quite nicely. I duly achieved both the A & E awards through my membership of the PSI.

Now living in Worcester, it was only natural that I joined the camera club in that city and helped with their international slide exhibition. Sadly, at that time, the club's main emphasis was on colour slides and prints were treated as a poor relation. I went looking elsewhere for something more suited to my interests and I joined Smethwick PS in 1974, later becoming President of the Club.

Over the course of the next nine years, I did more lecturing and judging in the Midlands as most evenings were free from my ATC work. I was eventually 'recruited' onto the Midland Counties Federation (MCPF) to administer their judges programme, and later became a full member of their Executive Committee including a term as President in 1979/80. For the last two years of my stay in the Midlands I was also the MCPF representative on the PAGB Executive Committee, only having to retire from this post when my work moved me on elsewhere. Other exciting things happened. I joined the RPS Assessment panel for Licentiate admissions and did that for seven years. Also, together with a very willing team of enthusiastic helpers, I got the (now hugely respected) Smethwick International Exhibition going in 1975.

This particularly busy period of activity came to an end in 1982 when my work moved me back down South. I was appointed an Instructor at the College of ATC attached to Bournemouth Airport. I joined Bournemouth club and later one in Poole, but what was immediately apparent was that the standard of photography seen at club level down South was not a patch on the work I had seen and enjoyed in the Midlands previously. However, life had its compensations, and shortly after arriving I was invited to join the RPS Associateship & Fellowship admissions panel for Pictorial photography – later re-assigned as the Visual Art category. I did a total of 10 years on this panel and saw a vast amount of superb photography and was able to give some guidance to various potential applicants from time to time.

A few years later, I received a phone call from the President of PAGB asking if I would be interested in taking on the job of FIAP Liaison Officer for the PAGB, the original holder of that post having decided he was getting too long in the tooth to continue. I gave serious thought to the offer – for about 5 nanoseconds-- before accepting and was recruited back onto the PAGB Executive Committee that Summer. I have been a member continuously since then, some 31 years later, doing the FIAP job for 25 of those years before handing over to Dave Coates, also a member of Circle 36. I completed a two-year period as PAGB President in 1999-2001 and was later made an Honorary Life Vice President.

The FIAP Liaison job was a hectic affair from time to time but had its compensations in that I was able to attend the FIAP Congress in various countries and it also opened the door to invitations to act as an overseas judge. I decided to try for the prestigious Master FIAP award. Unlike the previous two levels of FIAP distinction, based on exhibition success, this was more akin to an RPS Fellowship. It requires a panel of at least 20 prints on a related theme together with an explanation of the intent behind the topic. . I chose a completely different subject from the one used for my FRPS and was delighted to have it accepted. I later learned that this was the first success from any UK photographer, but not long afterwards several more achieved the goal, notably Colin Westgate and Hugh Milsom. There have been many more in the ensuing years.

In 1994 PAGB made a decision that was to firmly place its profile to the forefront of club photography with the introduction of its Awards for Photographic Merit scheme. Prior to that date the organisation was a vague umbrella group that coordinated activities of the various Federations round the UK, and as such was largely unknown to individual club photographers. I was asked to chair the various adjudicating panels both in single-image applications and AV, a task that lasted for several years until I handed over to Rod Wheelans. I had been an enthusiastic AV practitioner for several years, most notably during my time in the Midlands, and had seen several major competitions, so felt comfortable in that area. The PAGB scheme awards lifetime recognition, without the cost of annual membership fees. It is a source of considerable pleasure that I continue to attend these adjudicating days, and to date nearly 3,000 club applicants have achieved one or more of the various awards.

It's over 50 years since I gave my first talk to a Club. It was to Brighton & Hove CC and they were polite and laughed at my attempts at humour, which encouraged me further. After I gained my ARPS distinction invitations grew more rapidly. Some have been more fun than others.

I recall a visit to a mid-Kent club where, upon arrival, I was told that I was "on second"! It turned out that this club only met fortnightly and was in the habit of arranging both a lecture and a competition on the same evening. It was later explained that this was to fill the time available, should the competition entries be too small in number. That's all very well, but neither the judge nor I were pre-warned of this. As it happened, I knew the judge quite well, and we hatched a plan. We had been advised that there was no mandatory closing-up time in the village hall. In making his comments on the prints and slides he invariably asked my opinion on each entry, and we teased out the 'first half' well past the suggested tea-break interval. And then he courteously stayed the full length of my (slide) talk. We concluded just a few minutes before 11pm and suggested that in future the club should pre-warn their visiting judges/lecturers to give them the opportunity of declining future invitations!

My first print talk was an all monochrome affair. The first print I put up was a modest sized A5 effort of an interior shot taken in Wells Cathedral. I told the audience that this was the first print I had ever made and that my next print had been made just a few days ago, to show the gulf that separates the complete beginner that I had been, and the holder of the FRPS. I then put up a flush-mounted 20"x16" print of exactly the same shot printed from the same negative!

Over the years the audience reaction to this little joke has been extraordinary, and quite different in regions of the country. In the Midlands and in the North of England, there was so much prolonged laughter that I was usually unable to continue with the more serious part of the talk for nearly a minute. In the South of England, there was sometimes complete silence, or at best, a smothered snort of a laugh from one individual. The Welsh were good humoured too, and when I gave the talk to their Federation weekend gathering one bloke couldn't stop laughing and had to leave the room for a few minutes to calm down!

On another occasion, having been invited to a club just outside Maidstone I turned up at the venue (a large union-owned building) and was directed by the caretaker to a room along the corridor. Heavy traffic meant that I arrived only a few minutes before the appointed start time. I stepped into the room and despite being advised that it was only a 'small' club, found it packed out with well over 60 people. They had set up the projector stand and screen for me already and were eagerly waiting for me to start. I actually had my projector almost out of my carrying case before a small warning bell sounded in my head. "Is this the camera club?" I asked. "Oh No! We're the Railway Society"!

At one event the guest speakers were asked to give two presentations and I had specifically been asked for an AV show as my second offering. I showed a variety of different sequences and received a nice round of applause at the end.

One determined lady came up to me and gushingly said how much she had enjoyed the programme, "when you did your last sequence, I just closed my eyes and listened to the music it was so lovely"

I turned up in ample time to give a talk to Stourport, to be met by a committee member who asked me "Are you a new member?" "No" sez I, showing the worthy gent my letter of invitation, "I'm your speaker for this evening." The man visibly blanched because, it turned out, they had also invited another photographer to judge a competition, and he was already looking through that evening's entries! I was later advised that the previous Programme Secretary had had a serious 'falling out' with the committee and that he had spitefully double-booked the entire programme for that entire year.

Every morning at about 3 am, a lovely old Dakota aircraft took off from Gatwick to fly to Guernsey and Jersey to deliver the daily newspapers. The aircraft invariably returned to Gatwick at about 6 am, and, occasionally in the Winter months, very low slanting light would give a temporary 'magic moment', when the sun produced delightful discs of glowing light from the rotating propeller blades as it taxied to its parking bay. I got in touch with a company that imported Tamron lenses at the time to enquire if they had a 500mm lens I could borrow. After a bit of a hagggle regarding insurance etc, I was offered a monster 200-500mm zoom lens that had only just arrived. The next time I was on duty in GMC at Gatwick the lighting was perfect, and I unsheathed the huge lens from its fitted case.

The Dakota landed and commenced taxiing back in. At the precise moment the magic discs of light appeared from my viewpoint, I issued a peremptory instruction to the pilot for him to "hold your position". He stopped. I dashed outside the double-glazed GMC building to the surrounding balcony, and hand-holding this enormous lens tried my best to line up the shot. I took about 6 shots in rapid succession, then dashed back into the building, grabbed my headset and told the pilot to continue. Somewhat guiltily, I did wonder what the pilot must have been thinking, for in the three or so minutes that this had taken place, absolutely nothing had moved on the surface of the airport. I couldn't say "smile please", and he never phoned in to enquire the reason for the halt!

I feel that I must tell you about one of the most outrageous stories told to me by a very good friend. Derek Rodway was a very highly respected judge and lecturer in South Wales. On one occasion, when booked, he set off to give a slide talk to a works club in the Rhondda Valley in what later became a nasty snowstorm. Not enough to stop the journey. After all, the club would be eagerly waiting to see his pictures, such was his deserved reputation. On arrival, the hall was in complete darkness and he waited patiently in his car. When the official start time had gone with no sign of activity, Derek managed to stop a passing cyclist, gamely pushing his machine up the road. He asked if the cyclist knew how to contact the caretaker but was told that the camera club had their own key. The cyclist added "but you won't get anyone coming out on a night like this." He was correct! Nobody did turn up and Derek carefully returned home. I recall his telling me that it took nearly nine months before the club apologised and refunded his expenses!