



# DAVENTRY

## PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY



Stalking © Chris Baldwin

## A MOST WANTED MAN

**Chris Baldwin**

Interview with Christine Prickett

Chris Baldwin is a very busy man!

I was therefore grateful that he could find the time to talk to me. As we all know he is a talented photographer and excellent judge. BUT when I found out **Chris has been judging for forty years, yes forty, I thought the topic of competition judges and his thoughts about the whole process would be of interest to the club members.**





At Bay © Chris Baldwin

*Images from a big cat photo shoot in the USA, the first full shoot that Chris went on.*

I therefore, not surprisingly, asked him why he decided to be a judge all those years ago and he replied very candidly that he thought the process of judging other people's images would help him to become a better photographer. And did it? He said yes, he thought so, but more importantly it is something he very much enjoys doing.

I then asked what qualities someone needed to be a good judge. Chris didn't hesitate and rattled off the following –

Observant

Capable of talking while you are thinking

A good vocabulary

Precision

Tact

An encouraging manner, definitely not cruel or superior

Consistency

Chris had been a teacher and thought that all of the above qualities had been relevant and developed during his working life and that these transferable



skills were applied when he was judging photographic competitions. He added that you also needed to be confident.

This then was the basis of his success? Yes I think so.

I said I thought he was a very good judge and that was not flattery because he was sat in front of me. He said that he knew he was regarded as such because he kept getting asked back to clubs year after year and that was also how he got his grading as an A-list judge. There are apparently two grades of judge you book from the MCPF handbook 'list'. The list covers a certain geographical area and judges are graded as A or B. The two grades illustrating the popularity and bookings of a particular person.



Camargue Quartet © Chris Baldwin

*Photo's that are indicative of Chris' eclectic body of work*

So what is the process of becoming a judge?

You initially have to apply to your Federation, in his case to the East Anglian Federation of Photographic Societies (EAF). Chris thought you could do this on line.

After applying a candidate would then be invited to attend a one-day course. Their suitability would be evaluated during the day. This would partly be achieved by being given some images and asked to talk about and assess them. First in a small group, then to all the course attendees & trainers.

If successful you would then be added to the Federation handbook's list of available judges.



Domination © Chris Baldwin

*Photo's that are indicative of Chris' eclectic body of work*

I wondered if you had to be an accredited photographer to be a judge and Chris said no that was not necessary

After you have gone through the process do you have refresher courses? No, said Chris, your performance is judged by the clubs you go to and their reaction to you. If you are asked back you know you are doing ok, especially if you are in high demand.

It is interesting to note that Chris is one of three popular judges that belong to the DPS along with John Lewis and Dave Hollis.

If there are no ongoing judge-type refresher days how is it that there seems to be trends in photography that judges seem to follow? Chris wasn't sure that this was the case but added we are all influenced by images we see and admire in, for example, photographic magazines and perhaps that filters through to represent a preference for particular photo types or a style.

Did he think judges influenced club members' images? He hoped that the judge's comments helped them to get better but he didn't think they would directly influence anyone's style or subject choices. He did think though that areas such as mounts or borders could be influenced by a judge's comments.



Do judges get paid? No, they just get their expenses paid. Did Chris think a payment would result in more and better judges? He didn't think so. He was open-minded about a possible payment but it wouldn't be a motivator for him. He judged because he enjoyed it and he suspected that this was the case with others.

Are competitions a good thing? Yes, because it is the competitiveness that helps make members strive to do better.

I then went on to the subject of women judges of which there are very few. Chris agreed that this was the case but said this, to some extent, reflected the gender split in most clubs. Photography he thought was a male dominated hobby. Looking for a reason beyond this for the lack of female judges I asked



Combat © Chris Baldwin

*Awarded trophy for best print at the Chiltern Association Championship Day 2017*

if he thought it might also be because women might be more sensitive to criticism and or less confident. He wasn't sure if they were but he did appreciate that it might be quite daunting for a woman to judge in a club which was male dominated. He did though, as mentioned earlier, think confidence was a key requirement and women should not be frightened to try judging. They could well enjoy it and there was no reason for them not to be

equally as good as or even better than the current male judges. I certainly agreed with that.

I asked Chris if he was asked to judge in different ways for certain competitions or at different clubs. He said for the PAGB you were not asked to comment about the images shown and you quickly had to give a score. Also the Rushden Annual Open Competition involved quickly pressing a button as many images were shown in fast succession. He said it could be quite arduous at times because you have to concentrate hard over a long period of time.

I asked if he thought there were 'poor' judges doing the rounds and he was quick to say 'No', only some were better than others and if someone was 'poor' they would not be asked back to clubs. It did occur that clubs do get caught out sometimes and have to book a judge not knowing what they were like.

Chris stated we might all moan about judges but ultimately we are glad they turn up. Was that really the case I asked? What if a good image of his own was marked badly? Chris said he didn't mind if the judge had a good reason for the low mark and he would then learn from it.

He added recently that his other club, Banbury, tried using a voting system whereby the members voted for their favourite picture. Unfortunately the whole process turned out to be a bit of a farce. I asked whether it was because there was no-one describing the picture because I often was surprised by what judges saw and which I had missed (or vice versa). Chris agreed that the commentary about a picture was very important. For him it let him appraise the image more thoroughly whilst he was talking and this also allowed the viewers/club members to see what he was focusing on and assessing.

Has judging changed I asked because photography certainly has progressed in the period that Chris has been judging. Chris said 'No not really'. It's still about prints & projected images. 'I am looking for a competent pleasing image but you can't get away from the fact that judging is subjective'.

Chris left to join the rest of the members for a 10 in 10 evening and I couldn't help reflect that we are lucky to have his experience and talent in the club now and that perhaps we should use him more proactively such as Towcester is doing. They regularly ask him to 'pre' judge their images before they put them into various club and inter-club competitions.



Indicator © Chris Baldwin

## What's on in January

8th January - Competition - Print - Panel of three images - Malcolm Sales.

15th January - Informal Critique.

22nd January - Guest Speaker - Home and Away - Chris Upton.

29th January - Member's Evening - Travelogue - Judy Jennings & Graham Brown.

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## 8th January - Competition - Print - Panel of three images



### January Open - Panel of Three Images Printed Assignment

You may enter two panels. Each should consist of 3 different images which may be mounted together either on a single mount or on 3 separate mount boards. No repetition of images across the panel or a single image sliced into three will be allowed. The aim is to select three images which either tell a story or are linked by their subject content, colour, style or format which together form a single related work.



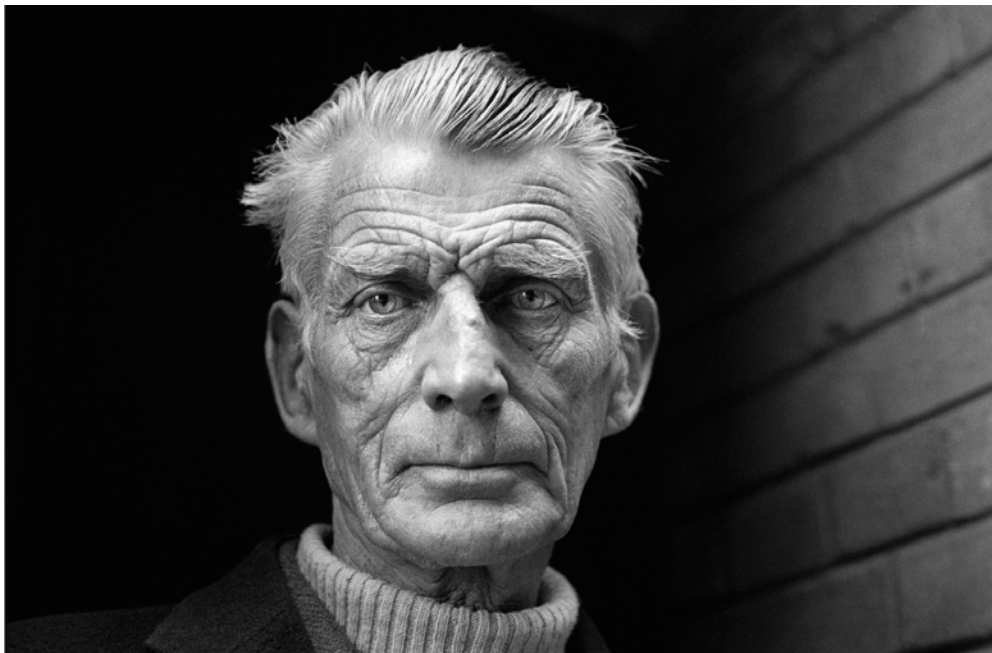
[Ten Awards at Great Barr Panel National Photography Exhibition 2015 — Terry Donnelly](#)



## Top 100 women in photography: RPS names its Hundred Heroines

To mark the centenary of women getting the vote in the UK, the Royal Photography Society has compiled a list of 100 influential female photographers.

[Top 100 women in photography: RPS names its Hundred Heroines | Digital Camera World](#)



Samuel Beckett © Jane Bown

### Jane Bown

Having thought she'd missed her quarry, Jane snuck round the back of the Royal Court Theatre in London's Sloane Square, where she caught him exiting via the stage door.

Her first commission for the Observer was a portrait of philosopher Bertrand Russell in 1949. From then, Bown photographed the great and the good, the rich and the poor, the ordinary and extraordinary with a compassionate and gentle eye.

[Jane Bown: 'There was nothing there with Blair' - YouTube](#)

Thanks to Roland for this link to RPS Heroines, if you have any ideas or favourite photographers that you think would interest other members then email Mike Fuller - [fuller.333@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:fuller.333@tiscali.co.uk)