

## Me, Photography and Woolwich Photographic Society - A personal history By Barry Jarvis (Honorary Life Member)



"So where do I start? Back in 1966 I had my first introduction to photography. My uncle, who was a member of the Woolwich Photographic Society at the time, asked my Mum, Dad and me, if we would like to go on the Society's Annual outing to Dover and a visit to the docks was arranged, but as I recall, due to strike action we did not get in. So what camera did I own? None, but I would use my Mum and Dad's Box Brownie, but between my Dad and Uncle they never got the film loaded correctly, so never took any photo's that day. That Christmas I got my first camera - a Kodak 126 cartridge, as a present, and my days of taking photographs really began, but unfortunately my photography time was a bit limited as I was still at school!

So what next? Well back then I used to play with my friends in the street and Mum said my uncle wondered if any of us in the adjoining houses might be interested in Photography, and fancied joining the W.P.S, (recommending family and friends to Photography was something we did for years; it's a great way of recruiting members!) So during the 1967/68 programme I attended some meetings as a guest. The W.P.S, was classed as a 'club class', (but the Society governed itself) at the Woolwich Adult Education Institute. I became a Member of W.P.S. in 1968 at the age of 14, but I had to gain written permission from my Headmaster at Bloomfield School, which was required by the Institute, not the W.P.S. (Photo left: Club portrait of Barry, taken in the mid-1980's)

So after basic instruction on how to make up chemicals and develop and print black & white, I sort of made a go of this as a hobby. As luck would have it, my uncle lived with us for a while in a 3 story house and we converted a spare box room into a darkroom, better still, my uncle brought all the equipment with him! After he moved out he left it all to me. I acquired a couple more 'nothing special' cameras, including a Coronet 4-4 (I think the name was) so until I started work and could afford my first proper SLR, Mamiya/Sekor 500TI camera (from Percival Cameras in Plumstead Road) these had to do."

"I entered club competitions and still have all my prints, slides, and negatives from that time, including a couple of Pentax SLR lenses etc. which have not seen the light of day for many years. In recent years I've preferred to use a mobile phone to take shots. I do not say I was, or am, a great photographer, but I like what I do. In 2018 I bought a Nikon D3400 digital camera.

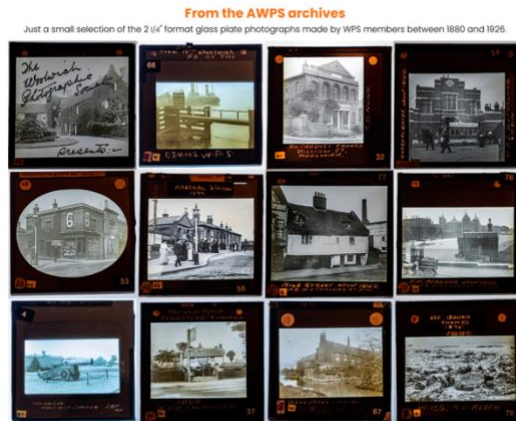
In some ways jobs on the club committee (which I must say I enjoyed doing) took over from photography for me. In my fourth year of membership (1971) I was asked to join the Social Sub-committee, later on taking on the roll of Social secretary and Treasurer until 1997. My first position on the Main Committee came in 1972 when I was elected to a post we called at the time 'Committeemen' of which there was four. In 1973 I was elected Vice-



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President for a one-year term (it used to be 3). Also that year I was made Competition Secretary, I held that post for 24 years! In 1983 was also elected Financial Secretary until 1997. At the 1990 Annual General Meeting I was made an Honorary Life Member – which was nice! (Photo right: AWPS coach trip to Heathfield Park, Sussex, May 1976)

Now I wish to come to something which is absolutely priceless, old lantern glass plates/slides 214 format of Woolwich and District dating I think from 1880-1960's (see examples right). We used some of these to put on a show of old Woolwich with a script written by W (Bill) Simpson, and at some date we had colour slides taken as near as possible to the same locations, the show was called 'Woolwich Old and New'. I understand that most of the wooden boxes of slides are safe and sound. Sadly, some are missing, perhaps taken home for safekeeping by an ex-Member and are now collecting dust in an attic somewhere, perhaps one day they will re-emerge?



I would like to say that we, as a society, should hold on to them as they are our heritage and many of them would have been taken by past members and donated to the club. I understand that the colour slides, which were further updated, are also no longer in Society hands, but thankfully many of the remaining old glass plates and slides have now been digitally scanned and we are working to archive these and show them to the public in the near future. I think there is an interesting photography project waiting to be done on Woolwich old vs New.

As a closing note, for some years I was also a member of Blackheath and Goldsmiths Camera Club, and also the Pentax Club of Great Britain."

Barry Jarvis  
(2019)