



THE LITTLE MAN

THE OFFICIAL ORGAN OF THE
PHOTOGRAPHIC MINIATURE POSTAL PORTFOLIOS

All contributions should be forwarded to the Editor,
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THE LITTLE MAN SPEAKS

Not since the Winter of 1940 have I been able to speak to you. Then I told the story of the resuscitation of these Sister Clubs. The Clubs have meanwhile grown from strength to strength; enthusiasm has never dwindled. The standard of work submitted month by month has maintained a high level of efficiency, while the co-operation of the Membership has been an inspiration to those who had undertaken the control of the various circles.

That the Emergency Council has been able to keep twelve Circles in active circulation throughout this two year period is sufficient testimony to the exceptionally fine service rendered by the Circle Secretaries, for without their help and loyalty the venture must have failed.

Now, once again, I come to lend my support, and ask no more than to be allowed to speak for you in your name and to pass your wisdom on.

Your obedient servant,

THE LITTLE MAN

PROGRESS

Since the re-circulation of our folios in 1940 the most outstanding event has been the affiliation of the Sister Clubs to the Royal Photographic Society.

It had been the wish of the President for some years that the Clubs should become affiliated, and it has been known that he might have enforced his opinion on the Clubs. Some there were who put forward criticism because he did not exercise his undoubted influence to achieve this end. It has however always been his policy to be guided in such matters by the wishes of his Council and the Council were not then ready to make such a

move. Now the Clubs have become affiliated.

To meet the requirements and demands of the Postal Clubs a Postal Clubs Sub-Committee has been appointed by the Executive of the Central Association. Representatives from all the affiliated postal clubs have a seat upon this Sub-Committee under the Chairmanship of Mr. Leighton Herdson. Already some promising progress has been made.

Of primary importance is the effort that has been made to secure for the affiliated postal clubs a separate section in the forthcoming Central Association Exhibition at the House of the R.P.S. (Particulars will be issued at an early date.) It was not to be expected that the Sub-Committee would in their first year venture a solo effort, and compromise is however a welcome step in the right direction.

To collect and catalogue all the available lectorettes arrange for the conversion of many lectures from the extensive collection held in the custody of the C.A., into lecturette form, to compile a library of photographic books and literature to be made available to members of affiliated postal clubs is another of the tasks that the newly formed Sub-Committee has undertaken.

An interesting feature likely to be announced shortly is a competition for the best lecturette, while it is just as possible that there will be a competition for the best Note-book entry.

It is proposed to organise an Inter-Club competition. This would no doubt be preceded in the multiple clubs, such as P.M.P.P. and P.P.P. by an Inter-Circle print competition.

To set up a Board of Judges to adjudicate on such competitions and later at Exhibitions of Postal Club work is another aim of the Postal Clubs Sub-Committee.

Another ideal is the setting up of a joint purchasing committee, this would effect a considerable saving in Club finances.

With such possibilities opening up before us, the Emergency Council is to be congratulated on deciding to give the support of our sister clubs to the Postal Clubs Sub-Committee.

W. L. F. WASTELL, Hon. F.R.P.S.

Died April 26 1941, Aged 77.

Many of our Club members will welcome the opportunity offered to make a donation towards the "Wastell Trophy." All will demand the Trophy should be as handsome as its object deserves.

W.L.F.W. was much interested in our portfolios and he adjudicated on the P.P.P. Competition of January 1939. In his article which appeared in "The Little Man" No. 4 he wrote "The prints entered for this competition (there were 96 entries) made a batch of very high all-round quality, and would by themselves form an excellent exhibition.....Both subjects and treatment were worthy of the best and highest traditions of pictorial photography."

Such was his opinion of these portfolios.

Some will remember him best as "The Walrus" author of the famous "Piffle" articles which appeared in the "A.P." from 1903-1928. This series of pages numbered 1300, and they were contributed without the break of a single week—a record in journalism. Others amongst you will be more familiar with his "With the Beginners" pages in "A.P." written over his initials W.L.F.W., from 1928-1941.

No Club ever had a better or more generous friend, advisor and critic than we had in W. L. F. Wastell. We mourn his loss.

"There accompanied me for some time a distinguished pictorialist who did not make a single exposure all day, because he said there were no atmospheric effects. Up till then I had always understood that such workers kept atmospheric effects at home in collapsible tubes, and could spread any sort on the picture at will. But he seemed to expect to find the effects already stuck on the landscape. Anyhow, we were afterwards chased home by one of the fiercest atmospheric effects I have ever seen." (Extract from "Piffle")—R.C.L.H.

WHITHER PHOTOGRAPHY?

Pictorial photography, as we know it today, can justly be said to have attained a fairly good standard, and at the leading shows a really poor piece of work is seldom seen. On the other hand, really outstanding prints are very rare and up to the present moment a photographic genius has not appeared, so that our medium is not considered to have reached the heights achieved by the great arts even in one isolated case. Whether it will attain this position one day is a much debated point. The main purpose of this little article is to assert that photography will take its place among the other great arts, and to discuss the path it should tread in order to achieve this ideal.

The photographer must first completely free himself from the deadly influence exercised by the old traditions and fundamentals of other arts, particularly those of oil and water colour painting. The type of subjects favoured by the old masters, their lighting, composition, etc., are constantly reiterated and analysed by lecturers and writers. It would appear that these are the foundations on which an ambitious photographer should build. Exhibition judges usually further this view by basing their judgement on the old standards. Thus the huge web is spun and the photographer is caught in it from the very beginning; bound hand and foot in the mesh of ideals of other mediums which bear only the smallest resemblance to his own.

Let us consider for a moment the case of water colour painting. The early water colour painters were not considered to be artists; one had to paint in oils or try to imitate that medium to earn such a title. The great masters of water colour were those who cared not what their critics thought but continued to exploit the outstanding virtue of their own medium. This virtue is agreed to be transparency as opposed to the opacity of oil pigments and it was in the painting of landscapes in the perfect translation into colour terms of the vagaries of the British climate both inland and on the sea-shore that this virtue was pre-eminent. So that in the great majority of cases the masters painted land or seascapes and these works are the great glory of water colour. No landscape in oils can, of necessity, approach them.

Here we have the signpost pointing to the trail photography must follow. Decide at once what the still camera can do better than any other medium. To do this takes time, but after seeing many exhibitions and also the efforts of a few bold (but not fashionable) photographers, and after wading through the mass of artificiality, the real elements which matter most become clear. The selection has to be ruthless but the conclusion reached is that the something which identifies a highly successful print from the passably good ones and which also identifies it as a product of the camera is **the rendering of texture and detail** by the skilful use of light. This is something the camera can do par excellence. A secondary observation is the ability of the camera to capture the fleeting moment, but as still photography tears this moment from its context it is felt that the cine camera can render more successfully the passing second together with its past and future.

To return to the all important point of the rendering of texture and detail, it must be said that the term "texture" should be interpreted in its broadest sense. The word is often only associated with close-ups, but texture can be seen in many types of subjects—sunlit walls and buildings, snowscapes, the surface of the water, many substances and materials and so forth. It is evident that the adoption of this guiding principle will result in many subjects no longer being suitable or worthy of photographic effort. For example the familiar landscape would be ruled out. Would this be a cause for regret? On the contrary! Where is the landscape made by the camera that can compare with those painted by the masters of water colour? The print is but a feeble imitation of their work and the photographer measures his success by the nearness to which he can approach them.

The camera artist can never excel them at this subject because the subject itself is not photogenic, or in other words it has little texture or movement on which the camera can prove the merit of its interpretation.

Therefore, let us make a fresh start. Reject all subjects which can be done better by other mediums.

Choose subjects which the camera can render better than any other process. Study the work of the mid-European photographers led by Erö Vadas, and at home that of Briggs and Van Wadenoyen. Not that all the prints from these latter men illustrate my argument, but they are the only people who are feeling their way in a continual forward movement. Free your minds from all restrictions and inhibitions. Never mind if the grey-beards frown. I am not calling for sensational eye-catching prints, but rather for the birth of sane, truthful photography, faithful to its own fine qualities and developing them, until one day there will arise a master in harmony with his medium.

A. Royden Willetts, A.R.P.S.

P.P.P. LOOKS AHEAD

Wars appear to have no permanent ill effect upon photography as a hobby. Hitlers come and go like shadows which only accentuate the light of greater things.

But times of stress are sometimes times of change. Such mediums of expression as music very often reflect the stress of the times in which the composers lived, and photography, being influenced as much by mechanical changes as by personal influences, will doubtless be used as an outlet in the same way.

Much good work is being done by a few and the portfolios show a remarkably high standard, but there is not the scope of peace time. Perhaps this, then, is the moment to reflect upon the future, and if there are to be changes, we might as well be master of the shape of things to come.

After the war I would like to see photographers having greater opportunities for studying their favourite branches of the hobby, including the study of technique and art. P.M.P.P. and P.P.P. are strong enough in both personal ability and numbers, and members throughout the country to give a lead. Portfolios present an ideal medium for the passing on of knowledge.

Lecturettes are all very well in their way, but they can only nibble at a subject, while books are written with an eye to circulation with the result that others

besides photographers have to be catered for. I would like to see members having an opportunity to become students in art, or students in photographic chemistry, or what you will, through the medium of the postal portfolios. This "educational" side could be under the guidance of a Council whose special task would be that of improving the knowledge of members and their advancement.

It is possible that colour will vie with monochrome in popularity after the war and an appreciation of colour values and colour composition will be greatly sought after by photographers. With few exceptions the artistic achievements in colour up to the present have shown a deplorable lack of understanding of anything but the presentation of colour for colour's sake.

In the 1930s, with the advent of the miniature camera, a new form of realistic work was introduced. Conventional arrangements and viewpoints were often swept by the board, yet in the best work there was a fine sense of balance, much good space filling, and there was a vitality about it. The camera was standing on its own feet as the **only** medium for this class of work. But there was little guidance for the would-be artist in the new medium of photographic expression, and apart from the few who knew what they were after, little progress was made, and far too high a proportion of the work in this new form was shallow and meaningless.

We may be sure that the Pmp-p Ppp Council would welcome suggestions for raising the standard of technicality and the appreciation of the principles of art among members. Many would prefer to learn in small doses by supplementing the existing facilities in the folios in some convenient manner. Another method would be to have special portfolios circulating among members who wished to make a serious study of a chosen subject to a set curriculum, progressing month by month under the guidance of an accepted mentor who knew his stuff.

If the Editor agrees, we might have two or three of the best letters on the subject published in the next issue of the Little Man Magazine.

J. H. Hole

The Photographic Miniature Postal Portfolios

Continued progress.

In the issue of this Magazine for the Summer of 1938 is an account of the history of the P.M.P.P. from its inception in September 1931 to the formation of Circle 8 in 1937. Now let me carry this a step further.

In June or July 1938 Circle 9 was formed, Mr. S.F.J. Jordan being its first secretary. It reached full strength in a very short time and contained some enthusiastic workers. December of this same year saw a temporary change in the leadership of Circle One. Mr. Robson had to go into hospital at short notice. Mr. Mattinson quickly and very kindly stepped into the breach and saved the Council a deal of trouble. Another fine example of the enthusiasm and kindly co-operation we find in all Circles. No matter what the emergency, nor how difficult the circumstances, the Circles must and shall continue to function.

Mr. R. C. Elias took over Circle Four from Mr. Rickard in the early part of 1939. In June of the same year there was a Northern Outing to Durham, organised by Mr. Robson who had then returned to his duties as Circle One Secretary. A big Rally at Warwick was also arranged by the Council of the Association of Postal Portfolios (now our Emergency Council). This took place in June. Both these events were really outstanding successes.

It was in 1939 that the Royal Photographic Society took up residence in their new premises at Princes Gate, London, and as our own A.G.Ms. were always held to coincide with the R.P.S. and Salon shows, I, as General Secretary had to look around for suitable accommodation for our meeting in the same locality. Arrangements were completed for our 1939 A.G.M. to be held in Kensington on September 9. War was declared on the 3rd and all our arrangements for the meeting had to be immediately cancelled as large meetings were prohibited by law.

With the knowledge that anything might happen, and that at least a considerable proportion of our

membership would be called upon to join the Forces we had no alternative but to withdraw from circulation all portfolios and club property. It was not long before the President and myself received letters requesting that the folios be recirculated. The President and I had already been discussing this possibility, so a circular was issued to all members asking if they could or could not continue their folio efforts.

The response was surprising, and it was found possible, by combining the available membership, to continue with five of the original folios. Circles one and three were under Mr. Robson, two and four under Mr. Elias, five and six under myself, and seven and eight under Mr. Keable. The old Circle nine was considered strong enough to carry on alone under the leadership of Mr. Jordan. These wartime folios were designated by the letters A.B.C. etc., and continued smoothly for some months.

Despite the "blitz" winter of 1940, expansion went on apace, new members joined and many old friends returned. It became necessary then to reform the old circles. But there were two exceptions. Mr. Danks was unable to take over his old Circle Three folio and Miss Wagstaff was unable to skipper Circle eight. So these continued to operate combined with Circles one and seven and remain so to this day.

August 1940 saw Mr. J. Roberts take over from Mr. Jordan and Mr. S. C. Clements stepped into the leadership of Circle Two when Mr. Evans resigned.

I am pleased to say the finances of the Club have never been in a better position in spite of the fact that the rate has remained at the pre-war level of three shillings. In the autumn of 1938 I advocated an increase to five shillings, and recent circulars have informed you that at the last meeting of the Emergency Council I again raised this point, though now for a different reason. Then the question was whether the Club could exist on the three shilling rate; now it is a question of what further service can be given for the proposed increased subscription. Firstly, as I told the Council, I wanted the Little Man Magazine re-issued and whereas previously it had circulated only to those

who contributed to the Magazine Fund, I now wanted it circulated free to all members as well as to those serving with the Forces (where addresses are known).

There has been much demand for the Magazine, and a Fund has been opened so that you can make donations to it, and I hope you will all find it possible to send something along to the Editor. The first issues have been made possible at so early a date by the kindness of two members who guaranteed them.

With regard to the proposed increase in the subscription from next September, the President has circulated post cards so that you may have an opportunity to vote on the proposition. It is anticipated that other benefits besides the Club Magazine will accrue to members as time goes on. I hope later to be able to issue standard mounts to all members. Meanwhile we must be satisfied with what we have, and hope for the future. The season's greetings to you all.

Syd. H. Burch

Our next issue will contain a controversial article from M. E. Ralph on Inter-Circle Competitions. The Story of P.M.P.P. Circle 7/8 by Mr. "pilot" Keable, pages of news from other circles and a list of members serving with the Forces. There will also be a Scroll of Merit showing the club members who have been successful in Open Exhibitions.

Have you helped by making a contribution to the Magazine Fund?

The President and
Emergency Council
send you

All Good Wishes for a Happy New Year.