

CORNWALL PHOTOGRAPHIC ALLIANCE
PUTTING IT ON RECORD- A Historical Note

The idea of an Alliance of local camera Clubs was first discussed between Mr Keith Robertson of the Camborne/Redruth Club and Mr A S Ronalds of the Falmouth Club. Mr Ronalds at that time was Librarian at Redruth Library. The simple aim as stated in the first report was “ ... to improve quality ... add new interests ... and to encourage more inter club participation with a view to wider horizons.

So, out of a central committee the West Cornwall Photographic Alliance was formed in may 1971, with Mr A S Ronalds as Chairman, Mr Keith Robertson as Secretary and Mr L Wilton of the Truro Club as Treasurer. The participating clubs were Camborne/Redruth, Truro, SWEB, Falmouth Photographic Society, Cornwall Technical College, Penzance & Goonhilly. Committee members in the first year of office included amongst others, Messers Les Ashworth and Charles Hosken, who are still represented on the present committee of the Alliance. Committee meetings were first held in the Redruth library, and then, for many years, in the social room of the SWEB Camera Club, Carne Brea, until that club fell away in 1979. Cornwall Technical College has been the venue for many committee meetings since that time, although other venues are now invoked.

Mr Keith Robertson continued as Secretary until 1977 when he moved out of the county. Subsequent secretaries have been Charles Hosken, Arthur Wiggins, Peter Terry and our present Secretary, Bob Frederick.

From the beginning the engagement of outstanding national photographers to visit the area was fostered - speakers who could not be supported by any one club alone. Many illustrious photographers have been sponsored including Michael Tickner, Sir George Pollock, Ian Ball, Tom Molland, John Dawkins, Richard Tucker, Frank Neubert, Bob Moore, Dr Lois Myers and Sheila McCullough and more recently John Podmore, Derrick Rodway, Heather Angel (when President of RPS), Barry Wilkins, Margaret Hodge, Jerry Woolridge, Chloe Johnson, Ian Platt, Andy Cullow and Helene Rogers, most of whom hold at least Fellowship Distinctions of the RPS.

An annual competition has also been a central theme of the Alliance with the aim of raising standards. A cup sponsored by Mr Ronalds, known as the Alliance Print Cup, was presented for the best print as early as 1972. Support for the print competition fell away when colour was first introduced, but commendably, in recent years prints have been enthusiastically supported. So much that an additional separate cup for colour prints has now been presented by Mr Abid Shah of Penzance.

Also in 1972, Mr Geoff Marshall presented a cup for the best colour slide and the first winner of the cup was Mr Shanock of Falmouth Photographic Society.

In the Queen's Jubilee year of 1977, a special and additional colour slide competition was arranged which best symbolized the Jubilee spirit. This was one by Mr Bob Tanner who received an engraved Dartington glass mug awarded by the Alliance.

Initially these competitions were for individual entries with a limit placed on the number of prints and slides submitted by each club simply to make the competition more manageable. Since the 1980 Annual Competition however, a new competitive element has been introduced to help raise the standards of clubs as a whole. This was the presentation of a cup from Mr Ray Holland of St Ives to the club obtaining the highest total of marks for slides submitted by its members.

It needs to be placed on record that since the earliest times the Cornwall Technical College Photographic Society with the support of its then Principal, Dr Ken Farnell, has played a crucial role in giving support to the Alliance by providing facilities for events and for publicity. Without their assistance the Alliance would not have thrived anything like as well. To mark Dr Farnell's great interest, his widow presented in 1989 the `ken Farnell Cup for the club, which obtained the highest total of marks for prints submitted by its members.

In recent years the use of a panel of three independent judges instead of a single judge has greatly enhanced the assessment standard of the annual competition. Furthermore, since 1977 a fourth judge with an RPS distinction from outside of the county was invited to assess the slides and to tape a commentary so that the slides and tape could be circulated in the subsequent session among the participating clubs. This is however no longer undertaken.

Since Bob Frederick came into the county and took over the Secretaryship he has been instrumental in having the prints and slides taken to three International Judges and assessed by them. The first competition so assessed was in 1989 at Smithwick by `roger Parry ARPS, Tony Wharton FRPS AFIAP and Ron Sills FRPS of the Smithwick Photographic Society. This judging set a benchmark for our standards and hopefully our Annual Competition entries will be subjected to the same high standards for the foreseeable future.

The Alliance was instrumental in helping Truro Camera Club when they suffered a decline in numbers in 1977 and they also played a part in getting the St Ives club firmly established.

Another milestone was passed in 1981 when the Alliance took the decision to rename itself the Cornwall Photographic Alliance since this now reflects the fact that to date twelve clubs are in the Alliance across the county from Wadebridge to Penzance.

The Alliance is not a separate entity but is self governing by the clubs which form its membership. Chairmanship rotates through the various clubs year by year. Financially the Alliance does not aim to make a profit for any other reason than to give it a sound basis for the following ventures. Mr Len Collings, treasurer for many years, keeps a firm hand on our finances to make this possible.

The Alliance came of age at 21 years in May 1992. May it go from strength to strength as it continues to act as an ambassador for photography throughout the County.

Charles Hosker
President.