



# SPS Newsletter

## Welcome

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Wow, where has May gone already? I have been rushing around having just returned from a few days in Northumberland, and what superb hot weather I had which was much appreciated, the countryside looking glorious.

We have now completed our 'official programme and competition year' and are 'resting' until September, hasn't it all gone by so quickly. But don't forget to get your entries in for our Exhibition that is taking place on Saturday, 17<sup>th</sup> August 2024 at Shirley Methodist Church. We have our monthly pub nights to look forward to (see Programme for details), along with our new President Martin's Picnic on 14<sup>th</sup> July 2024 at the Attenborough Nature Reserve, Nottingham. So get your picnic rugs ready, your hampers dusted off and stock up on your sausage rolls, lashings of ginger beer and other delights – sounds a bit like a Famous Five adventure ...! Who's bringing their dog?

So what awareness days in May have caught my eye this year? Well the whole of May is devoted to Stroke Month and it's also National Walking Month. So, no excuses get your walking boots or shoes on and head outside and do a few steps. In honour of the month I have purchased a new pair of walking shoes (hope they are comfortable!). And, if you are feeling like needing some walking motivation why not support the RNLI's 'The May Day Mile' when it is challenging you to walk a Mile a Day in May to raise funds for them. Further information can be found at [www.fundraise.rnli.org](http://www.fundraise.rnli.org).

2<sup>nd</sup> May marked World Password Day (are you like me always forgetting them? I have to keep them written down in a book to remember them all ... and then I put the book somewhere safe for security and then can't find it!). The birds were singing loud on 5<sup>th</sup> May with International Dawn Chorus Day. I don't know whether you are like me but I love during the lighter mornings to get up early and just go outside and listen to the dawn chorus, the sound is so magical and epitomises the beauty of our natural world. I am not good enough to recognise all the birds from their singing voices, only really managing to recognise the robin, blackbird and woodpecker, along with the creel of a gull! I admire those who can tell the different bird songs apart, perhaps my problem is due to me being tone deaf? 9<sup>th</sup> May was Lost Sock Memorial Day, 17<sup>th</sup> May is Endangered Species Day, 6<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> May was Deaf Awareness Week, 13<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> May Mental Health Awareness Week and 18<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup> May National Doughnut Week when many bakers and coffee shops sell lots of delicious doughnuts to raise funds for The Children's Trust. I mean, if it's for charity...

And my favourites, British Tomato fortnight from 27<sup>th</sup> May, celebrating our lovely little red friends and on 29<sup>th</sup> May, National Biscuit Day. Talking of biscuits what's your favourite biscuit? According to the statisticians the UK's favourite biscuit in 2023 was shortbread followed by Jaffa Cakes (but is that really a biscuit?) and Jammie Dodgers. And would you be surprised to learn that us Brits are the world's biggest biccies eaters - scoffing an average of three tasty treats a day. We eat more biscuits than anywhere else on earth, 204 million-a-day across the UK's 68m population. That's made me stop and think just as I am enjoying a biscuit with my cup of tea whilst I write this newsletter ... and guess what it's a shortbread! But I am heartened to learn that my age group does not have the largest appetite for biscuits that honour goes to younger consumers. In the 25 to 34-year-old age group, a sizeable 15% buy biscuits on a daily basis and 72% will make a purchase at least once a week. That figure falls to 52% of 45 to 54-year-olds, and just 39% of 55-plus shoppers.

I was intrigued to learn about the Aberffraw biscuit (sometimes called the Aberffraw Cake or Teisen Berffro) which I had never heard of before. Evidently it's the world's oldest biscuit and is said to originate from 13th Century Anglesey in North Wales. It's a basic shortbread that comes in the shape of a scallop shell... legend has it that a Welsh king was holding court in Aberffraw (a small Welsh village) – his wife was walking on the beach there and, spotting a pretty scallop shell, asked for a cake to be baked in the same form. And so the Aberffraw biscuit was born.

However, a far more realistic source for the biscuit was the famous pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela. This pilgrimage to the Church of St James in Galicia, North Western Spain, began in about the 8th Century with pilgrims wearing badges on their hat in the shape of a scallop shell. It's for this reason Aberffraw biscuits are sometimes also called James cakes. Under the patronage of King Gruffudd ap Cynan (1075-1137) or his son and successor Owain Gwynedd (1137-70), a stone church was built at Aberffraw with Romanesque features similar to 12th Century churches on the pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostela.

Historically, Aberffraw Biscuits were baked in local homes and cottage industries. The dough was carefully shaped using a special scallop-edged mould or by hand, resulting in the recognizable scallop pattern. The biscuits were then baked until golden brown and crisp.

Well I think that's enough of me rattling on with little known nuggets so have a very enjoyable May whatever you are doing and I will be penning another Newsletter for June. So don't forget to send me anything about where you are going, interesting or funny items etc. so I can include them. Email me at: [172elizabeth@gmail.com](mailto:172elizabeth@gmail.com).

With my very best wishes

Liz xx

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## 02

## Through the Lens

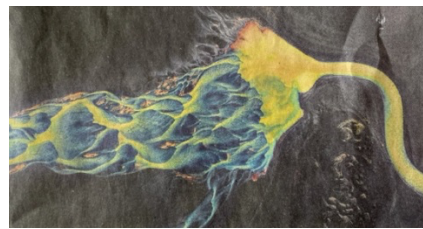
Did any of you see the recent announcement that Tracey Lund has been crowned The World Nature Photography's Photographer of the Year for her shot of gannets in the Shetland Islands? Her image was also awarded Gold in the Birds Category.

This recent recognition is testament to Tracey having given up her telecommunications job in the pursuit of photography full-time. In the past we have been fortunate to have Tracey as our speaker on a couple of occasions (brilliantly booked by Sue Pearmain), and if you ever have the chance to hear Tracey speak she is well worth investing your time in listening to her and seeing her images. You can also follow Tracey on Instagram and Facebook if social media is your 'thing'. I always get a thrill when I see someone doing well who at our local photographic club we have heard speak and inspire many of us to take more photographs and appreciate the skills and passion involved in photography.

Tracey's winning image is shown below. Apologies for the quality of the image but I couldn't get the crease out of the newspaper!



The top spot for the Nature Art category went to Miki Spitzer for an aerial photograph of watery veins, glacial braids and golden sediment in Iceland.



Alex Brackx led the Behaviour – Mammals category with a photograph of a mother zebra and its foal being attacked by a cheetah in Maasai Mara National Reserve in Kenya.



## 03

### An A 'May' Zing Month

May is a wonderful month of the year with the lighter evenings and the bloom of Spring all around us. In celebration of the month here are some little nuggets of information for you:

- The month May is thought to be named for Maia, the Greek goddess of fertility (although the Roman poet Ovid had other ideas. He claimed May was named for the maiores (the elders) and June for the iuniores (youths))
- May used to have a very different name in Old English. Back then, the month was referred to as the "month of three milkings." Unsurprisingly, this meant that during this month, you could milk your cows up to three times per day!
- According to old superstitions, you should not buy a broom, wash blankets or get married in May: "Marry in May and you'll rue the day".
- Tradition dictates that washing one's face in the dew from May Day morning beautifies the skin.
- May has two birth flowers – the Lily-of-the-Valley and the Hawthorn. The Hawthorn flower is a symbol of hope, while the Lily-of-the-Valley represents the return of happiness and sweetness.
- The international distress signal, "Mayday," has nothing to do with the first of May. It derives from the French *venez m'aider*, meaning "come help me."

And what about May Day and the Celtic festival of Beltane, the most important day of the folklore year? In the calendar of the ancient Celts it marked the first day of summer. The 'fire of Bel', or Beltane as it was called, was celebrated with bonfires to welcome the new season.

Despite being opposed through the centuries by both Church and State, many May Day celebrations survive today. Maypole dancing, with its sinister hints of tree worship, was described by the Puritans as 'a heathenish vanity' and was accordingly banned. Dancing did not start again until after the restoration of Charles II. The tallest Maypole can be found at Barwick in Elmet, Yorkshire, measuring 86ft. Other ways to welcome the summer include the crowning of the May Queen, the mad antics of Jack-in-the-Green and the rampaging of the Hobby Horses.

And did you know 19<sup>th</sup> May is St Dunstan's Day? Dunstan was an Anglo-Saxon saint born a few miles from Glastonbury in Somerset, around 909AD. His father was a Wessex nobleman of royal blood. Glastonbury was a place for Christian pilgrimage and a renowned centre of learning at that time. Dunstan was educated at the Abbey there before joining his uncle Athelm, Archbishop of Canterbury, at the court of King Athelstan of Wessex. When Athelstan died his successor Edmund named Dunstan as Abbot of Glastonbury.

Dunstan acted as a royal advisor. In 955 however, Dunstan argued with the young King Eadwig, who confiscated Dunstan's property and exiled the monk. Dunstan was called back to England by Edgar, King of Northumbria and Mercia. Under Edgar's influence Dunstan became Bishop of Worcester and when Eadwig died in 960, Dunstan was named Archbishop of Canterbury. Dunstan arranged the details of Edgar's coronation as king, which remains the basis of royal coronations today. When he died in 988 Dunstan became the most popular English saint of his day and his tomb became a place of pilgrimage.

## 04

### Wet, Wet, Wet!

Chaucer in his prologue to 'The Canterbury Tales' wrote 'When April with her showers sweet' to which TS Eliot added 'April is the cruellest month', summed up well the month of April, which can offer us very mixed and changing weather and this year has given us many challenges. Particularly so if you were in Dubai recently, did you see the news reports of the storm and rain that battered them, with a year's rain falling in a single day. But is what people say about the month true for the UK? Evidently according to the Met Office December is always actually the month with the most rain.



What do you call a pile of coins in the rain?

Climate change!

What exactly is rain? According to the dictionary definition it is 'the condensed moisture of the atmosphere falling visibly in separate drops'. And what about the language the weather forecasters use for rain? 'Unsettled' means rain, 'Changeable' means rain eventually, 'Unstable' means rain as does 'low pressure' or 'unseasonable'. According to the English Dictionary we have so many words to describe rain from drizzle, mizzle, smirr, downpour, torrent, deluge, shower, spitting, chucking, throwing it down, stair-rods, I could go on ...



The Welsh apparently have 25 words to describe rain! But in a way rain is what defines our country more than any other weather type. However, we are not really so rainy compared to other places. Colombia and Brunei are the world's wettest countries and Bergen (Norway) is the rainiest city in Europe, having on average 6.4 inches per month. According to the Guinness World Records the place with the highest average annual rainfall is the village of Mawsynram in North East India with c.472 inches of rain per year. Argyllshire (Scotland) is the wettest UK region with c.89 inches of rain per year, but it is the individual hills of Crib Goch (Gwynedd) and Styhead (Cumbria) with 182 inches and 180 inches respectively that record the highest amount of rain. And the wettest city in the UK, Cardiff, closely followed by Manchester.

So thinking of all of these statistics maybe we need to re-think our thoughts on rain. I myself like to see the positive in it and always refer to it as 'liquid sun'! So on that note let's keep our fingers crossed we have a good, dry summer and not too much liquid.



What did one raindrop say to the other as it ran off the road?

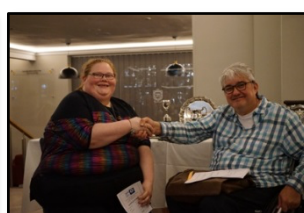
This is a grate day!

## 05

## Annual Awards Dinner and Evening



Friday, 12<sup>th</sup> April saw us celebrate the end of our formal programme season with our very own version of the BAFTAS (but without the red carpet!), the Annual Awards Dinner. Once again, our hosts at Fulford Heath Golf Club served up an excellent meal, enjoyed by all. Here are some of the highlights. Congratulations to all those who entered the competitions this year, without you entering there would be no competition, and well done to all of you who were successful in the competitions. Many thanks to Tony Dyson, our photographer on the night.





Eric Jones Memorial Trophy	Nat Hist Proj Gp 1	Myles Ensor
David Bentley Memorial Trophy	Nat Hist Proj Gp 2	Fay Venables
Norman J Prue Trophy	Nat Hist Proj Gp 3	Jolanta Bujalska Axon
Hugh Owen Trophy	Nat Hist Print Gp 1	Mike Goodwin
Haydn Jones Memorial Trophy	Nat Hist Print Gp 2	Kevin Watts
Don Mallett Trophy	Nat Hist Print Gp 3	Mick Schilling
Mobley Trophy	Set Assignment	Mick Schilling
Watkins Trophy	Digital Panel	Tony Dyson
Tom Bartlett Trophy	Print Panel	Jenny Ladbrokee
Don & Elsie Wardell Trophy	Best Mono Print Gp 1-3	Jolanta Bujalska Axon
Landscape Colour Trophy	Landscape Project Gp 1	Michael Prince
Strange Trophy	Landscape Project Gp 2	Martin Green
Kirk Cup	Landscape Project Gp 3	David Venables
Suffield Rose Bowl	Landscape Print Gp 1	Ann Ashford
Biggs Salver	Landscape Print Gp 2	Tony Dyson
John Hogg Salver	Landscape Print Gp 3	Mick Schilling
Timbrell Trophy	Annual Proj Gp 1	Myles Ensor
Roy Holmes Plaque	Annual Proj Gp 2	Chris Lee
Colour (Slide) Goblet	Annual Proj Gp 3	Sue Pearmain
Ken Bowles Salver	Annual Print Gp 1	Mick McShane
Walker Challenge Plaque	Annual Print Gp 2	Martin Green
Frank Smyth Memorial Trophy	Annual Print Gp 3	Jane Roby
John Burton Memorial Trophy	Best Mono Gp 1-3	Martin Green
David Venables Shield	Best AV	Tim Hutchin
Intermediate Merit Award	Best Total Prints Score Gp 1	Mike Goodwin
Advanced Merit Award	Best Total Prints Score Gp 2	Kevin Watts
Advanced Plus Merit Award	Best Total Prints Score Gp 3	Mick Schilling
Tri-Colour 6 Cup	Best Total Proj Score Gp 1-3	Chris Lee
Peter Woodbridge Trophy	Highest Score groups 1-3	Chris Lee



## 06

## The Colour Red

There is no one way to describe a colour. Josef Albers once proclaimed that if you were to say 'red' to 50 different people, there would be 50 different versions of the colour in each person's mind. Names have evolved to make specific distinctions between colours, but even then it can be confusing, and each one is subject to the evolution of language in different cultures. For example, in Dutch the word for pink once meant yellow, and in Japanese the word green used to describe the colour did not exist until fairly recently.

Today, many colours exist as synthetic versions, but their names pay homage to their origins. While the Ancient Greek term for ochre means 'pale yellow', ochre today is a broad umbrella term for rich, earthy colours such as ferric oxide – or iron oxide – which, in combination with clays or soils, gave rise to names such as Indian Red. Indian Red is rich, opaque and deep red in colour. Its name derives from the red laterite soil found in India, where it was first identified by the Scottish scientist Francis Buchanan-Hamilton, and where iron ores exist in abundance. It can vary in tone, but in India it is a warm, dark, earthy-red, with a tendency towards blue. Variations include Venetian Red, English Red and Kobe Red, the latter a dark tone of Indian Red.

The use of earth colours such as Indian Red date back to prehistoric times. Due to its resistance to light the use of Indian Red has been wide, from old masters' paintings to the present day. It has been a popular colour in decorative and industrial paint applications due to its high permanence and anticorrosive qualities when mixed as an epoxy resin.

Up until 1996 Indian railway trains were painted brick-red in colour. The maroon-red oxide primer was made of ferrous oxide and would most likely have originated from local sources. Although it is never described as Indian Red, model-train enthusiasts have come to recognise the name.



Why did the tomato turn red?

Because it saw the salad dressing!



Why was the strawberry late?

Because it got stuck in a jam!



What did the red traffic light say to the car?

Don't look I am changing!



# 07

## Out and About

If you fancy trying to get some more images of canal narrowboats etc. why not consider going along to the Rally and Canal Festival, details below:

Fellows, Morton & Clayton Ltd Rally and Canal Festival, Braunston Marina, 29-30<sup>th</sup> June. Rally of historic working narrowboats with daily parades. Open 10-5 pm. [www.braunstonmarina.co.uk](http://www.braunstonmarina.co.uk)

And if you fancy a trip further afield why not head down to Sussex. Amongst other things did you know East Grinstead high street boasts one of the longest runs of medieval building in England. It also sits on the Greenwich (Prime) Meridian – zero degrees longitude. Located in the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the North and South Downs and the Weald have a mix of heavy clay soils, greensand and chalk. It's very good soil for making wine, particularly sparkling wine, with no fewer than 50 vineyards in this part of England, many offering tours and tastings. Conditions are similar to Champagne in France. Sussex wine enjoys a protected geographical status and accounts for 25% of all the wine produced in the UK. Major producers include Balfour Winery at Staplehurst, Rathfinny near Brighton, and the 'King' of them all is Nyetimber, which is regularly served at royal receptions. And did you know the President of Wine GB is Queen Camilla no less.

*If you have any suggestions of places for people to visit do please let me know and I will put them into the Newsletter.*

# 08

## Competition Corner

Well unfortunately no-one was successful with the right answer to April's competition, the answer to which is given below:

What's black and white and eats like a horse?

**The Answer: A Zebra**

And here's another little teaser for you this month:

## May Competition

What is blue and not heavy?

The first correct answer emailed to me will win. So send your answers in by email to [172elizabeth@gmail.com](mailto:172elizabeth@gmail.com). **Closing Date for Entries: 31<sup>st</sup> May 2024.**



# 09

## Photography Podium

### Next Year's Competitions

Don't forget whilst you are 'resting' for the Summer to think about the competitions lined up for next year's Programme. And maybe when you are out and about get your cameras out and keep snapping, you never know there might be a winner in one of them!

I am already having a long, hard think about President Martin's Set Assignment and I have to say it is challenging my little grey cells somewhat. Here's a list of what we have to look forward to next year:

- First Digital
- First Prints
- Natural History (DPI) Natural History (Prints)
- President's Set Assignment ('Connections')
- Landscapes (DPI) Landscapes (Prints)
- Christmas Knockout
- Straight out of the Camera
- Monochrome (DPI) Monochrome (Prints)
- Panels (DPI) Panels (Prints)
- 'People' (DPI) 'People' (Prints)
- Six Prints
- Annual Digital
- Annual Prints
- Creative
- AV

# 10

## External Recognition



### U3a Photography Group (Balsall Common)

Very many "Congratulations" to Dave Venables who has been recognised for supporting the U3a Photography Group (Balsall Common), during their past 200 meetings!' Dave is pictured in the front row, 3<sup>rd</sup> from the right.



## 2024 MCPF Print and PDI Championships

The 2024 Print and PDI Championships took place on 20th April at Braunstone Civic Centre. Around 70 Club members from across the Midlands were in attendance to watch the Championships with 22 Clubs entering the PDI Championships and 17 Clubs entering the Print Championships.

The images were judged by Andy Polakowski AWPf, DPAGB, BPE5, EFIAP/p, APAGB, Jenny Hibbert MPAGB, EFIAP/g, AWPf, BPE2, and Ray Brammall ARPS, APAGB, DPAGB, EFIAP/g, BPE4.

Smethwick PS, Arden PG and Wrekin Arts PC were the top 3 Clubs in both sections (although there was a tie for third place in the PDI Final with Smethwick winning through by having more images scoring 15 than Newport).

The top 8 clubs in each section qualified for the second round. Shirley were 14<sup>th</sup> in the PDIs and so didn't qualify for the second round. In the prints Shirley came 7<sup>th</sup> equal, putting us in the second round. We came 6<sup>th</sup> equal, with an average score of 13, which is a brilliant performance for Shirley.

Hopefully we will be entering again next year and maybe do even better. It would be great if we had more of our members attend and give support. Please read the article in the MCPF Newsletter to get a flavour of the day and also the full set of results.

Have a good summer and hopefully see you at our exhibition in August.

Chris Mallett

*If any of you enter any competitions and get any external recognitions 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 June 2024!**