



Newsletter

**BRACKNELL
CAMERA
CLUB**

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Editorial

By Ruari Cumming

Many editorials I read in magazines just seem to tell you what is in that issue. Boring !! So I lost all presence of mind & looked up the word "editorial" in the OED. It explained it as "an article which expresses the editor's opinion on a subject of particular interest at the present time".

Well my interest at the moment is how I have coped with the transition from celluloid to digital. Whilst still going through what I call "RAW pains", I have found I take many more snaps now than when they cost me 20p each ! It's not that I'm mean, you understand, just frugal on how I spend my now reduced income, whilst still maintaining my wife in the life style she enjoyed when I was drawing a salary !

Each snap costs nothing & is available virtually instantaneously. If the shot is rubbish or technically bad I delete it immediately & try again, or delete on the computer later. I have decided I am not going to fill up hard drive space or DVDs with images that will never see the light of day. I have drawers full of slides which are stored on the premise that "they might be needed someday". Piffle !

Since getting my EOS 5D in early June I have shot nearly 1,600 snaps. Admittedly, 3,500 shots p.a. to some of you may not be a lot, but compared with my normal annual consumption of 20 rolls of Velvia, this is over 340% more ! As someone said to me the other day "You're coming around to digital then ?" Considering how much I've spent I don't really have any options, but I have been pleased with having many more images to pick from for club competitions. I have always been an advocator of progress & whilst some I can accept & applaud, others I have to accept & hope for the best. Digital is here to stay, until the next innovation, so I am happy to embrace & enjoy its benefits. Yes, some aspects are new & different but then many things in life are like that.

Finally, heard this week that Leica, makers of the very excellent Pradovit range of slide projectors, are to cease making them. Glad I have mine already !

Print Mounting Workshop

At the print mounting workshop held on Tuesday 4th October, there were six new members, guided by Alan, Ruari, Jeff & myself. Alan gave an excellent demonstration of mounting with an interesting result - the print ended up on its side !

Later in the evening Peter demonstrated different styles of double mounting including an example of one mount which was 1 cm out on one border. Luckily the print was not very good & when entered in a competition last year, the Judge talked about the print, not noticing the mounting error !

The evening was light hearted & useful not only in having "hands on" practice but also getting to know each other. Our new members also had the chance to see that the "old lags" really are willing & able to help the less experienced members. Yes - we really are ! Hope to see you at the next one.

Peter Handford

Portfolio Competition

To those of you who are considering entering, arguably the finest photographic competition of the season, namely the Bracknell Camera Club Portfolio Competition, here are a few reminders of the requirements.

The entry is **ONE** 35mm slide on any subject, but generally one that can be commented on by every other entrant. It can be a serious study which needs to follow the general rules of good exposure, sharpness if required & composition or a humorous one that will inevitably invite good, bad or even ribald comments ! Have no fear, this is a fun competition – just dig out a slide & hand it to me or any committee member. You will then have the opportunity to judge all of the other slides in this popular 'round robin' competition.

The closing date is Christmas 2006, so let me have entries as soon as they become available. All slides will also be put on our website. Please note that due to the dwindling popularity of slides versus digital images, it may be necessary to go digital completely, in the not too distant future.

Chris Bradley



Ladies Day at Royal Ascot, June 2006

By Caroline Colegate

"If your pictures aren't good enough, then you're not close enough" - Robert Capa

I have always admired the candid 'people pictures' which tell a story about the individual but I have always felt shy of going up to people and pointing my camera at them. A while ago I was discussing this with John Tyler (it was he that drew my attention to the Robert Capa quotation above) and he suggested that I gain some confidence at an event where not only do people **expect** to be photographed but are taking pictures themselves. He said that he'd be happy to accompany me to such a gathering and show me the ropes. So when Royal Ascot returned this year I decided to have a go. Over the years many of the club's members have taken some wonderful pictures at Ascot and at one time in the 90's Ladies Day became a regular meeting place for BCC.

John suggested we start our day in mid-morning at Ascot railway station because we might get some interesting shots of people staggering off the train. Many would be arriving on the Pullman from the Midlands and would already have consumed plenty of Champagne before taking further refreshments at the 'Jagz Bar at the Station'.

I mentioned our outing to Ruari who decided to join us. We also met up with Bruce Collins who took the more sensible approach and went by train instead of car.

On arrival at the station John told me his choice of lens is 17-35mm, usually set at about 20-24mm initially. He persuaded me to ditch my favoured 70-300mm lens and use my 28-80mm set at the 28mm end. That would ensure that I would have to get nearer to my subjects and overcome my shyness of getting in close to people with my camera.

I soon saw that some people were happy to play up to the camera. One lady even said "you want to take **my** picture ? Oh I am flattered !".



"Ere cobber, your beer's getting warm !"

After a while we were approached by the railway police and asked what we were photographing and why. They seemed satisfied until a more noxious 'jobs worth' said we must get permission from the Stationmaster.



"No Officer, I wasn't flashing !"

Bruce promptly went to see him and came back to say everything was sorted. Apparently most of the large area in front of the station, all the way down to the main road, is private railway property so in theory they could have stopped us taking photos.

At about 12.30 we walked up to the main gates outside the racecourse and joined the scrum of other photographers. This I found easier because I was one of many and therefore didn't feel quite so visible. It was here that we met Debbie & Chris & two of their friends who were also after those candid moments.

On the way up to the main gates we stopped at one of the grassed car parks where numerous parties were picnicking on the finest of food and drink. John persuaded me to approach one group and ask them if I could take their picture. Like everybody who goes to Ascot they were more than happy to oblige and then proceeded to produce several of their own cameras for me to take them !



"Ready ? Now 'teeth' please !"

Bruce also experienced some very friendly people. One group of young girls not only offered him some of their food but also provided him with their e-mail address ! He duly sent off his picture to them and one girl replied to say that she had either lost her camera or had it stolen that day and therefore Bruce's picture was the only one of them they have as a memory of Ascot. Well done Bruce !

So what did I learn from watching my mentor (John) at work ? Well, 1.) Don't be shy but get in close. 2.) Use a wide angle lens - it forces you to get in close. 3.) Use fill in flash at -1 to -1.5 stops and most importantly, 4.) Concentrate, never take your eye off the ball.

There was more than one occasion when, whilst talking to John, he would leap away suddenly and home in on his subject. Quite how he manages

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to hold a normal conversation but stay at a high level of readiness I really don't know - but clearly it is something I must work on for myself.



"I do like champagne, that beer was so common!"

It's all about the 'seeing eye'; you can learn the technical aspects at leisure on the sofa at home but training the eye and brain takes a lot longer and much practise. John certainly has that 'seeing eye' but it's something I need to concentrate upon. It's so easy at an event like Ascot to get involved in enjoying the wider aspects of what's going on around you and lose the ability to home in on the little detail that gives you that award winning shot.

So what of my first foray into people pictures? Well, I have two or three that I am pleased with but next time I will have to work harder on concentrating my mind to extract the detail from the bigger picture and yes, there will be a next time. Opposite is one of my better photos from the day.

Photos by John Tyler



"Come on big boy, let's lose some of your money!"

like Dorset or Northumbria, or a Hebridean island. It doesn't really matter where, as long as it has the potential for rewarding viewpoints with reasonably easy access. Don't plan to take pictures from the top of the Cuillin ridge on Skye if you are not a mountaineer! Keeping within the bounds of both what you know & what you can do will ensure you enjoy what you are doing. Try and have a specific and fairly well defined area to shoot within or else you'll spend all your time in the car driving all over the place. A good 'rule of thumb' is to keep your shooting area to within just one OS Landranger map. If it is somewhere like the Northumbrian coastline then define where on that coastline. Will it be the beaches or the castles or both? Will it be Holy Island or Bamburgh Castle? Or perhaps further south, of Dunstanburgh Castle in the early morning glow, from a position on the sandy beach just as the tide recedes leaving wet reflective sands? Now you are getting specific and that is the art of good planning - know what you want to take, what the conditions need to be and what the overall end product will look like. This will narrow you down to a few "target sites" to concentrate on. Look at other photographers work for inspiration and see what, when and how they took their snaps. Could you do better and put a different slant on a well known view?



Now comes the research of that area. Firstly obtain an OS map, preferably with a scale of 2½ inches to the mile. I find these are best bought direct from the Ordnance Survey¹ to ensure they are the latest editions. Maps bought in some book shops tend to be older versions. The

OS also sells bespoke maps - called 'OS Select' - which you can order "on line". You just select where the centre of your map should be and follow the easy instructions, ordering your final map in either a scale of 1:25,000 (2½ inches to the mile called 'Explorer') or 1:50,000 (1¼ inches to the mile called 'Landranger').

If I plan to take pictures along a coastline, then I will need to know when high and low tide will occur. There is no point arriving at your planned location only to find that the tide will not be where you want it to be, at the time you want it, for many days yet!

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Landscape Photography (Part 1) "Grand Designs"

By Ruari Cumming

This is the first article of a trilogy about landscape photography. I was stimulated to write these following the kind words of encouragement & enjoyment expressed to me following my "exposé" to you all last March of the world of Hebridean Island Images. When my "Editorial Assistant" first read them she said that I was "teaching Grandma to suck eggs". Clearly, that is not my intention. Some will be obvious, some you will know already but perhaps parts will be new to you or may stimulate to say "Ah! I hadn't thought of that!" I just hope you enjoy reading how I go about taking my landscape snaps.

Suppose you decide to shoot some particular area, e.g. the Lake District, or a stretch of coastline

Buy a good tide calculator ² and plan your visit accordingly.

Time of year, where the sun is & the weather will all play a part. Choose a time of the year that is suitable to what you want to take pictures of. Obviously, if you want the Cairngorms covered in snow then it will have to be January/February when the light is clear and the mornings are crisp. The days are longer with directional & warmer sunlight in early morning and late evening in May and June. During May the trees start to leaf out with amazing colours ranging from burnt sienna to the palest of leaf greens and bluebells bloom in the woods on chalk downland. Coastal regions benefit from the yellow flag irises by the seashore. Autumn brings heather blooms on heathland and trees going russet brown. So choose your area with the seasons in mind. It's a good idea to know when sunrise and sunset times are. You can buy a fancy plastic 'gizmo' with compass showing sunrise positions but I tend to use data from the US Naval Observatory ³ web site. Just establish from your OS map the latitude and longitude of where you want and enter the data. A one page printout will provide all the times for the dates you need. And as for the British weather? Well the tourist guides will give you some indication. I can tell you that for Scotland, May, June & September are the best months. Try interrogating the Met Office ⁴ website for more detailed information about weather trends for the area that interests you.



Now you need to use good travel & tourist guide books, either bought from booksellers or borrowed from the local lending library. A search on the web, in perhaps Amazon ⁵, will throw up a range of guide books which should specialise in the area you are looking for. Use the National

tourist board head offices in England or Scotland or Wales to find out the address/telephone number of the local tourist office to where you are going to take your photos. Have the local office send you as many free tourist guides as they can, whether it be accommodation guides, maps of local towns etc and leaflets on tourist attractions. All will help in your research, gaining you a wider appreciation of where you intend to go and hopefully showing photos which will stimulate you.

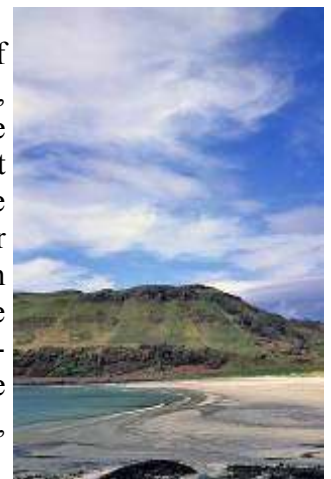
Often your OS map will show, usually marked with an *i*, whether a small town in the vicinity has a tourist office.

Once all this is done, you will need to find suitable accommodation. Whether your preference is hotel, bed & breakfast or self catering, consider these points. Is your accommodation in a place or village within quick and easy access to your "target" shooting locations? Can you park right outside, ensuring your car will not be blocked in by other vehicles if you want to get out at 6 a.m.? Has your room got a TV so you can see the local weather forecasts? Will you be able to exit the premises in the wee small hours, unaccompanied by "mine host", or will it be all locked up & bolted? Is it a safe locality to leave your camera gear in your car boot overnight? Will you still get an evening meal if you arrive in late as you were still photographing at 8.30 p.m.? The list of Q & A's can go on & on but are worth doing.

Finally, using all the information you have gathered as suggested here, start to plot where you think your likely "target" locations could be. Mark these sites on your OS map using a very soft pencil, like a 9B. This will not mark your map too badly and will rub out easily. Add information notes like time of day, direction of shoot, state of tide etc. to each of your initially planned shots.

Yes, this does seem a lot a work but think about what you will be expending your money on. Petrol & accommodation costs before you even put your viewfinder to your eye, so it pays to plan well. After all, the rule of the six "Ps" is worth remembering. P*ss Poor Preparation results in P*ss Poor Photographs !!

The second article of this trilogy, "On Location", will appear in the next issue & we will be looking at what you need to do once you have arrived at your selected locality, in readiness for some enjoyable landscape photography. In the meantime here is a little snap of mine, taken in May this year.



Calgary Bay, Mull

¹ Customer Service Centre, Ordnance Survey, Romsey Road, Southampton, SO16 4GU. Tel: 08456-050505 or www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk

² Quicktide Guide, QT International Ltd, 19 Canynge Road, Bristol, BS8 3JZ. Tel: 01179-736688 or www.quicktide.co.uk

³ Astronomical Applications Dept., US Naval Observatory, Washington DC, 20392-5420, or <http://aa.usno.navy.mil>

⁴ Meteorological Office, FitzRoy Road, Exeter, EX1 3PB. Tel: 0870-900-0100 or www.metoffice.gov.uk

⁵ Amazon Books at Milton Keynes on www.amazon.co.uk