



# Club Support Newsletter

## Issue II



**To all Club Committee Members**

**March 2023**

Our first Support and Development newsletter was issued in February. Thank you to everyone who has provided positive feedback and encouragement. As we mentioned before, the purpose of these newsletters is to help clubs be sustainable for the future. This is by finding ways to promote clubs and grow membership and then also by suggesting ideas for a cost effective but exciting and interesting programme. (If you didn't see or receive a copy, it's on the NCPF website).

So, as we head towards Easter, we thought we'd treat you to another edition. Your Easter Egg from the NCPF!

This month we have two main articles for you:

The first one is some ideas from Gerald Chamberlin about hosting an interesting evening for your club members and the second is an interview by Gerry Adcock with Peter Stevens from Tynemouth Photographic Society about raising awareness and spreading the word locally. This is being split over two editions of the newsletter – Part one in this issue.

*Firstly, however we'd like to ask if anyone would be prepared to help us at the NCPF? You may be aware that Gerry Adcock is standing down as Webmaster for the NCPF and he also does a lot of the IT support for the organisation. We are looking for someone (or perhaps more than one person) to start taking over some of the roles he fulfils on behalf of the NCPF. Please contact one of us or e-mail the chair of the NCPF directly if you would like to know more about this. It is a key role within NCPF.*

The core purpose of this newsletter however is to help clubs and below are the two articles we mentioned at the start.

### **Club Programme Evening: Competition Review Nights by Gerald Chamberlin.**

*In our club (Morton PS) this takes place the week after each monthly competition.*

*On the night, all the Prints and PDIs are shown again. The authors of each Print and PDI give the back story about the images and what inspired them to take and enter them, plus information on camera settings and what post processing they have used. Other members of the club are also invited to ask questions and give comments.*

*We find that this creates a lot of interaction and discussion amongst members.*

*A big plus is that new members find it very a good source of information to help to improve their photography.*

*For these nights we often use a free piece of software, FastStone Image Viewer, which can reveal the Exif data and show a histogram of the image. The software will also allow minor changes to light, contrast and colour etc. to give an idea of what any "improvements" suggested by a Judge might look like.*

***Bonus tip from Gerald:***

*Once a month we have an extra evening, on a different night of the week to our normal meetings, which we call Study Group. These are more practical learning nights where members can demonstrate and share techniques that have been discussed at competition review night. These nights have now become a well attend low-cost evening.*

**Spreading the word! Part 1 of an interview with Peter Stevens from Tynemouth Photographic Society.**

The NCPF Club Support and Development Group was formed with the aim of trying to bring together ideas and strategies to help clubs weather the present difficulties. One of the Group's members is Alan Forster who is also the current President of Tynemouth PS. During meetings Alan spoke of difficulties the club were experiencing: like most other clubs they revolved around declining membership coupled with escalating costs. In Tynemouth's case these issues were compounded by the fact that they have sole use of their club rooms and are therefore responsible for the bills in their entirety, which especially in the case of energy was becoming alarming.

In an attempt to address these issues Tynemouth decided to form a sub committee comprising of members Peter Stevens together with Alan, Linda McGregor and Chris Parker. They were later joined by Julie Hedley and Brett Culpin.

Peter Stevens had a working career in various aspects of marketing and customer management. Also having held senior marketing roles in Banking and Finance, Management Consulting and in Government. This experience in marketing was to prove very useful for Tynemouth who set about using some of this know how to boost membership numbers and alleviate financial pressures.

Hearing the story from Alan I thought this might be of interest to other clubs and decided we could perhaps conduct an interview with Peter and Alan to uncover their secrets! The resulting interview is transcribed below.

***Gerry Adcock:*** So we're starting off by saying thanks very much for agreeing to do the interview, and helping with our aim to provide information to all our clubs about methods or ideas to help generate new members or funds, given the present difficulties that most of the clubs are experiencing. I was wondering if you could give us some background regarding the circumstances which led to Tynemouth Photographic Society deciding to take these matters so seriously and take steps to try and deal with them.

***Peter Stevens:*** I think there were two trigger points. I very recently joined the committee and started to get used to the type of items that appeared on the committee agenda. They were, not surprisingly, largely 'day to day' operational things and any discussion about the members, i.e. "the customer" didn't appear as such. I raised this once or twice and the idea was beginning to take hold, when that other second pressure started to bite. The financial crisis, particularly the energy costs started to significantly impact our finances. So the need to bump up our

membership became ever more important. After some discussion I was asked to form a small group with two or three other members and come up with a recruitment strategy.

**Alan Forster:** looking at our membership I don't think it's different to lots of other clubs, we know in that the average age of the membership is quite old, and looking to the future we need to be attracting younger people, just to keep the club fresh and alive. That had been something that had been on my mind for some time. Then Peter arriving and expressing really that we didn't have anybody looking after members, or attracting new members and it needed that unique focus. It was kind of staring you in the face, we couldn't see it, but it was absolutely right. When we talked to the committee about it, I think the committee were all for it. As Peter said this pressure on our finances has gone up quite a bit. Other clubs rent accommodation, and I'm sure the rent is going up as energy costs stay high. We were in a slightly different position as we've got our own club rooms. The energy costs are all ours and they went up quite a bit. So in order to remain viable having a focus on members, keeping the members we've got and attracting new members was ever more important, and so I think the committee were really behind this idea and we were happy to ask Peter to take this forward for us.

**Gerry:** I'm given to understand that you came up with a four-point plan, four factors that needed addressing, can you outline what they were?

**Peter:** Marketing has been a large part of my career, and I've experienced this type of thinking with other organisations. I was in fact Chairman of Harpenden Photographic Society until I moved up to the north three years ago, and we did something very similar and managed to regularly attract new, and younger members. So, I'm confident this will work for us in Tynemouth.

I think there are two points to make as context really:

- Firstly, that were not intending to convert people to photography, we're not going out there saying here is a great new hobby for you. We're looking for people who are already keen photographers and want a place to do their photography, that's important.
- The other point to make is obvious but it's an important one, which is that we're a membership organisation, and membership organisations have a certain approach to marketing. That's where the four steps come in. Basically, we're creating a pathway which starts with making ourselves known to potential members and encourages them to progress through to joining and staying with us for the long term.

The four, high-level steps are as follows:

#### 1. **Create awareness of TPS**

This is the first and most difficult step and is all about publicity. The purpose is to create an awareness of TPS in the minds of those members of the public who might be interested in joining. At this stage we don't know who they are, so we need to present ourselves in 'high traffic' locations to attract their attention. The critical point here is to make it easy for these potential members make contact and find out more about us.

2. **Generate potential members (prospects)**

This stage is intended to capture the contact details of everyone expressing interest in TPS and store them in a way that will allow us to make follow up communications. This gives us a list of names of people that we know have an interest – a crucial step forward.

3. **Convert prospects to members**

Hopefully most people interested in joining will have been to our web site and then visited the club. But many will need a gentle nudge. So an important part of the strategy is to follow up all prospects with a friendly email, thanking them for expressing interest and encouraging them to visit the club and experience an evening with us. This usually results in them joining.

4. **Retain members**

The real value of a new member is when they stay with us year on year and so retention is a key part of the strategy. This stage is largely concerned with ensuring TPS continues to be a great club providing a range of activities that members enjoy.

*End of part one of the interview ... look out for part two in our next issue.*

**And finally**

Thank you for reading this newsletter. Please look out for the next issue which we intend to publish after Easter. It will of course include the second half of the interview with Peter when he tells us what they did to attract new members. Not to be missed!

If you've got experience of things that work to help reduce club costs or boost your membership numbers, and if you'd like to get involved with the NCPF please let us know. You can contact us using e-mail [clubsupport@ncpf.org.uk](mailto:clubsupport@ncpf.org.uk)

***Happy Easter!***

***Gerry Adcock, Gerald Chamberlin, Alan Forster, John Smith (Chair),***

***Richard Speirs & Debra Taylor***

***NCPF Club Support and Development Group***