

40 Years – A Celebration

6th November 2021.

Croeso Greetings one and all to this rather select gathering of photographers who have come to celebrate the 40th birthday of the North Wales Photographic Association.

I would especially like to give a warm welcome to Gordon Jenkins – judge of this afternoon's competition and Diane Owen from the Lancashire and Cheshire Photographic Union.

Before we proceed any further, I would like to thank Phil (Abbott) and John (Smith) and all their team for this afternoon's entertainment and to the clubs that contributed to make it a successful competition. THANK YOU.

We should all be proud of the work the NWPFA has done over the last 40 years – supporting the work of camera clubs in North Wales and assisting photographers to enjoy their hobby and to improve and gain recognition for their work through workshops, competitions, exhibitions and distinctions.
So how did it all come about?

"A photographer is someone for whom taking pictures is more difficult than it is for other people." (*– a misquote found on Twitter*)

In 1892, the RPS founded "The Affiliation of Photographic Societies with the Royal Photographic Society." The aims of the Society were very similar to those of the present day PAGB.

By the late 1890s it became apparent that this set-up was unwieldy and that decentralisation would be an advantage.

So, in 1899, the first Federation, the Yorkshire Photographic Union, was founded. Others followed after. For many years the Federation Secretaries met with the RPS in Conference. Then in 1926 it was proposed to formalise this arrangement and "The Council of British Photographic Federations" was established.

Eventually, five English Federations – the Yorkshire Photographic Union, the Northern Counties Photographic Federation, the Lancashire and Cheshire Photographic Union, The Midland Counties Photographic Federation and the East Anglian Federation of Photographic Societies, along with RPS and the Central Association of Photographic Societies (which was all the other clubs not covered by the other Federations.) – formed the embryo PAGB. The first meeting of this group was in May 1930.

The Photographic Alliance of Great Britain comprises 15 federations based on geographical regions. The total number of clubs within all of these is over 1000, hence, there are approximately 40 thousand photographers indirectly affiliated to the PAGB.

The Welsh Photographic Federation was founded 1951 and joined the PAGB in the same year.

At that time the WPF encompassed all the clubs in the country of Wales including those here in the North.

Due to the geography of Wales, club activity was divided. With the majority of the population and the corresponding large number of clubs being in the South, meant

most of the activity and investment was concentrated in the South, with the North left out in the cold.

The Northern clubs used to meet informally and in 1980 and there was a movement led by Ken Worthy of Rhyl Club to gain independence allowing the North to make their own decisions and programme.

Ken put this to his club and received an overwhelming majority from the 60 odd members who attended.

At a meeting of the 16 North Wales Clubs on 11th January 1981 it was proposed by Rhyl that the North Wales Photographic Association be established. 10 clubs voted in favour, 5 against, with Dwyfor abstaining.

Initially, 12 clubs joined – The British Aerospace Camera Club, Buckley Camera Club, Clwb Camera Caernarfon, Denbigh Photographic Society, Dyffryn Ogwen Camera Club, Harwarden Institute Camera Club, Mold Camera Club, Rhyl Photographic Society, Rhyl, Labour Social Club, British Rail Camera Club, Wrexham and District Photographic Society and RAF Valley Camera Club.

The first President of our Federation was Margaret Salisbury, for 1981 (who is unable to attend for health reason). Ken Worthy was Secretary and stayed in that post until 1993. Emyr Roberts was our first Treasurer and stayed in post until 1994.

(In memory of his contribution to the NWPA we have a trophy in his name which is awarded to the best landscape picture in the Annual Exhibition.)

It was decided to make a bid to join the PAGB. Originally, it wasn't intended to separate fully from the Welsh Federation. It was proposed to have two bodies - the North and the South - to make the whole. But this didn't prove acceptable. Our application was supported by Bill Wisden of Southern Federation who proposed it and was seconded by Jimmy and Sylvia Keith of the London Area. We joined the PAGB in 1982.

In the minutes of the NWPA meeting of May that year, it was recorded that Margaret Salisbury had made an invaluable contribution to the process and was duly thanked for her part in the successful application to PAGB.

*It should be noted that the hierarchy with the PAGB at the top is not one of control. The PAGB is not a governing body for federations, and neither are federation's governing bodies for clubs. **The hierarchy is one of service.** Federations exist to serve the needs of clubs and their members, and the PAGB exists to serve the needs of all of those. These organisations are typically run by volunteers who are also club photographers.*

It is surprising, and maybe a little disconcerting, that many of volunteers' names from those early days still regularly keep popping up, even now 40 years later. Margaret and Emyr are two obvious ones. But also, **Andy Polakowski** (for winning the Individual Print Trophy in 1981-82) and Tom Dodd, who helped with selecting competition pictures and became competition secretary later. Then there was John Roberts who was President in 1982 and again 2007 & 2008. Forgive me for any others I might have missed.

I say disconcerting because if you think about it, these people were in their 30s and in their prime. But even now, in their later years, are still active and contributing time and energy to the Federation.

There are others like Frank Barber, Don & Christine Langford, Mike Heller, Kevin Hirst, Brian Cook, Berwyn Williams as well as many others, to name just a few, who have also given exemplary service over the years.

The list goes on. Not just on the executive but in the clubs. While it is easy to recognise the leaders – the chairmen, secretaries and office holders – there are many who silently contribute to the running of the clubs or the federation - The quiet ones, who open the doors, put the chairs out, hang the exhibitions, organise the projector, make the tea and all the little things that make a meeting or event.

We also thank all the newer members who are coming on board offering their talents and abilities. We need to ensure there's opportunity for them to contribute and add their ideas and vision.

We can't be complacent. The NWPA is the smallest of the 15 Federations. Pre-Pandemic we had 24 affiliated clubs with a combined membership of about 800 but during lockdown we know that at least one club – Deudraeth – has closed down, several have not been in contact with their members and most of the rest are reporting reduced membership.

We need young blood with new ideas and energy if we want to continue. We must adapt to the times and find new ways to support photography in North Wales. We still need to support competitions, awards and distinctions but we also need to look at other ways and promote other aspects of photography.

We need to recognise those members who contribute so much to our success. That's why we have our own special award – Hon NWPA
And the PAGB have the APAGB award for service.
Check out the websites for more information about how you can nominate someone that deserves it.

Assuming we've got it - give Kevin his APAGB and also Emyr's award.

Today we look to the past and give thanks to all who have made this Federation a success.

Tomorrow we must look to the future.

Thank you all for coming tonight. Diolch I chi gyd am ddod heno.