

# Camera club myths

Duncan Grove, a member of Malden Photographic Club and Kingston Camera Club, gives us the inside scoop on club membership – in the process he dispels some myths, but holds his hands up to others...

**N**ot the camera club type? I didn't think I was, but three years after having joined one I can emphatically tell you that I was wrong! As a direct result of my membership, I now have ARPS after my name, seven trophies on my shelf, my own website and work accepted by many international salons. More excitingly, I have recently earned thousands of pounds from licensing just one image and I'm also building an income from other photographs.

**Are your misconceptions about camera clubs the same as mine were?**

## 1. Train-spotter types dressed in '1970s Man at C&A' sitting around swapping cameras and discussing what all the buttons do.

Well okay, I concede that you are not that far out with regards to the dress sense, but rarely are cameras produced at meetings. Clubs focus on images more than the tools that produce them. In fact, my club has recently changed its name from 'Malden Camera Club' to 'Malden Photographic Club'.

## 2. There are compulsory coach trips to steam rallies.

I don't do coaches and I don't do steam, so this was probably my biggest fear! Of course, clubs do organise outings and so they should

– they are opportunities to learn more about photography whilst having a pleasant day out in good company. Unfortunately, time constraints often prevent me from going on the trips, but I never feel pressured by the other club members to attend; it's good to know that I am welcome when I can make it.

## 3. My work will be slated if I enter competitions.

You're right – this is a big problem! The qualified external judges that come along to comment on and mark images will always try to find something positive to say, but you can see them struggle at times. I nearly walked out of my first competition when the judge said my favourite entry looked like a holiday snap.

However, I am glad that I stayed. The competitions motivate me to edit and print my work. Upon reflection, I can generally see the reasons for the comments and, more importantly, find that I really do learn from them. Other times, we all have a good collective moan about the judge!

## 4. You have to have top-of-the-range equipment.

I may tell my wife this, but only because I suffer from a depression disorder if someone has a camera with more buttons than mine. The shameful fact is that members with far more modest equipment seem able to take

consistently better photographs than mine. Now that is depressing!

## 5. Camera clubs are a male bastion.

Simply wrong. There are many talented female photographers in my club, including our President – the only member with an FRPS distinction. Several members come as couples each week and other ladies leave their husband at home to do the childminding.

## 6. A camera club can teach me nothing that I couldn't learn from reading a magazine.

This magazine, along with one or two books, has been instrumental in my understanding of how to take images and process them post-capture. However, sometimes I compare the original image with my processed version and end up unsure whether or not my editing has actually improved the picture. Having my friends at the camera club and judges critiquing my work helps me enormously in developing my eye for a good photo.

Most clubs will be delighted to welcome you along to a few meetings before you commit to joining and the annual fee normally equates to less than £1 a week. Some nights can be better than others, so I would encourage you to visit your local club for a few meetings and find out what it has to offer.

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