

FEDERATION HISTORY

When, at the end of 1946, following the end of the war, photographic materials and leisure time began to be more freely available, a small group of enthusiasts met at the home of one of their number to discuss how amateur photography in the South London area could be encouraged and improved. The result was a general meeting held on 23rd January 1947 under the auspices of the Croydon Camera Club, at which eight clubs duly agreed to form themselves into THE SOUTH LONDON FEDERATION of Photographic Societies*, the object of which was *“To improve the facilities for photography and foster fraternal relations between federated societies.”*

Those eight clubs were:

ACC & TAB C.C., BECKENHAM P.S., CROYDON C.C., PUTNEY C.C.,
OLD COULSDON C.C., SOUTH LONDON P.S., STREATHAM PARK P.S.,
and SUTTON C.C.

Since those early days many clubs have come and gone, some having joined and left the Federation more than once; others have changed their names, amalgamated, or for one reason or another been dissolved. The total number of clubs in membership has varied, the maximum being 26 at the time of the 21st Birthday celebrations in 1968.

From the beginning, the aim of the Committee has been to encourage the exchange of visits and ideas among the member clubs. In the first two years, in spite of having to work on shoe-string finances, the Committee organised inter-Club competitions, postal portfolios, and produced a syllabus containing an outline programme for all member clubs. A start was also made on the preparation of a list of judges and lecturers, and a very successful inter-Federation meeting was held with the Middlesex County Photographic Alliance. Under the Chairmanship of Mr. S. E. Whittaker ARICS, of Croydon C.C., and with Mr. L.B. Fleming of Streatham Park P.S. as Secretary, the firm foundation was established on which all subsequent success has been built.

Undoubtedly the most appreciated activity of the Federation has been the inter-Club competitions. The monochrome print competition was started in 1947 with the original members formed into two groups of four. South London P.S. won the first series of competitions in their Jubilee year and were the first holders of the Holroyd Trophy generously presented by Mr. R. O. Wooton on behalf of Putney C.C.

The first Finals were held by invitation of member clubs on their own meeting nights until 1952, when the Committee felt sufficiently confident of the interest in the competitions to hire a hall at Cambridge House, Camberwell, on a Saturday and put on a full afternoon's programme. This included, in addition to the final of the inter-Club competition, competitions for individual entries of monochrome and colour slides, and prints made from 35mm negatives, a film show, and an address by Baron, the court photographer. For the first time an exhibition of certificate winning prints was hung and the best print of the year was selected. The result was a resounding success from which has grown the annual Finals Day event which is now one of the biggest and best supported meetings among amateur photographers.

In 1957 the Finals were held at Cobbs Banqueting Hall, Sydenham in the presence of the President and Vice President of the Royal Photographic Society. In 1958 and 1959 we enjoyed the facilities

at Lambeth Town Hall, and in 1960 moved to the Livesey Memorial Hall, Lower Sydenham, where the Kent Gas C.C. generously provided excellent accommodation for all subsequent Finals events until 1976.

In 1977, 78 and 79 the event was held at St. Mary's Church Hall, Wellesley Road, Croydon, the H.Q. of Thornton Heath C.C. In 1980 Selsdon C.C. arranged for the Finals to be held at St. John's Church Hall, Selsdon. From 1981 to 1991 Old Coulsdon C.C. hosted the event at their (then) Headquarters at Coulsdon Youth and Social Centre. The event continued to be held there until 2006, except for 1990 when we had to go to Purley Council Offices for the day. In 2007 the Federation has opted to move to All Saints Church halls, Sanderstead. 1992 saw the first year of having a different Club each year to organise the catering for Finals Day.

To add zest to the competitions, trophies have very kindly been presented by various members from time to time; a full list is given elsewhere in this handbook.

Over the years, various other interests have been catered for, such as competitions for slides, colour prints, and audio-visual presentations, including a biennial Audio-Visual Competition held at Sanderstead. The Audio-Visual Competition was started in 1985 as an annual event but in 1990 changed to its present biennial frequency, to allow competitors more time to acquire sufficient material to put together a programme of work of a higher standard.

In 2005 the first competition, Jack's Jug, was held for images projected digitally, and in the following year the federation organised its first inter-club competition, The Vic Smith Trophy, for such images. In this respect we were ahead of our neighbouring federations in consolidating digital photography into our programme.

We have also held from time to time autumn lectures and meetings of judges and programme secretaries. Seminars to help new judges have been organised to swell the number of judges working in our area. From 1983 biennial exhibitions have been held in the Fairfield Halls with the sponsorship of Mr. Alex Falk of Mr Cad and then with the sponsorship of Hargreaves (KJP) Ltd. In 1999 the Exhibition was moved to the Sutton Central Library, but has not been held since, owing to lack of sponsorship.

Since the new Millennium the Federation has increasingly felt the pressures experienced by many voluntary groups in these modern times. Numbers were generally going down and clubs were finding it difficult to attract younger people. However the accessibility and excitement of digital technology is starting to reverse these trends and in many clubs there is a growing confidence in the future. A notable feature of the changes in club membership is that the nearer to inner-London the club is located, the harder it is to survive. This trend has been clear throughout the sixty years of the federation, and even clubs established for over a hundred years, such as Thornton Heath, have not been spared. The result is that the remaining clubs lie in a narrow ring around the edge of the Federation's geographic limits, a less-than-ideal situation.

The Federation has joined the Kent County Photographic Association, who actually altered their Rules to enable us to do so, our only right of membership being that we have access to the low cost public liability insurance arranged through the Photographic Alliance of Great Britain.

August 2003 marked the end of an era with the passing of Kathy Robinson, who had given 31 years' service to the Federation as Hon. Secretary, and the stepping down of her successor as Hon Secretary, Eddie Harris of Beckenham PS, after 14 years' service. The AGM of that year saw fresh volunteers for the principal Committee posts, and there remains a strong awareness of the

value of the Federation. We have a solid nucleus of clubs which should ensure that the Federation continues for the foreseeable future.

In 2009 it was decided to revise the organisation of the main competitions to accommodate the changing number of clubs and the increasing difficulty of finding enough experienced judges. This re-organisation also saw the introduction of Plate competitions. With the overwhelming shift to digital photography, it also saw the replacement of the slide competitions with Projected Digital Image competitions in the main Federation events calendar. The slide competitions continued to be run on a separate evening. The new arrangements have worked very well in their first few years.

The Federation's last slide competitions were held in 2011. By the following year there were considered insufficient slide workers in member clubs to make them viable. They were, therefore, discontinued and marked the end of an era in the Federation's history.

** The federation's name was later changed to "The Federation of South London Photographic Societies" to avoid confusion with the existing club, the "South London Photographic Society"*