

Pretoria Photographic Society

Congenial learning from each other



SECOND PHOTOGRAPHIC CONGRESS OF SOUTHERN AFRICA
PRETORIA 1955



Founded in 1932, the Pretoria Photographic Society (PPS) is one of the longest surviving photographic clubs in South Africa. The society was formed by interested photographers *as a means of getting together in congenial circumstances to discuss their hobby and learn from each other.*

There were seven founding members and the first president was James Black, who owned a photographic business in Pretoria. Otto Nest was the first vice-president. Among the early members were FAA Sturdy (President from 1935 to 1938) and Ron Langley (treasurer), who later founded the well-known Pretoria photographic firm of Martin Gibbs (still in existence), the late renowned wildlife photographer Dick Wolff, J.K. Wilson (secretary), Max Nowitz, A.F. Mackenzie and Brian Scallen (elected President in 1947).

By the second year, membership had grown to ten and by 2022 the society had about 80 members.

Soon after its founding, PPS hosted the 4th South African Salon of Photography in 1935.

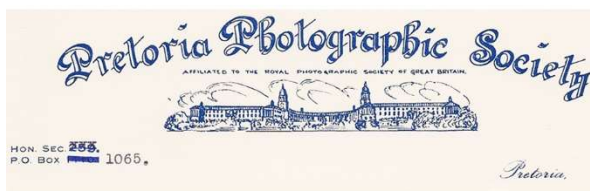
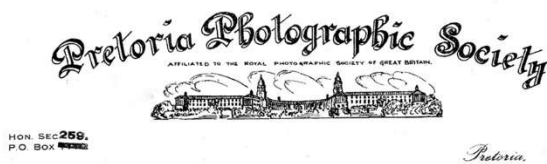
The Meetings were held in the library of the Theosophical Hall in Skinner Street, on the second Thursday of every month - including December (at the time). In December 1935, the members were informed that the Theosophical Society had notified the committee that due to their aversion to members' *smoking*, they would not consider the renewal of the lease of the library as from January 1936. The committee informed members that they had secured suitable alternative quarters at the De Villiers Building near Koedoe Arcade (the Public Servants Association).

In March 1936 the Society moved to a lecture theatre at the Technical College, courtesy of the Department of Adult Education, where they met free of charge, but donations were offered. The society met there for many decades.

Members of the Johannesburg Photographic Society (JPS) frequently met jointly with members of PPS. In January 1936, 22 Members of PPS drove to Halfway House to meet a contingent from JPS. Short lectures were delivered by members of both clubs and these, together with the subsequent discussions and refreshments, made the evening a very pleasant one.

In June 1936 about 80 people were present at a joint meeting of PPS members and visitors from the Johannesburg Photographic Society, the Johannesburg Camera Club and the Leica Club (which was formed in 1935). A "*Talkie film*", a "*Musical film*" and a film about volcanoes were shown by Mr. Lounsbury. The interest in these first *talkie* movies shown in Pretoria was so overwhelming that overflow crowds had to be turned away.

At the end of 1951 PPS had 30 members – all males.



The first letterhead used in the 1930's



P.O. BOX 2611
PRETORIA
0001



- INVITATION -

Come and join us at our Social Evening with the End-of-year Slide Show and Awards Presentation:

Date: Wed. 7 October 1992

Bring & Braai !

Top: A letterhead from the 1970's. Above: the first use of the new logo.

PPS met continuously after its founding in 1932, except for a voluntary recess from 1940-1945 for the duration of the Second World War. The club started meeting again in 1945 with a talk by the famous Miss Constance Stuart on 17th April 1945, after her return from Europe where she served as South Africa's first woman war correspondent for *Libertas* magazine. In her talk titled *My Experiences as a War Photographer and Correspondent in Europe* she shared her experience of being attached to the American Seventh Army in France and the South African Sixth Armoured Division in Italy. (See Memorable Members).

The renowned artist Walter Batiss gave a talk on composition in August 1945.

After meeting at the Technical College for many decades, meetings were moved to St Alban's College and more recently the Lynnwood Dutch Reformed Church.

Extracts from the meeting minutes:

August 1946 - The main item on the program was a debate with the Pretoria Cinegraphic Society on the motion "*That Still Photography was a more satisfying Hobby than Cine Photography*". The challenge to a *duel with words* was issued to movie friends by the President at their 100th Meeting as redress for *degrading and debasing the ancient and noble Art of Photography by their trivial practices*. There was one subject on which a number of members were heard airing their views - "originality". The president gave a sober analysis of the importance of originality in photography. (And we today think it is something new).

March 1947 there was a discussion on *Photographing the Royal Visit*, with tips on handling the crowd scenes and the illumination to best advantage. A prize of one guinea was offered for the best photograph by a member of a special event associated with the royal visit.

October 1948 - There are a number of 35mm enthusiasts (we call them enthusiasts not photographers) in our rank, and Mr Scallan will talk on what meticulous processing means in 35mm work.

November 1951 – *Colour Photography*. Mr. E Eliovson, Chairman of the Johannesburg Camera Club, has kindly consented to give us a talk which he will illustrate with some of his colour slides.

1955 PPS hosted the second PSSA congress after the founding of the society at a congress in Durban in July 1954. PPS Honorary Life member Oscar Abramovitz was a Founding Member (see below) of PSSA and several PPS members attended congresses.

In 1958 a unique judging system was introduced. Five members from the audience were elected as judges at the meeting. They would vote via electronic light switches, but before the vote, an advanced member of the society will comment on the image. The final mark will be based on the majority vote (e.g. 3, 2, 1 or 0). After the tea break five new judges would vote and a new senior member comment. This system found favour because it introduced more audience participation. A few years later it was decided that the judges from the audience should be Intermediate and Advanced workers and that the commentators would be Advanced workers only.



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PRETORIA 1955



PHOTO DOTMAN PRETORIUS

Front Row Left to Right: A. Rosewitz, Eric Verue A.R.P.S., Elsa Naudé, Gordon Maddox, Brannie N. Penny, Mr. M. C. Margetts, Dr. J. K. du Toit, Dr. A. D. Benrusan, Charles Rosher, Robt. Bell, O. Abramovitz, H. Geldard, Mrs. E. Cowan, Nat Cowan, F. A. A. Sturdy, L. Bevis
Second Row Left to Right: Harry Lotzof, Gene Lotzof, Sherlock Holmes, Mrs. James Black, James Black, H. R. Lawley, Ray T. Ryan, John R. Hagens, Percy A. Scott, Mrs. D. B. Bensusan, Mrs. G. Hepple, Mrs. H. J. Abramovitz, Mrs. P. Danzig, B. Danzig, S. R. le Franc, Mrs. C. M. Jones, F. G. du Jardin, R. F. Goldie, P. A. Reyneke
Third Row Left to Right: J. v. Z. Lötz, J. J. Panegrouw, C. R. Mönig, Mrs. A. A. Mönig, Mrs. J. Wiehahn, Prof. B. S. Wiehahn, E. Hepple, Mrs. M. E. Margetts, M. R. Goldick, Mr. Andrew Goldie, F. W. Tope, Mrs. C. E. Eckard, L. H. Spinks, G. M. Cousins, Ted Jones, G. S. Kempis, P. A. Reyneke
Fourth Row Left to Right: Louis C. Nel, L. W. Eccles, Mrs. W. B. Yates, W. B. Yates, Alan Yates, Mrs. Alan Yates, E. B. Werton, S. R. Keeling, J. P. H. Steyn, G. A. Spence, W. H. J. Andrew, T. Reed, Mr. L. J. Eckard, L. B. Poole, C. A. van Tilburg, James C. Brierley, G. Visscher, D. R. Winchester

In 1965 it was decided to approach other clubs in Pretoria to supply judges on a reciprocal basis and to ask Ted Dickenson to assist with training judges.

In 1969 an Interclub competition between PPS, Germiston and Jabula clubs was introduced.

In 1992 the SABS club was integrated with PPS and the latest logo was adopted.

Some things never change, according to an article in e-Image when PPS turned 90:

- **In 1947** it was noted that many members were in arrears with their subscriptions.
- **In 1958** Dr Danzig was horrified at the prospects of colour photography usurping black and white print photography.
- **In 1958** the committee noted that *for the first time in many years, all the Committee Members were present.*
- **In 1965** various means were tried to cut down on the time taken for judging ... In 1982 the problem persisted and by 2022 the effort was still ongoing.

Some things did change:

- **In the early 2000s** PPS instituted a new stream, which they called e-photos, which became the dominant medium. While prints are still in their rules, there had been no print entries for some years.
- PPS was an early adopter of virtual meetings during the Covid pandemic. After the lockdown rules were lifted they started meeting live again and continued with hybrid meetings.

**THE ROYAL PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY
OF GREAT BRITAIN**

CURATOR AND HONORARY SECRETARY
J. DUDLEY JOHNSTON

FOUNDED 1853

16, Princes Gate,
Kensington,
London, S.W.7.

SECRETARY:
L. E. HALLETT

OFFICIAL ORGAN: EM/.
THE PHOTOGRAPHIC JOURNAL
Telephone, Kensington 3324

J.G. Holland, Esq.,
Pretoria P.S.,
Box 1065,
Pretoria, South Africa.

9 November 1948.

Dear Sir,

I have pleasure in informing you that at the meeting of my Council on Monday, 8 November, the Pretoria Photographic Society was duly admitted to affiliation.

Yours faithfully,


L. E. HALLETT
Secretary.

- **In 2018** the late Bertus de Jongh introduced an innovative challenge for five-star members. In The Bertus de Jongh Honours points are awarded for a wide range of activities in photographic excellence and strategic initiatives for PPS, which include publication in local and international media, winning salon categories, etc. Once the points threshold is reached, a member may submit a panel that will be externally evaluated to achieve the next four levels of Honours.

Some milestones

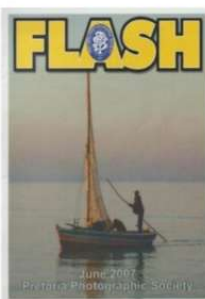
In 1938: PPS merged with the Cine Club.

In 1946 the Johannesburg Camera Club paid a visit to PPS and a dinner in their honour was given at Polley's Hotel. Speakers included Mr Nat Cowan, Victor Hougaard and Will Till.

In November 1948 L.E. Hallett, secretary of the Royal Photographic Society (RPS) of Great Britain, informed PPS that *at the meeting of my Council on Monday, 8 November, the Pretoria Photographic Society was duly admitted to affiliation*. This was the second time that PPS was awarded affiliation status, because the club's first logo reflects affiliation status with RPS.



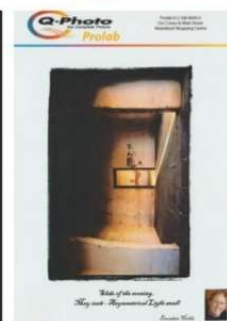
July 1954



June 2007



July 1954



May 2008





Early 1950s: The first monthly magazine, *Flash*, was published as a monochrome saddle-stitched booklet. Initially a few typed pages with society news had been handed out to members during meetings. The title of the magazine was coined Flash. **Mid 1980's** *Flash* became full colour. In **2011** it was renamed **e-Flash** and was distributed via email. The magazine won several awards from the Photographic Society of America.

When in 1971 the first Pretoria International Exhibition of Photography (PIEP) was initiated, InterPhoto was formed. This was a partnership between the four clubs in Pretoria. These clubs were PPS, CSIR (F22), SABS (which later affiliated with PPS) and Iscor. The salon ran every second year and PPS was still represented on the committee in 2002.

1982 PPS celebrated its 50th anniversary with a series of events, including a banquet hosted by the City Council and a Golden Jubilee exhibition from 2-27 June in the Arcadia Art Museum, where about 200 photographs were on display.

2002: To celebrate the 70th anniversary an exhibition of 300 prints was held in the State Theatre from 27 September for two weeks.

Around 2004 digital images (we called them e-photos then) were just starting, says long-standing member Tony Roberts. "At a meeting I sat next to the slide projectionist and earned his disfavour by saying "My, but this is a fiddly technology" after the third slide jam and second inverted, wrongly marked image."

2012 – the first Pretoria Super Circuit was held in February.



Memories of Ninety Years –
The Pretoria Photographic Society



In 2022 the 90th anniversary of PPS was celebrated in various ways, for example, with a National Exhibition from 1 to 24 September. The PPS 90th Birthday Salon Exhibition was opened on 1 November 2022 in the church hall where they met in Lynnwood.

In 2023 a Special Edition of the society's *e-Flash* magazine with a selection of articles by members published during the previous decade was produced to celebrate its 90th anniversary.

Club presidents

Years served	President
1932-1934	James Black
1934-1935	Frank Sturdy
1935-1936	James Black
1937-1938	Frank Sturdy
1938-1939	R.A. Langley
1939-1940	Frank Sturdy
1940-1945	Closed for WW11
1945-1946	Frank Sturdy
1946-1947	Mr Scruby
1947-1949	B Scallan
1949-1950	R.A. Langley
1951-1952	Frank Sturdy
1953-1954	JK du Toit
1955-1956	B Danzig
1957	C.A. van Tilburg
1958	JK du Toit
1959 -1962	Oscar Abramowitz
1963	Eric Harper
1964-1965	Aubrey Elliot
1966-1967	J Glander
1968	WH Farham
1969 -1970	Detlef Basel
1971-1972	R Brown
1973	Eric Harper
1975	G Sandrock
1976	J Oxley
1977-1978	Detlef Basel
1979-1980	Jackie Horjus
1981-1982	Brian Peckover
1993-1994	Peter Rooke
1994	Mike Brookes
1995-2003	Detlef Basel
2003-2005	Martin Kellerman
2005-2007	Evelyn Gibson
2007-2008	Tony Roberts
2008-2010	Sharon Haasbroek
2010-2011	Johan Hosten
2011-2012	Jeremy Munton-Jackson, Tony Roberts
2012-2013	Tony Roberts, Thelma van der Schyff
2013-2015	Thelma van der Schyff
2015-2017	Reg Caldecott

2017-2018	Chantelle J v Rensburg, Bertus de Jongh
2018-2019	Bertus de Jongh
2019-2021	Thelma van der Schyff
2021-2023	Pine Pienaar
2023-2024	Thelma van der Schyff

Members of note

James Black, PPS Founder, was awarded Honorary Life Membership in May 1949 in recognition of his services in the past years. According to the minutes Mr. Black had done an enormous amount of good work for the Society and past and present Members surely appreciate it.



Miss Constance Stuart joined the Society in about 1936 and subsequently proceeded overseas to study Photography in Germany. On her return she opened a photographic business and became a great influence in the Club. She became famous as the first South African woman to serve as a war correspondent during World War 11. Her solo exhibition of photographs that paid tribute to the two military divisions she was attached to, the American Seventh Army in France and the South African Sixth Armoured Division in Italy, travelled through South Africa.

Another professional, Martin Gibbs, established himself in business and with his knowledge greatly assisted members. Ron Langley, who joined Martin Gibbs in his business, is still running the business.

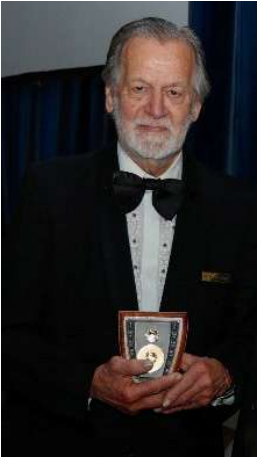
DR JK du Toit APS, Hon PSSA (below left) served as PSSA president between 1962 to 1965 and also served as Director of Photography on the Board. He served Pretoria Photographic Society as president from 1953 to 1954 and again in 1958.



Oscar Abramovitz Hon PSSA (above middle with his typewriter right) was awarded Honorary Life Membership in August 1970. He was a PPS member from at least 1952 and was elected PPS President in 1958. He also served as secretary for several decades. In 1968 he presented a course in photography to every member. He was one of the Founding Members of PSSA, who joined in 1954 and was awarded Hon PSSA by the society. He accepted the editorship of Flash magazine in 1960 on condition that every committee member must contribute at least one article per month – even if it is only a cutting from a magazine – and that he would resign as editor if the committee members did not co-operate. In 1968 he was presented with a pair of cuff links as a token of appreciation for the course in photography he presented to members.



Toni Ballotta APSSA, AV-LPSSA, AFIAP served on the Committee of PPS for many years in the position of Editor of Flash and also as Vice-Chairperson for a couple of years. She also served on the Board of PSSA for 7 years as Editor of *Image Magazine*. Evelyn Gibson paid tribute to Toni in PSSA Image magazine ([read here](#)) and in an article in e-Flash of February 2022.



Detlef Basel Hon PSSA, APSSA, SPSSA served in photographic association committees, boards, and councils for 54 years. He joined PPS in April 1967 and four months later he was elected president — in absentia. His unexpected election was prompted by the interest he had shown in assisting beginners and new members in the club — a natural interest after running photographic clubs at the schools where he had taught science for 40 years. He served on the committee of PPS for 36 years from 1969 to 2005, including three sessions of two years as President. He initiated the move of PPS meetings to St Alban's school, where he was teaching. He was also awarded Life Membership by the Pretoria Photographic Society.

Apart from the long years serving on the Pretoria society committee, Detlef served on the PSSA board for 25 years as salon director, and one year as vice-president during the late 1970's. During the time he served on the PSSA board, he was awarded an SPSSA (Associate of the PSSA) for service and Hon PSSA. At the PSSA Greyton congress in 2019, PSSA president Jill Sneesby presented Detlef with a Lifetime Achievement Award for *'his extensive and continued service to photography and PSSA*. In 2005, after Detlef turned 70, the Basels moved to Cape Town, where he served as President of the Cape Town Photographic Society from 2007 until 2015.



Evelyn Gibson Hon PSSA, FPSSA, APSSA(Vers), EPSSA(Mille-Platinum), SPSSA, EFIAP, SPSA, ARPS joined PPS in 1999 and served as President for two years between 2005 and 2007 and was awarded Honorary Life Membership of the society. Evelyn is best known as PRO of PSSA and previously served as PSSA Northern Gauteng Regional Director. She is a member of the PSSA Honours Judging Panel, the PSSA Marketing Committee and Excom. She is also a member of the Photographic Society of America and achieved SPSA honours for Street Photography, and a member of The Royal Photographic Society of Great Britain, where she earned ARPS. She became a member of various clubs, including Cape Town

Photographic Society and most recently, George Camera Club, after she and her husband moved to the Garden Route.



Reg Caldecott FPSSA, a commercial, documentary and sports photographer based in Gauteng, was PPS President between 2015-2017. In 2014 he was voted the *Sports Photographer of the Year* at the South African Sports Awards. Reg worked as Senior Photographer at Beeld for several years before branching out on his own and becoming a photographer for Gallo Images. He has been the accredited photographer for the SPAR Proteas netball team and individual players at various tournaments, including the 2015 and 2019 Netball World Cups, the Banyana Banyana soccer teams, and is well-known for his coverage of women's sport. He has been covering various other junior and senior sporting events – notably tennis – as well as individual stars.



Roman Vogt AFIAP was another memorable club member who was made an Honorary Life Member in 2008. He was born on 13th March 1938 and passed away on 20th January 2015 at the age of 76 years. He served as liaison officer between FIAP and PSSA. [Click here](#) to read an eulogy to him.

More information

Visit the PPS website at <https://pretoriaphotographic.co.za/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/PretoriaPhotographicSociety/>

Email: ppsannouncements@gmail.com