OTLEY CAMERA CLUB

COMPETITION HANDBOOK
2026 /2027

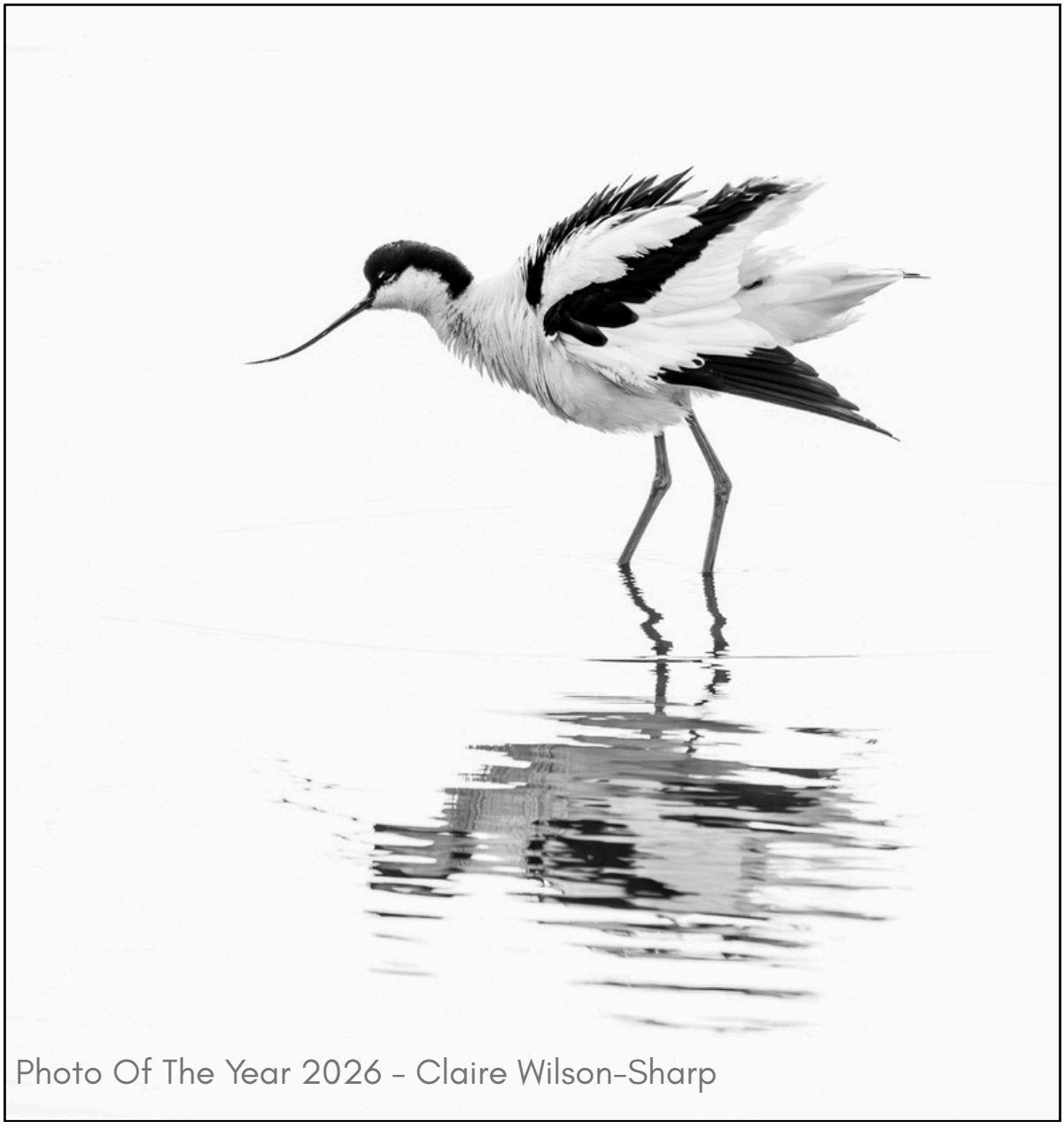


Photo Of The Year 2026 - Claire Wilson-Sharp

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INTRODUCTION

Competitions are an enjoyable and important part of club life at Otley Camera Club. They provide an opportunity to share your photography, receive constructive feedback from experienced judges and see the wide variety of images produced by other members.

Taking part in competitions is a great way to develop your photography skills and try new ideas.

We look forward to seeing your images in the next Otley Camera Club competition.

We hope you find this handbook useful and that it answers any questions you may have. However, if there is anything you are unsure about or would like to know more about, please ask – there is always someone at the club happy to help. Every experienced photographer was once a beginner who asked questions.



Karen Weir

COMPETITION FORMAT

During the season, Otley Camera Club holds seven internal competition nights.

Each competition has a set theme and within the theme there are two categories.

PROJECTED DIGITAL IMAGES (PDI)

Images are judged by looking at the images on a screen.

PRINT

Images are judged by looking at a physical print.

All competitions are judged by an external judge, who will review each image and provide helpful feedback. Judges will then award:

- 1st Place
- 2nd Place
- 3rd Place
- Highly Commended (this can be more than one)
- Commended (this can be more than one)

Each placing earns points, and these are added together throughout the season to determine the club's Photographer of the Year.

Unless advised otherwise by the Competition Secretary, all members are encouraged to enter up to two images in each category (PDI and Print).

BEFORE ENTERING

Before entering a competition, make sure you:

- Check the competition deadline.
- Read and follow the competition rules and definitions.
- Ensure that your images meet the requirements needed for PDI and Print competitions.

Images that are handed in late or do not meet the rules and standards may unfortunately need to be withdrawn from the competition.



Chris Burgess

ENTERING YOUR PDI'S

When entering your PDIs, you must ensure they meet the following requirements.

- File format: JPEG
- Colour Space: sRGB
- Maximum width: 1600 pixels
- Maximum height: 1200 pixels
- Maximum size: 2MB

PDI SIZE AND RATIO

There is no fixed aspect ratio, but the image must not exceed the dimensions of 1600 pixels wide and 1200 pixels high.

Examples:

✔ 1600 × 1000 pixels – acceptable
✘ 1600 × 1300 pixels – too tall

If an image exceeds the maximum size, it must be resized before uploading.

Each image must also have a title of no more than 32 characters. Do not use any special characters or punctuation other than - and .

Your images are entered via our Success website.

Watch the video on our website for full instructions (password: Layers).

ENTERING YOUR PRINTS

When entering your Prints, you must ensure they meet the following requirements and that you upload a digital version too.

- Prints can be any aspect ratio.
- The print must be no larger than A3.
- Prints should **not** be mounted.
- On the back of the print (top right corner) write: The title of the image and your membership number (**not your name**). We recommend that you write this onto a sticker and then attach it to the print.

Each image must also have a title of no more than 32 characters. Do not use any special characters or punctuation other than - and .

The physical print should be placed in the provided envelope and then placed in the competition box in the clubhouse.

When entering a print competition, you must also upload a PDI version of the image to the Success website. This is done in the same way as entering a normal PDI, but you select the Print category.

The digital version is used for record keeping, publishing results and projection during the results evening.

Make sure the title uploaded online matches exactly the title written on the back of the print.

PRINT CLUB

To support members, the club is able to print images for you through our Print Club.

This is run by some of our experienced members who own their own photographic printers. There is a charge for printing, but it is kept as low as possible to encourage as many members as possible to use the service.

There are three options available to members:

Print Lab Service

This works in much the same way as using a professional printing company. You send your image to one of our members and they print it for you.

Advice Print Service

Send your image to one of our members. If they feel that the print could be improved through adjustments such as sharpening, colour correction, brightness, contrast, or similar changes, they will provide advice on what you might wish to consider before printing.
Please note that this advice relates to the quality of the print itself. It does not cover other aspects of the image such as composition, cropping, removal of distractions, or image selection.

Print Club Live

On four nights during the season we run Print Club Live. This is an opportunity to sit with one of our experienced members who will guide you through the printing process. You will be able to soft-proof your image before it is printed, helping to ensure that the final print looks exactly as you intend.

There is a further document regarding Print Club in the Members' Area of the website. As always, if you have any questions, please ask.

READING OUT NAMES

When a competition is judged, each PDI image is displayed on screen or the print is held up, and the judge provides feedback. As the image is shown, its title is read out. Authors may choose whether their name is also read out alongside the title.

We encourage members to include their name, as it allows the judge and other members to engage with the work. People often enjoy finding out where a photograph was taken or how an image was created, and knowing the author makes those conversations possible.

We understand that some members prefer not to have their name shared, and that is absolutely fine. By default, names will not be read out. If you would like your name to be included, you can opt in by completing the form.

Please note that if an image is placed, the author's name will be shared regardless of this preference.


John Northover

OVERALL RULES

Each competition has its own definitions and rules; however, there are also rules that apply to all competitions. If these are not followed, the image may unfortunately be removed from the competition.

Unless stated otherwise in the competition definition, image manipulation is permitted. This includes techniques such as cloning, compositing, focus stacking, exposure blending, and object removal.

All images and image elements must have been photographed by the author. The use of stock images, clip-art, graphics, textures, overlays, or any other third-party visual assets is not permitted.

Images created wholly or partly using AI-generated image content are not permitted. AI tools may be used to assist editing, provided no new visual content is generated.

Members must have a current club membership to enter competitions.

Images that have previously been awarded 1st, 2nd, 3rd, Highly Commended, or Commended in an Otley Camera Club competition may not be entered into another club competition other than the Annual Exhibition.

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Copyright of all images remains with the author. By entering a competition, members agree that their images may be used by Otley Camera Club for club battles, exhibitions, the website, social media, and other club publicity.

The club trusts the integrity of its members. However, in exceptional circumstances, entrants may be asked to provide supporting evidence, such as RAW files or EXIF data, to demonstrate compliance with the rules.

If you are unsure whether an image meets the rules, please contact the Competition Secretary before entering.

COMPETITION OVERVIEW

Entry Deadline	Theme	Judge
1 October	#1 Open	Nigel Plant
29 October	#2 Creativity In The Home	Mark Waddington
10 December	#3 Nature	Paul Abraham
14 January	#4 Scapes	Colin Williams
11 February	#5 High Key & Low Key	Mark Waddington
11 March	#6 Night Lights	Giles Rocholl
8 April	#7 Steam, Smoke and Fog	Erica Oram


Bryn Redman

LIGHT & SHADOW

This year's competition has an overarching theme of 'Light & Shadow'. Whichever the competition, we invite you to explore the world through the captivating theme. At its core, photography is literally "drawing with light," but it is the dynamic interplay between brightness and darkness that gives an image its soul.

We are looking for photographs that move beyond simple documentation to embrace this contrast—whether that means:

- Harsh, dramatic shadows creating bold architectural shapes.
- Soft morning light revealing delicate textures.
- Deep silhouettes that leave room for mystery.

We want to see how you use light to define form, evoke mood, and transform the everyday into something extraordinary.



Dawn Jenkins

THEMES OVERVIEW

The following pages provide information about each competition theme, including:

- The image submission deadline, the date of the judging and the judge
- A definition of the theme, including any specific rules that must be followed
- Example images
- A "Meet the Judge" section

The theme definition will also include suggestions for how our overarching theme for the year, Light and Shadow, might be applied. Please note that these suggestions are intended to inspire rather than restrict. You are welcome to enter an image that does not incorporate Light and Shadow, provided it meets the main criteria of the theme and complies with any specific rules. The judge will be provided with the theme definition before judging.

The Meet the Judge section includes a short introduction to the judge and a brief overview of the qualities they particularly value in photography. This may include aspects such as composition, storytelling, creativity, technical excellence, use of light, or emotional impact.

These comments are intended to help you understand the judge's approach and provide inspiration when creating your images. They are not additional rules, and you should still feel free to enter any image that meets the competition theme and requirements.

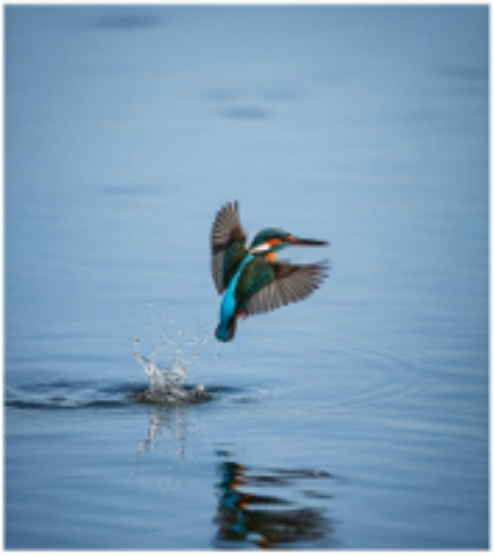

John Northover

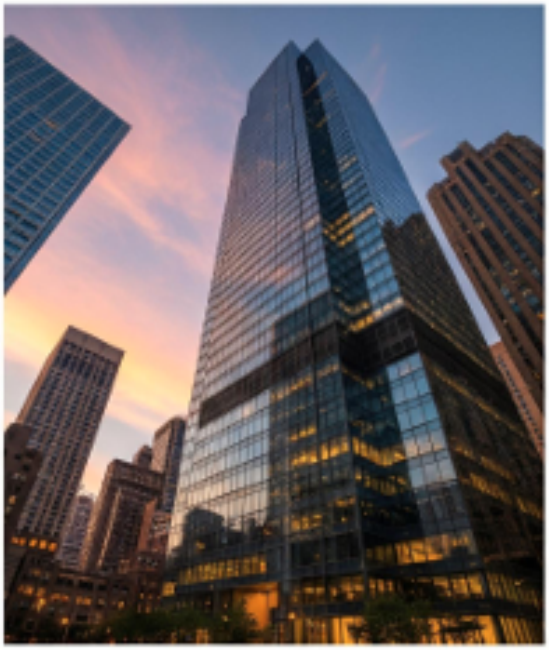
#1 OPEN

Entry Deadline: 1 October

Judge: Nigel Plant

Date Of Judging: 29 October









#1 OPEN

The ultimate blank canvas.

This is your chance to showcase your absolute best work, free from thematic constraints. Whether it's a classic portrait, a razor-sharp sports shot, a beautiful travel memory, or a highly conceptual piece of digital art—if it's an image you love and are proud of, we want to see it. Bring your passion projects to the forefront!

Even without constraints, the core of our season remains: show us how your masterful use of light and shadow elevates your best work from a simple snapshot to a captivating photograph

Meet The Judge: Nigel Plant



Nigel Plant is an experienced photographer based in Yorkshire. He gained his ARPS distinction in 2008, followed by the DPAGB in 2009 and the AFIAP in 2012. Until July 2024, he served as one of the Chairs of the Royal Photographic Society's Licentiate Distinctions Panel, bringing a wealth of judging and photographic experience.

"When judging this competition, I will be looking for a successful blend of story, technique, and execution. First and foremost is the image's 'message'—how effectively it uses imagination, creativity, and a unique interpretation of the subject to tell a compelling story. Equal weight is placed on the 'medium' itself, meaning your control of lighting, tones, colors, perspective, and capturing that perfect, decisive moment. Finally, strong technical fundamentals are essential; I will be evaluating exposure, appropriate sharpness, tonal range, and clean post-processing and presentation. Ultimately, the strongest images will be those where technical skill serves a clear creative vision."

#2 CREATIVITY IN THE HOME

Entry Deadline: 29 October

Judge: Mark Waddington

Date Of Judging: 10 December



#2 CREATIVITY IN THE HOME

You don't need to travel the globe to find a great photograph; sometimes, inspiration is sitting right on your kitchen counter.

We want you to look at everyday domestic items with a fresh, artistic eye. From a beautifully lit, traditional still life of your morning coffee to a mind-bending macro shot of a cheese grater, show us the extraordinary hidden within the ordinary.

Focus on how the interplay of light and shadow transforms the mundane—whether it's a harsh shadow casting geometric patterns from a window blind, or soft, directional window light bringing out the texture of household objects.

Meet The Judge: Mark Waddington



Mark Waddington is a former BBC television producer with over 30 years of experience in broadcasting and filmmaking. During his career, he worked as a Creative Producer at BBC Television Centre in London, producing award-winning short-form films, and also spent time as an on-air news presenter for BBC Radio and a national announcer on BBC One.

Following his retirement, Mark worked on media education projects and later served as CEO of a community development charity. He remains actively involved in supporting local community groups and the visual arts. Mark is a keen photographer and is a member of the Royal Photographic Society, Yorkshire Photographic Union, and local camera clubs.

For me, originality and authenticity are important. I like to see a fresh or personal way of looking at a subject – perhaps an unusual perspective, an unexpected observation, or simply something that others might have overlooked. Photography is personal, so a good photograph should tell us something about the person who made it. Content comes before technique. By content I mean what the photograph is about: the story, feeling, idea or insight it communicates. Technical qualities are important, but mainly because they help the photographer express that content. So I will look at how effectively the photograph is presented: is it sharp where it needs to be, appropriately exposed, well composed, and does its use of colour, tone or other technical choices support what the photographer is trying to say?

In short, I am looking for strong content, effective presentation, authenticity and a personal point of view.

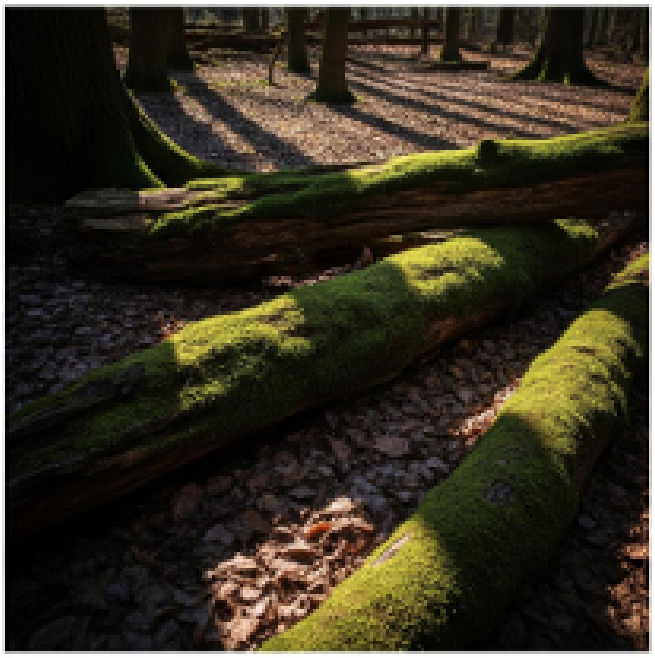
#3 NATURE

Entry Deadline: 10 December

Judge: Paul Abraham

Date Of Judging: 14 January









#3 NATURE

Step outside and capture the authentic beauty of the natural world. For this category, we are embracing the traditional spirit of nature photography.

We'd love to see true-to-life, faithful depictions of untamed wildlife and uncultivated flora.

Aim to keep human elements out of your frame and keep your editing as natural to the original scene as possible. But traditional certainly doesn't mean lacking in artistry! Keep our season's overarching theme in mind by using the natural interplay of light and shadow to elevate your work. Show us how dappled sunlight brings a woodland floor to life, how shadows highlight the delicate textures of a bird's feathers, or how dramatic directional light carves out the true scale of a geological wonder.

Note this theme has some additional rules:

Adjustments to improve the presentation of an image are permitted (e.g. cropping, exposure, colour correction, and the removal of minor distractions). The addition, removal, or relocation of significant elements that change the truth of the image is not permitted.


Sarah Toulmin

#3 NATURE

Meet The Judge: Paul Abraham



Paul Abraham is an award-winning freelance photographer based in Leeds. A lifelong photography enthusiast, he has built a strong reputation for his work across events, commercial photography, and portraiture.

His images have appeared in publications, on television, and across a variety of online platforms. Clients and subjects have included well-known figures such as Amanda Owen and Frank Bruno, as well as organisations including Superdrug and We Are Twelve.

Alongside his photography, Paul delivers workshops on No Fuss Photography and Mindful Photography, combining practical photographic skills with wellbeing and creativity. In 2025, he held his first major exhibition at The Mill Gallery in Leeds.

"For this competition, I will be looking for a strong, deliberate use of composition and an eye for capturing images that go far beyond a standard 'snapshot.' I thoroughly enjoy seeing ordinary, everyday subjects presented from a unique or unexpected perspective. In my view, the story and feeling an image conveys are ultimately more important than flawless technical skill. Show me something familiar, but make me see it in a whole new way."

#4 SCAPES

Entry Deadline:14 January

Judge: Colin Williams

Date Of Judging: 11 February



#4 SCAPES

A camera club classic, but with endless possibilities.

We are looking for images that capture the essence and scale of a place. Bring us your traditional, sweeping golden-hour vistas and majestic mountains, or take a different route with gritty urban cityscapes, intimate woodland details, or minimalist coastal long exposures.

Capture the spirit of the environment. Remember that a truly great landscape is sculpted by light and shadow; we want to see how stretching dawn shadows reveal the contours of the land, or how dramatic light carves through an urban skyline.

Meet The Judge: Colin Williams



Colin Williams is an experienced photographer and judge who serves as Treasurer, PAGB Representative, and Awards Officer for the Yorkshire Photographic Union. An accomplished exhibitor at national and international level, he holds the EFIAP, CPAGB, and BPE2* distinctions and brings a wealth of photographic and judging experience.

Colin is a member of nearby Cookridge Camera Club and is a familiar face at Otley Camera Club, having judged our competitions on many occasions over the years.

'Coming Soon'

#5 HIGH KEY & LOW KEY

Entry Deadline: 11 February

Judge: Mark Waddington

Date Of Judging: 11 March









#5 HIGH KEY & LOW KEY

It's time to master your exposure! This theme is the ultimate, literal expression of our season's focus on light and shadow, pushing these elements to their dramatic extremes. Will you go High Key, using bright, airy, shadowless light for a clean, ethereal feel? Or will you choose Low Key, relying on deep shadows, dark tones, and minimal lighting for a moody, dramatic masterpiece?

You can submit either style—just make sure your command over the light tells the story.

Meet The Judge: Mark Waddington



Mark Waddington is a former BBC television producer with over 30 years of experience in broadcasting and filmmaking. During his career, he worked as a Creative Producer at BBC Television Centre in London, producing award-winning short-form films, and also spent time as an on-air news presenter for BBC Radio and a national announcer on BBC One.

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In short, I am looking for strong content, effective presentation, authenticity and a personal point of view.

#6 NIGHT LIGHTS

Entry Deadline: 11 March

Judge: Giles Rocholl

Date Of Judging: 8 April









#6 NIGHT LIGHTS

When the sun goes down, the lights come on. This theme focuses on the illumination that pierces the dark. You might submit a traditional, perfectly exposed astrophotography shot of the Milky Way, the vibrant neon glow of a wet city street, or the sweeping, colorful streaks of traffic light trails. This is light and shadow at its highest contrast. Show us how brilliant, artificial, or celestial points of light combat the deep, consuming shadows of the night to completely transform the world around you.

Meet The Judge: Giles Rocholl



Giles Rocholl is a highly respected professional photographer with over 45 years of photographic experience. Beginning his career as a trainee photojournalist in 1980, he quickly rose through the newspaper industry, becoming one of the UK's youngest Chief Photographers and later holding senior editorial roles with the Yorkshire Evening Post, Yorkshire Post, and several North West newspaper titles.

A pioneer in the adoption of digital photography and online media, Giles played a key role in developing digital imaging and photo library services within the newspaper industry before establishing his own freelance photography business in 1999.

Today, Giles specialises in architectural, commercial property, drone, event, and landscape photography. He is a familiar and popular judge on the Yorkshire camera club circuit, known for sharing his extensive professional knowledge and experience.

"When judging this competition, I am looking for images that combine technical excellence and strong composition with a powerful sense of emotion and impact. While mastering the fundamentals is essential, the standout entries will be those that evoke a genuine feeling or reaction from the viewer. If an image checks all those boxes and has that elusive 'touch of magic' about it too, then it will be a real winner for me."

STEAM, SMOKE & FOG

Entry Deadline: 8 April

Judge: Erica Oram

Date Of Judging: 6 May



STEAM, SMOKE & FOG

This theme is all about capturing the ethereal and the atmospheric. We want to see how you photograph suspended particles! Head out early to capture a classic, misty morning inversion over the countryside, hunt down the billowing steam of a heritage railway, or stay indoors to creatively light the curling smoke of a blown-out match. Pay close attention to how these elements interact with light and shadow—diffusing harsh rays into soft glows, creating mysterious, shadowed silhouettes in the fog, or catching a singular beam of light in a dark room. Give us mood, mystery, and atmosphere.

Meet The Judge: Erica Oram



Erica Oram has been passionate about photography since the late 1990s, initially working with colour slides before making the move to digital photography. She is a member of Sheffield Photographic Society and Gamma Photoforum and became a member of the prestigious London Salon in 2019.

An active lecturer and PAGB judge, Erica's photography centres on street photography, landscapes, and intimate details. Her work is often spontaneous, aiming to tell a story, create a mood, provoke a question, or make the most of shapes, lines, colour, and light. Known for her thoughtful and creative approach, Erica brings a wealth of photographic and judging experience to camera clubs throughout the region.

"When judging, I evaluate entries through a series of questions about their impact, design, and execution. I first look at communication and connection: Is it clear what the photograph is about, does it hold my attention, and does it convey a feeling, theme, or story that makes me react? I also look for individuality, checking how effectively the photographer has utilized light, composition, and visual design to create something unique. Finally, I consider the technical execution—assessing whether the image is technically sound, ensuring there are no unnecessary distractions, or deciding if a technical flaw is minor enough to be overridden by a powerful creative concept."

OTHER COMPETITIONS

Throughout the season there are several other competitions you will be provided with the opportunity to enter.

Otley Camera Club's Annual Exhibition

Each year, we hold a public exhibition over a weekend at Otley Parish Church.

Members are invited to submit mounted prints for display, showcasing the wide range of photography produced within the club.

The exhibition is judged by an invited external judge, with awards presented across a number of categories. Visitors to the exhibition are also able to vote for their favourite images, providing members with valuable feedback from the general public as well as from an experienced judge.

The exhibition is one of the highlights of the club year and provides an excellent opportunity to share your photography with a wider audience.

Yorkshire Photographic Union Exhibition

As a club, we enter the annual Yorkshire Photographic Union (YPU) Exhibition, which is open to photographers from over sixty camera clubs across Yorkshire.

Members are invited to submit images for selection, and successful entries are displayed as part of the exhibition. Awards are available to individual photographers, and the club also competes for collective honours.

The exhibition provides an excellent opportunity to have your work seen alongside some of the best photography being produced across the region and to represent Otley Camera Club at county level.

OTHER COMPETITIONS

Loughton Interclub Competition

Members are invited to submit one image for selection in the annual Loughton Interclub Competition.
The competition is judged by two judges: one selected by Loughton Camera Club and one selected by Otley Camera Club. Each judge scores the images independently, and the combined scores determine the winning club.
This friendly competition provides an opportunity to compare our work with photographers from another club and is always an enjoyable and closely contested event.

More information will be provided about these competitions nearer the time.



First Place Annual Exhibition 2026: Les Smart

FINAL THOUGHTS

We hope this guide has helped explain our competitions and, most importantly, encouraged you to take part.

Competitions are a fantastic way to develop your photography, challenge yourself to try new ideas, and receive constructive feedback from experienced judges. While it is always nice to do well, the real value comes from taking part, learning from the comments, and seeing how your photography develops over time.

Please don't be put off if you are new to photography or feel that your images are not yet "good enough". Every member, regardless of experience, is encouraged to enter. Some of the most rewarding competition journeys have come from members who simply decided to give it a go.

If you are ever unsure about a competition definition, the rules, image preparation, printing, or how to enter, please ask. There are plenty of experienced members who will be happy to help, and we would much rather answer a question beforehand than have someone miss out on entering.

Most importantly, enjoy the process, be creative, and have fun. We look forward to seeing your images throughout the season.


Danni Burgess