

SPS Newsletter

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Welcome to our first Newsletter of 2025. I hope you all had a very enjoyable Christmas and New Year, I certainly did. Did you join the rest of the 16 million plus people watching Gavin and Stacey then?

Isn't January flying by already, it's gone so quickly I have been a little late in publishing the Newsletter! We have had mixed weather so far high winds dampening the New Year's Eve celebrations, crisp days and frost and damp, wet misty days. But I was reading recently that so far the temperatures this month are higher than average and it does seem much milder than I normally think January is! And did any of you see the recent 'Wolf Moon', it was huge.

Well New Year normally brings New Year Resolutions and if you recall I did suggest in December's Newsletter that one of your Resolutions could be to submit an item for the Newsletter this year. So with this in mind and like many organisations do when a new year starts, the Newsletter is getting a 'Re-Brand and Re-Fresh' in 2025. Yes, there will still be the same bad jokes, miscellaneous facts, competitions etc. but we are hoping for some "Fresh Voices".

We are going to be 'press-ganging' you into submitting some articles to the Newsletter. So expect my 'heavies', Phil and Jenny, to be approaching you to ask you for items (as I cannot be at the meetings and do it in person). And there is only one response you should give them and that is "Yes of course". So, you have been warned ... I am already excited about editing the Newsletter this year and looking forward to seeing your submissions. And don't worry if words are not your thing there is plenty of help and assistance we can give you to bring things you are interested in to life on the pages of our Newsletter. And what's more our 'Re-Brand' won't cost millions of pounds ... how good's that?

I do appreciate all the messages you often send to me saying how much you enjoy reading the Newsletter. If it makes you smile then I am happy as it has done its job. Don't forget you can send me your items to my email address:

Email me at: 172elizabeth@gmail.com.

As ever January has a number of awareness events, some of which have caught my eye. The first one that made me smile was 'World Introvert Day' on 2nd January, a day aimed at bringing awareness for the inward-focussed world of introverts, making it known that their actions and habits don't make them anything less than normal. Many studies have shown that introverts, despite their deep need for alone-time, are an important minority that work behind the scenes of an extroverted world to keep it functioning. We have also had World Braille Day on 4th January, Human Trafficking Awareness Day on 11th January and World Religion Day on 19th January. Still to come is International Day of Education on 24th January and Burns Night on 25th. Hope you all have your 'neeps and tatties' ready and don't forget the wee dram of the whisky.

We also have the celebration of the Lunar or Chinese New Year on 29th January. I believe 2025 is the Year of the Snake, the 6th animal in the Chinese Zodiac, representing intuition, strategy and elegance – sounds just like me! When paired with the Wood element, 2025 emphasises adaptability, creativity and long-term planning.

And this year's Chinese New Year Wish to give to people is 'Health is wealth, may you enjoy both in abundance in the Year of the Snake'. So I send this wish to you all.



Two of my favourite ones this month are 'Kiss a Ginger Day' which occurred on 12th January, and is a light-hearted day dedicated to appreciating and celebrating individuals with red hair.

And then we have had 'Winnie the Pooh Day' on 18th January, the annual celebration dedicated to the beloved literary character and the whimsical world created by the author A A Milne. And why was this date chosen? because it was A A Milne's birthday of course. He introduced us to Winnie and his friends and the Hundred Acre Wood in 1926, and his works are classics of children's literature and timeless. Who was your favourite character? Was it Winnie himself, Piglet, Eeyore or Tigger? And I would bet that there isn't one of us who haven't at some point played 'Pooh Sticks'. And did you know that Ashdown Forest in East Sussex is the real-life inspiration for the Hundred Acre Wood.



But my absolute favourite is National Hug Day on 21st January. Dedicated to celebrating the power of hugs and their ability to bring joy and comfort to both the giver and the receiver, it's a reminder that even a brief hug can create a meaningful and positive connection between individuals. So get hugging everyone and I send you all a Virtual Hug.



What kind of hugs does Winnie the Pooh give?

Bear hugs!

With my very best wishes

Liz xx

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02

Through the Lens ... What's Occurring?

My research has revealed that 2025 is a busy year for celebrating anniversaries. So, here are just a few that are occurring that you may like to know about. And some of them may give you the opportunity to get some photographic images for competitions next year ...:

- eBay the online marketplace is 30 years old on 3rd September.
- Joining me on my 60th Birthday later this year (yes I know I don't look a day older than 21 ...!) is the first manned space capsule. On 23rd March 1965, NASA sent the capsule named Gemini 3 into space as part of its Gemini project for a one day test flight. The capsule orbited the Earth 3 times and then landed back on Earth in the sea on parachutes.

Also enjoying its 60th Birthday this year is the Mont Blanc Tunnel, a 11.6 Km long road tunnel that crosses Mont Blanc (the Alps' highest mountain) connecting France with Italy.

- 65 years ago on 21st April 1960, after several years of construction, Brasilia was inaugurated as the new capital of Brazil. The architect Oscar Niemeyer was responsible for the project as Head of the State Building Department. His buildings enjoyed worldwide recognition and the city centre has been on the UNESCO World Heritage List since 1987.
- Perhaps the biggest anniversary this year is 80 years since the end of World War II, an event that had a major global impact and changed the world we lived in. On 7th May 1945, Colonel General Alfred Jodl signed the unconditional surrender of the German Reich in Reims in the headquarters of General Dwight D Eisenhower, Commanded-in-Chief of the Allied Forces in Europe. It came into effect at 23.00 hrs on 8th May 1945, and is now known as VE Day. With the signing of the unconditional surrender of Japan on 2nd September 1945, the War also ended in the Pacific, a date we know as VJ Day.
- 70 years ago on 11th June 1955 saw the worst accident in the history of motorsport at the 24 Hours Le Mans race when 84 people died and many were injured. I have a personal interest in this one as my Dad was a very keen motorsport spectator and rally driver and went to Le Mans regularly. He was there in 1955 and was only stood a few feet away from where the accident impact was. He described to me the scenes and what happened and it truly sounded something horrific to witness. Unsurprisingly after that my Dad never returned to Le Mans although he kept his lifelong interest in motorsport.
- On a happier note the Disneyland Resort in Anaheim, California is also 70 years old ... sing along now, M*I*C* K* E* Y* M* O* U* S*E.

It was the first theme park opened by the Walt Disney Company and the only one designed and constructed under the direct supervision of Walt Disney, and opened on 17th July, 1955. Disneyland has a larger cumulative attendance than any other theme park in the world, with over 775 million visits since it opened.



And who is your favourite Disney character then? I am traditional and have to admit that the Mouse is the only one for me. As a child I always wanted a pair of Mickey Mouse ears, strangely though I never got any although I did have some very cool sunglasses with Mickey Mouse on the frames

- It's also the 70th anniversary on 1st December since the African American Rosa Parks was arrested in Montgomery, Alabama, after she refused to vacate her seat on a bus reserved for white people. Her arrest and conviction triggered a bus boycott that was initially planned for one day but was eventually to last for 381 days. The protest which was organised by Martin Luther King became one of the key moments in the American Civil Rights Movement. On 13th November 1956, the Supreme Court in Washington declared racial segregation on public transport unconstitutional.



- On a sombre note, the first Atomic Bomb test by the USA took place on 16th July 1945 under the name "Trinity Test". 3 years earlier the "Manhattan Project" had already started, a military research project for the development and construction of nuclear weapons. In the secret laboratories in Los Alamos in the US State of New Mexico, the first Atomic Bomb was completed under the scientific direction of the nuclear physicist Julius Robert Oppenheimer. It was then used in the attack by the US Air Force on the Japanese city of Hiroshima on 6th August 1945. A four tonne bomb called "Little Boy" was dropped. 3 days later on 9th August the second Atomic Bomb, called "Fat Man" hit the city of Nagasaki. More than 200,000 people were killed instantly and tens of thousands died later from injuries or the effects of nuclear radiation. These 2 bombs forced the Japanese Empire (which had been allies of the Nazis in World War II) to surrender.



- 90 years ago on 3rd July 1935, Ferdinand Porsche presented the first Volkswagen prototype. But production of the civilian Volkswagen only began after World War II in the summer of 1945. By the end of production in Mexico on 30th July 2003, more than 20 million of the globally popular VW had been produced. A VW Beetle was one of the first cars I had access to drive and it was such a fabulous car to drive and so distinctive.



- The National Trust is celebrating its 130th anniversary. So look out for events throughout the year marking this milestone. Do you think they will be baking special anniversary scones? I do hope so as I love a National Trust Scene.
- I know from the entries in competitions that we have several railway buffs in our membership and who doesn't love the sight, sound and smell of a steam train. Well this year marks the 200th anniversary since the birth of the modern railway, on 27 September 1825, the world's first steam-powered passenger train travelled on the Stockton and Darlington Railway. To mark the anniversary there is a nationwide 'Railway 200' programme. It kicked off on



New Year's Day with the New Year's Day Whistle when heritage locomotives across the country sounded their whistles, horns and bells in unison at noon.

If you want to get some pictures of trains head up to County Durham where they are opening the New Hall at the Locomotion Museum with 47 additional locomotives on display. The National Railway Museum in York will also reopen its newly transformed Station Hall after a 3 year renovation programme. Or you could go to the Severn Valley Railway who are celebrating their 60th anniversary in 2025. They are hosting steam galas, diesel festivals and special events.

I had the fortune of going on the steam railway in Norfolk last Summer from Holt to Cromer. Needless to say I thought it would be a good photographic opportunity. However, I found it really difficult to get images that I thought were any good. So hats off to you railway photographers as I now appreciate how difficult it is to get a good, atmospheric shot. Here's one of my efforts, I think my school report would say of it "Could do better and room for improvement"!



- It's the 250th anniversaries of the pivotal British landscape painters John Constable and J M W Turner. There's a 'Turner and Constable' exhibition at Tate Britain if you are interested in their works. I might well be penning an article about the 'Hay Wain', as I visited the site of the painting last summer, so watch this space ...
- Glasgow celebrates its 850th anniversary and as a UNESCO City of Music has a packed musical events calendar. Google the 'Glasgow 850 Festival' to find out more.

03

Pride and Prejudice or Sense and Sensibility?

Are you a fan of Jane Austen? If so you will need to celebrate this year as it marks the 250th anniversary of her birth. Born in Steventon, Hampshire on 16th December 1775, Jane Austen is credited as being a pioneer in fiction, breaking new ground in subject and style giving the novel its distinctly modern character through her treatment of ordinary people in everyday life.



Her parents were George and Cassandra Austen. Her father was a rector and her mother belonged to the gentry as part of the aristocratic Leigh family. She was the

seventh of eight children, having six brothers, James, George, Charles, Francis, Henry and Edward, and one older sister. Although it was not compulsory for Jane to attend school, her parents sent both her and her sister to a girls' boarding school in Reading. During their first stint there they both caught and nearly died of typhoid fever. She completed formal schooling at age 12 and then found comfort in the family library, where she began to read. A voracious reader, she was a fan of Alexander Pope and Samuel Johnson's moral essays. She read French romances and Gothic novels.

In 1801, when Jane was 25, her father retired and moved with his wife and two daughters to Bath. After spending the majority of her life in rural Hampshire this relocation was a great upheaval and a dramatic change of lifestyle for her. When Austen's health declined, she created a will with her sister Cassandra as her heir. She also mentioned her brother Henry and his late wife's secretary Madame Bigeon. Austen and Cassandra also moved to Winchester College to be closer to her doctor.

Austen died at the age of 41 from a disease that was never diagnosed. Theories abound about her cause of death the most popular being Addison's Disease. Scholars have also suggested that it was tuberculosis or a form of cancer. Most recently, the British Library published a blog post indicating that Austen had died from cataracts caused by arsenic poisoning.

Austen's six major books, which would be equivalent to about 15 years of work, earned her before her death between £600-700, averaging out to £40 per annum. Austen never lived above the poverty line, which was set at £55 a year. Her first four novels were published anonymously, but by '*Mansfield Park*' her name was known. '*Sense and Sensibility*' was originally titled '*Elinor and Marianne*' and was signed "By a Lady". Her follow-up, '*Pride and Prejudice*', was originally titled '*First Impressions*' and was signed "By the author of *Sense and Sensibility*." The title change was inspired by the novel '*Cecilia*' by Fanny Burney. The phrase is mentioned three times in the final paragraph of Burney's book in capital letters. '*Persuasion*' and '*Northanger Abbey*' were published together in December 1817. They included a "Biographical Notice" written by Austen's brother Henry, identifying Austen for the first time as the author of '*Sense and Sensibility, Pride and Prejudice, Mansfield Park and Emma*'.

Austen didn't become a household name in her lifetime. Just after her death, her publisher destroyed the copies of her two final books, '*Northanger Abbey*' and '*Persuasion*'. It was in the Victorian era that she began to receive acclaim for her work and was recognised as a great novelist. Since the 20th Century, the term 'Janeite' has been used to describe devotees of Jane Austen. The name was coined by English writer and literary critic George Saintsbury.

Random Facts About Jane Austen

- She hated Bath.
- She and her sister Cassandra were obsessed with bonnets.
- Her books were all published anonymously.
- She never married, and pushed more for her writing career than finding a husband.
- '*Emma*' was dedicated to the Prince Regent at his particular request.
- She detested the Prince Regent.
- '*Pride and Prejudice*' is Austen's best known and most widely adapted work.
- Austen's work is available in c.40 languages.
- Among her famous critics was Charlotte Brontë, who said, "I should hardly like to live with her ladies and gentlemen, in their elegant and confined houses."



- Austen sold her copyright for *'Pride and Prejudice'* to her publisher for £110. It was priced at 18 shillings and was an immediate hit. In 2013 it was reported that *'Pride and Prejudice'* had sold 20 million copies in 200 years.
- Chawton Cottage is where Austen wrote all of her six novels, though she may have written early drafts in other homes. In 1947, it was opened to the public as Jane Austen's House Museum.
- Austen wrote a short play called *'Sir Charles Grandison'*. She worked on it just before finishing *'Lady Susan'*, an epistolary novel she finished writing in about 1794. *'Sir Charles Grandison'* was not published until 1875, well after her death.
- Austen's final composition was a poem, dictated to her sister Cassandra three days before her death. The poem was a humorous ditty on England's rainy weather.
- Austen's works have inspired modern storylines, like the novel and film series *'Bridget Jones' Diary'* by Helen Fielding, who took inspiration from *'Pride and Prejudice'*, and the Alicia Silverstone-led film *'Clueless'*, based on *'Emma'*.
- American singer Kelly Clarkson caused a uproar in 2012 when, at an auction, she purchased a gold and turquoise ring owned by Austen for £152,450. Britain's culture minister put an immediate export ban on the ring, preventing Clarkson from taking it home to the USA. Two years later, Clarkson withdrew her ownership.
- In 2017 Jane became the first female writer to be depicted on a bank note.

'Austen 250' events and experiences are taking place throughout 2025. You can revisit Austen's era-defining novels, along with their iconic film and television adaptations, and the places that inspired them. In Bath, at No 1, Royal Crescent (July-November) you can visit exhibitions and you can don your bonnet for three Austen themed gala balls complete with Regency dance lessons (May, June and December), while Jane Austen's house in Hampshire will host festivals, pop up talks and writing workshops year-round. For the first time ever Austen's school room in Reading will open to visitors between April-October as will No 8 College Street in Winchester where she spent the final few weeks of her life.



It is not what we think or feel that makes us who we are. It is what we do
Or fail to do.

'Sense and Sensibility' – Jane Austen

04

An Acquired Taste?

So how many of you decided to ditch the alcohol this month and do 'Dry January'? And if you did, have you fallen off the wagon yet or are sitting comfortably on it still? I have not signed up for it as luckily I don't drink alcohol so I have had to find something else to give up, but as of yet I haven't thought of anything

The term 'Dry January' was trademarked by Alcohol Change UK/Alcohol Research UK. The month-long feat to be sober was officially launched as a campaign in 2013. The organization says the idea for 'Dry January' came from Emily Robinson, a young woman who gave up drinking for a month in January 2011, to better prepare for her first half marathon. However, it is thought the practice has roots that extend as far back as 1942, when Finland had their own 'Sober January' to help in the war against the Soviet Union after the Finns joined Germany in their fight.



The initiative peaked in 2022, according to market research firm Morning Consult, after the COVID pandemic saw elevated alcoholic intake – c.1 in 4 people drank more than usual. In 2023, c.175,000 signed up to participate in 'Dry January' on the Alcohol Change UK website. In the USA 15% of adults (260 million people) pledged to practice 'Dry January'. The campaign has flourished during a period of increased alcohol consumption, with one study showing that drinking had increased by 70% between 1990 and 2017. The World Health Organisation have said that no level of alcohol consumption is good for our health calling alcohol a Group 1 carcinogen, the highest risk group, alongside includes asbestos, radiation and tobacco.



It takes me 10 minutes to walk to my local pub and 25 minutes to walk back.

The difference is staggering!



I have just tasted the new 'Kangaroo' beer.

You can really taste the hops!

05

Behind the Scenes *Phil Moorhouse LRPS*

Am I the only one when looking at the many wonderful images we see in our competitions to be as intrigued by the background story of the image as the image itself? Where was it taken, how was it taken, what led up to it, what was the thinking behind the author?

So often our favourite images come from the heart, and we have happy memories of when it was taken and what we were doing at the time and who we were with. Those images may not necessarily be winners, but they have something of ourselves in them and a backstory we can share and inspire others. To that end and after talking to a couple of people, we wondered whether it would be a good idea to have a new regular feature in the newsletter and get members to write a few words about the backstory to one of their images that they took to both inspire and encourage, and also tell a little more about themselves and their thinking behind different approaches to photography.

The beauty of this idea is we all take photos! Each photo must have some sort of backstory even if it was a grab shot from a layby on a road trip with no particular thought! So, it is open to everyone and it would be great if everyone participated.

We appreciate not everyone enjoys writing but we are happy to shadow-write the article if you spend a few minutes sharing the backstory of that particular image. So, it really is open to all... and to add a certain frisson to it you can also nominate photos you've seen about which you would like more background! You can do this anonymously and we will endeavour to get the backstory. So please think about it and we will be targeting people.....does that sound like a threat well you have been warned!!!

To kick us off here is the backstory to this image, one of my favourites.....

Sparkling Wine



Here's what you will need:

- A packet of mini indoor sparklers (available from Amazon at £10 for 40 sparklers,.... other suppliers of party goods are available!)
- A wine glass, topped up with water
- A small lump of blu-tack
- A piece of dark card to act as the backdrop
- A piece of dark card for the base (or try a piece of glass or shiny material)
- Matches or a cigarette lighter



Set up your scene in virtual darkness with one of the mini sparklers positioned vertically, hidden behind the half-filled wine glass using the blu-tack. It may be necessary to remove any visible blu-tack in Photoshop later, so take care with the amount used and its placement. My best results were achieved with a piece of brown card as the backdrop on the ceramic hob in the kitchen as the reflective base. This had the added advantage of having an extraction fan above it, so that the smoke alarm didn't go off! Settings will vary depending on the darkness of the scene, the ambient lighting and the camera used, but my best results were achieved with the camera, supported on a tripod, at ISO 250, f/22 at 30mm and a 2.5 second exposure. Focus on the left edge of the glass to ensure everything is in sharp focus.

Now light the sparkler and press the shutter every 3 seconds or so. Each sparkler has a burn time of about 20 seconds, so enough time to comfortably take about 5 shots. My best shots were seen when the sparkler had burnt down to the same level as the surface of the water, although some of the rejected shots earlier and later produced some equally interesting effects.



In post-processing, one or two 'tweaks' might enhance your results by making adjustments in 'Levels'. As the scene was shot in virtual darkness, clearly the histogram is going to be very biased towards the shadows on the left, but it may be worth adjusting the mid-tones if the brightness of the glass needs to be lifted. Highlights might need to be toned down a little to reduce burn-out.



Now, time to start experimenting! You could try other glassware such as jam jars and bottles, or a lightbulb, or ceramic mugs.





06

Competition Corner

December Competition

The first correct answer emailed to me was from Mick Schilling who just pipped Jolanta to the podium. Well done Mick.

If it takes one Elf 5 minutes to make a teddy bear, how many minutes does it take 100 Elves to make 100 teddy bears?

Answer: 5 Minutes as all the Elves are working at the same time.

January Competition

Here's this month's little teaser.

A woman shoots her husband. Then, she holds him underwater for over 5 minutes. Finally, she hangs him. But 5 minutes later, they both go out together and enjoy a wonderful dinner together. How can this be?

So get your thinking caps on and send me your answer by email to: 172elizabeth@gmail.com

Closing Date for Entries: 31st January 2025.

07

Photography Podium

Christmas Knockout

Wow what a night to finish off 2024 with a bang. The Christmas Knockout saw over 512 entries and proved a great success raising over £400 for the Club's Funds. And well done Jolanta who took both first and second place – I am not sure we have ever had anyone take both places before.



Stonechat



Derwentwater



Straight Out of the Camera

A great competition to start off 2025. Some great images and I was thrilled when the judge awarded me both First and Third Place in Group 1. I was so pleased my sheep photograph did so well as when I took it, the image just made me smile and I wanted to capture it if I could. I do hope that little sheep finally did manage to get something to eat ...

And huge congratulations to Jeannette who did even better being awarded both First and Second Place in Group 2. What lovely, atmospheric images she captured. I also loved Tony's image and loved the title ... very clever.

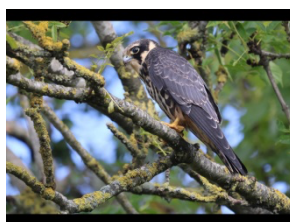
	Group 1		Group 2		Group 3	
<i>First</i>	<i>There's No Room For Me!</i>	Elizabeth Smith	<i>Straight into the Camera</i>	Jeannette Strange	<i>Buttermere at Dusk</i>	Jenny Ladbrooke
<i>Second</i>	<i>Hobby</i>	Mick McShane	<i>The Long and Winding Road</i>	Jeannette Strange	<i>Southern Hawker Exuvia</i>	Mick Schilling
<i>Third</i>	<i>Cold Reflection</i>	Elizabeth Smith	<i>Dec the Store</i>	Tony Dyson	<i>Twilight</i>	David Steele

Digitals

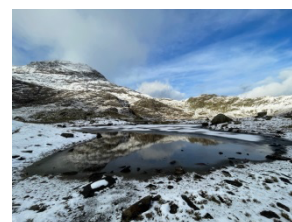
Group 1



There's No Room for Me!



Hobby



Cold Reflection

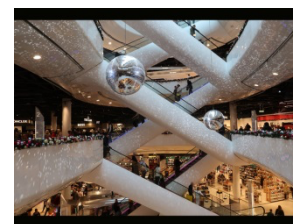
Group 2



Straight into the Camera

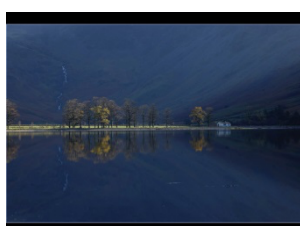


The Long and Winding Road

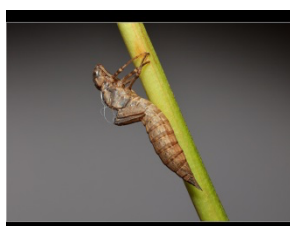


Dec the Store

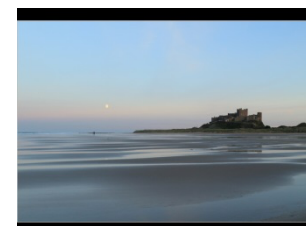
Group 3



Buttermere at Dusk



Southern Hawker Exuvia



Twilight

08

External Recognition

If any of you enter any competitions and get any external recognition then please drop me a line so that I can add it into the Newsletter. It's great to see what everyone is up to and the accolades they receive.



See you next in February 2025!