



The Camera Club

by Donald K. Entwistle, Secretary.

This article appeared in a magazine, probably celebrating some anniversary of the Bacup Natural History Society, in the late 1950s or early 1960s.

Although records are rather sparse it would appear that the Camera Club was first formed in 1903, when a Mr. H. E. Buckley was elected secretary. In 1904 there is mention of a Kodak lecture in the 'Mechanics', whilst in the following year it is minuted that the bathroom in the clubroom should be converted into a darkroom.

Very little is recorded prior to 1939 but it was obviously a period when photographic equipment became gradually less cumbersome to carry, and a folding 3¼" x 2¼" camera that could be carried in the pocket, tended to increase picture taking opportunities.

Photographic activities were restricted, both during the war and for some time after it, but by the early 1950's, although good cameras were scarce and relatively expensive, the majority of members possessed either a 3¼" x 2¼" or 2¼" square roll film camera, such as an Ensign or Ikonta. The very keen members often aspired to a twin lens reflex like the Rolleiflex, or even to the versatile single lens roll film reflex such as the Agiflex, which was considered to be the ideal for portraiture, due to its interchangeable lenses. 35mm was still in its infancy and only one or two members had the quality cameras, like the Leica or Retina, required to obtain first class results, from such a small format.

During the sixties and seventies there was a gradual swing to the 35mm single lens reflex which is today the clubman's almost standard equipment.

The basic functions of the club are threefold: firstly to promote weekly club nights of instruction or practice in photography, secondly to improve members' skills by competition, and thirdly to promote social activity.

At one time it was relatively easy to obtain quite a number of visiting lecturers, and we even had visits from instructionally eminent ones such as Karl Pollak and Lancelot Vining. In recent years it has become increasingly difficult to get visiting speakers, and we have become more dependent on club night events largely provided by members themselves.

In the exhibition sphere black and white prints were predominant in the fifties when members such as Reg Riley, Alderson Hoyle, Clifford Pickup and Ernest Kinsella were very active and had several successes in open exhibitions in various parts of Britain. Our own annual exhibitions sine those days have suffered from a dwindling interest in black and white, although there have been signs of a revival of interest, at least by one or two members, over the last year or so. It is now in the colour transparency field where club, and inter-club, competition is most evident; as yet there is little interest in the production of colour prints.

For many years the club has had an annual outing to some place of general interest, popular favourites being the Lake District, the Yorkshire Dales or the Peak District. Usually a great success socially, these occasions rarely produce the right blend of subject matter and lighting to make them a hit photographically.

Christmas socials reached a peak of popularity in the fifties, largely due to the kindness of two of our members Mr. and Mrs. Hesketh, who resided at Forest House which was of course an ideal venue for such activities.

Whilst never having a very large membership the Camera Club has fortunately been able to rely on its members attending as many activities as possible. Its prospects for the future would seem to lie in attracting new members, reducing the average age of the membership; and adjusting to new trends in the photographic world. The future could be full of promise - let us hope that it will be fulfilled.