



Newsletter

**BRACKNELL
CAMERA
CLUB**

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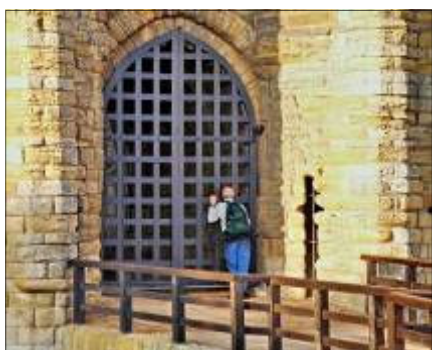
Editorial

By Ruari Cumming

Some years ago, a few members of our club complained that the Committee never organised any outings. We did once arrange a minibus to take us to Kew gardens but as the take up was so small it wouldn't have covered the costs. Thankfully this changed last year when Martin Williams organised a late afternoon visit to Stonehenge, after all the tourists had left for the day (see issue 54). Many members attended & I would have liked to also, had I not been in Scotland at the time. Perhaps Martin will organise another venue for us to visit this year?

This was followed by a large party going to Kent to photograph Big Cats. That day out was so successful that Alan is organising another one for late June & yes - I am in Scotland again! Some members find that they have subjects to photograph in common with others & fill a car or two for a day out. We went to Castle Combe motor racing circuit, on a fine day in August. Some of us have also been to the beaches of West Wittering, the Spinnaker Tower in Portsmouth & Westonbirt Arboretum. On all occasions I have come back with many images suitable for competitions.

Some will know that Bruce Collins & I spent a September week, in glorious weather, photographing the coastal castles of Northumbria. We are told some club members wondered how two "strong willed"



What do you mean you're closed ?!!

individuals, such as us, would cope with each other, in a small cottage not 1/2 a mile from Embleton beach. Well, these sceptics were proved wrong! We had a great time, learnt a lot about each other & photography, whilst enjoying each others company immensely. Why don't you have a photographic trip out with a friend this summer?



Monochrome Memories

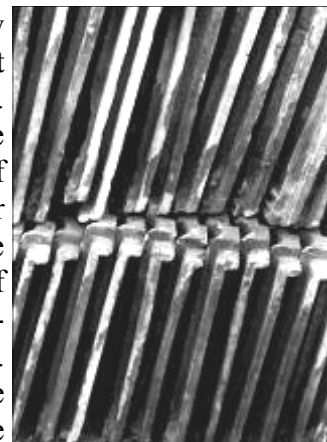
By Janice Bradley

Seeing so many monochrome images during last years club meetings prompted me to dig out my own black and white photographs. These were all taken between 1983; the start of O'level photography at school, and 1990, following which time I no longer had access to a darkroom.

During the 2 years before taking the O'level exam, we were given various themes for which we had to produce panels of photographs showing our interpretation of each theme. There were many themes, two of which I remember well.

One was a trip to the Hexagon Theatre in Reading entitled 'Spirit of the Hexagon'. We were allowed to wander round the stage area and in the empty auditoriums. This was my most difficult theme to represent, as I found it difficult to show any sense of 'spirit' when we were mostly in a deserted theatre. The other was entitled 'Objects not usually seen together' for which I had real fun with an empty orange peel, an egg and a miniature Rubik's cube (this was the late 80's), amongst other items. The set subject at BCC put me in mind of those times and really got me thinking last year.

As was the norm, I was encouraged to take the CSE exam as well as the O'level. I wonder now if our teacher knew something we didn't about the examiners taste. Perhaps he thought we stood a better chance of someone liking our individual styles if there were 2 separate sets of 'judges'. I have 2 favourite images from this time. The first was taken on the very first black and white film we exposed having been told to 'go out & photograph whatever you like'../contd



We then developed and printed the film ourselves, during our weekly 3 hour darkroom sessions on a Friday morning. Those of you who have started noticing my style will probably not be very surprised that this image is of 2 rows of roofing tiles, stacked on top of each other.

The other image is that of a friend who lived down the road from me at this time. I sat her in my bedroom on a stool, shut the curtains, shone my angle poise light at her, and started taking photographs. The one I favoured most was a low key image in which her blonde hair, face and hand jumped out from the shadows. It is probably not technically very good, but even after 20 or so years I still like it.



Nicky

I was amazed to notice that throughout my black and white film period, I took so many pictures of people. One set of pictures taken towards the end of my developing and printing era, were of another friend and the 2 bands he was in. Ever the optimist, the 2nd band he was in asked me to take some photos just in case they ever needed a cover for a single (these were the days when you couldn't just make your own CD, as they were such new technology). They didn't have a clue what they wanted, so I took some of them in the basement where they rehearsed. However there was really too much clutter around (sorry, expensive equipment and several hundred cables) so I took them outside. I bossed them about a bit, and asked them to perform various poses, and they very gamely did as they were told. Sadly the photos were never needed, and they have long since disbanded.



Nemesis

Those were the days. Nowadays I usually shoot digitally, but still admire black and white images. I often read in photography magazines that converting digital to black and white should only be carried out post capture, and never in camera on the black and white setting. My recent reminiscing,



The Catch

together with a free black and white film, prompted me to get out my old film SLR and try out a little experiment of my own. I decided to take a selection of images on black and white film, and on both

colour and black & white settings on my DSLR. I then converted the colour digital images to black & white using gradient map in Photoshop Elements 4.



Black & White Film

grain that I prefer. On screen the 3 images all look very similar (apart from the grain). Perhaps it is time to investigate using different printer papers.

Incidentally, I also discovered that I don't suffer from any form of camera shake with my trusty film camera, unlike my DSLR. At last I can tell my husband it is NOT my eye sight! Well, the new season at BCC is underway, and we have had the first competitions.



Digital in camera mono

This year I decided I would try out digital slides, as well as prints. This is not because I am terribly competitive, but because I get to double my exposure (pardon the pun!).

I have never used any form of slide before, so I have no doubt this will be a steep learning curve for me. The first hurdle was uploading my images to order them via the internet. This took 3 attempts, even with my IT manager husband 'helping'. However, the slides arrived 2 days later - I was very impressed (and I was very pleased with both the marks I got and the comments from other club members). I hope people noticed the lack of bridges. I am trying to avoid bridges this year for fear of being pigeon holed - but I have failed miserably already, during a trip to London.



Digital + gradient map

My aims for this year are to attend as many tuition/teaching sessions as I can, & to try taking more portraits. I am often put off entering portraits into the competitions as I feel my attempts are merely pictures of someone I know,

..../contd

& lacking in personality.

Still, I have had a small breakthrough with photographing people. My usually grumpy & uncooperative assistant/model has actually been asking for me to take her photo. Long may it continue.



My Smiling Assistant

My Canon Day

By C.S. Minchell



Early in May the manageress of Jessops asked me if I would enter a draw for a place on a symposium to be run by Canon on their new 30D camera. This I did and then promptly forgot all about it. On returning from holiday some

weeks later there was a message on my answer phone to 'ring Canon most urgent.' It turned out I had drawn a place and would I confirm immediately whether I could attend the following Saturday. Naturally I accepted.

I had to report to Canon's Headquarters in Reigate at 10.00 am and arrived in plenty of time to learn that it was to be an all day session and that 60 people had been selected from all around the Country. Coffee & refreshments were provided & for those who preferred a full traditional breakfast, bacon & eggs etc. was available. Only 54 people turned up and these were split into 3 groups, 20 in group A, 20 in group B, & the remaining 14, including myself, were to form group C. The day was divided into 3 equal 1½ hour sessions; the first was a lecture on the camera's controls, what they were all for, and how they all worked. This was followed by a 1 hour break for lunch & then the second lecture on 'white balance'; another break for tea & the final session was a talk & demonstration of Canon's flash system. The day ended with a fairly extensive question & answer session in the lecture theatre before the final summing-up and the inevitable goodbyes.

Unfortunately group C did the lectures in reverse order starting with flash. This was fully demonstrated & we were all encouraged to take pictures of a rather nice model using Canon's latest flash equipment. Anyone who did not have a 30D camera was able to borrow one for the day.

An excellent lunch was provided during which there was plenty of chatter about where we came from, what equipment we had etc. Later we were able to try out any of the many lenses laid out for us, I tried a 1000 mm telephoto on a monopod but not being used to such a large heavy lens found it very difficult.

People had come from all over the country, one had driven over night from Blackburn, another from Truro & a young woman had come from Cardiff. My group's afternoon session started with an excellent talk on 'White Balance' & at the end of it I was beginning to understand what it was all about. After tea & cakes it was 'How the camera works', everything was explained & demonstrated in great detail & to be quite honest at the end of it I had just about reached saturation point. After a Q & A session & a very good summing up, each of us was given a 'goody bag' containing a Canon T shirt, a very nice ball point pen, a 1G flash card and a £50 Jessops voucher.

It was a very happy but tired bunny who drove home late that evening, completely shattered but very grateful to Canon for being so generous & hospitable. While I was there I heard that Canon occasionally visit Camera Clubs giving lectures & demonstrations. I have passed what information I could gather to Caroline & maybe, if we are lucky, we might be able to host a show & talk by them someday.

And Minch says - 'Canon are Tops'



Landscape Photography (Part 2) "On Location"

By Ruari Cumming

So here we are. Settled in to our accommodation, met "mine host" & explained needs for early starts, car parking & late suppers. Perhaps even offered to take a few free shots of his establishment for him to use for advertising purposes. All this "creating a good liaison" will be advantageous if & when you need his help later during your stay. If time permits on your first evening, try a little scout round the place in your car to familiarise yourself with where the shops, pubs, car parking spots etc are. Mark these on your map, with the soft pencil, and any other useful bits of data.

The chances of the weather being absolutely ideal on your first full morning may be remote. No doubt you looked at the local weather forecast on the TV in your room both the previous night and that morning. Never mind, you can still use the time on a dull day gainfully to reconnoitre the area and in particular the "target locations" you identified as part of your planning.

Visiting each site allows you to establish the best place to park, what footwear would be most suitable, any paths or tracks to use.*/contd*

Know which fields contain ferocious livestock is an advantage as well as farm dogs that bark every time you pass them or nip at your heels. If you need to enter farm property, especially early morning, it's worth getting to know the farmer so he understands your purpose and allows you access.

Get to the spots you think will be best for your shot. Explore different positions and angles and note them down in your notebook¹. Start to work out the finer details of ideal shooting conditions. Where you want the sun to be and at what time of day? Will the state of the tide need considering if water or sand or a beach play a part in the view? Will the same shot need taking at different times of the day to capture different atmospheres? Which format, landscape or portrait, suits the shot best or will both be needed? What about composition? Will the "rule of thirds" be used or thrown out? Will the horizon cut the image in two or will you have to position it differently for greater impact? What position works best - up the hillside or down on the lower ground or even both? And so on, just more things to consider in the effort to capture a prize winning landscape. But time well spent when just the right conditions you want occur. And when they do, you may only have a very short time to capture that image, so preparation is vital.

Sometimes I find a location I hadn't pre-planned for. The weather and lighting conditions are so favourable that I just have to get stuck in and get my shots quickly. I call this "shoot & run" as I just have to shoot off as many as I feel is required, in the short time whilst the light is favourable, and still keep running to new positions for differing angles. This happened to me one morning on the Isle of Mull whilst at Duart Castle. I had just taken a long distance shot, up Loch Linnhe of snow capped Ben Nevis in the warm early morning light, when I saw a clearing sky to the east which was producing a cloud formation "to die for"! Driving like a banshee I found the castle gate still closed - it was only just 8 in the morning - so opened it, drove in closing it behind me and parked up quickly. Grabbing camera and a couple of lenses I tumbled down the side of the rock outcrop on which the castle stands. By taking & running, before the light or cloud formation deteriorated, I managed to get some 17 saleable shots.

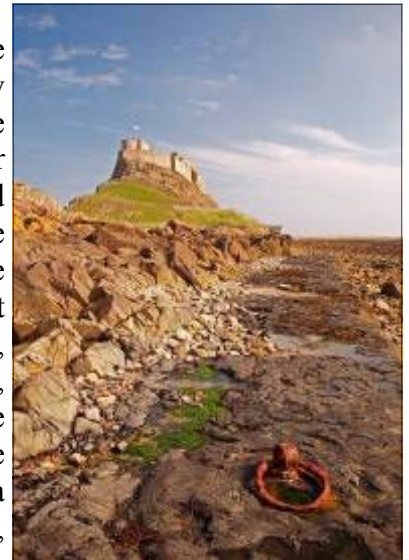
However, if the lighting is fairly stable you can take longer over shooting. A tip I learnt whilst on an Inversnaid Photography Centre² course was not to traipse around a site carrying heavy camera bag & tripod. If the place is quiet, isolated and safe enough, then dump your gear and just explore. It does give you a chance to look around, with camera & note book in hand, for suitable positions without

unnecessarily tiring yourself out. If the weather then is not ideal to shoot, I sometimes mark³ any suitable positions I find, coming back to them when conditions are right. Then I only have to carry what gear I need straight to my marked position, set up and shoot.

Once I start shooting, time will either speed by or, more likely, will drag interminably. I guess the trick is to have the patience of an angler. If the light is not just perfect, or some clouds are in the way or something is in the shot but shouldn't be, it's just a matter of time before the conditions are right. But this time waiting can be well spent. Look for and take close up shots of flowers, animals, insects lichen or other such items of interest that are just around you. These can be very rewarding and will often do well in club competitions. I use such shots as small "fill in" images for client brochure pages etc which I call "cameo" shots. It's just a matter of keeping your eyes open for something which attracts you. A flowering thistle head in the refuse dump on South Uist kept me busy for many minutes, much to the amusement of the men on the "vulture", as refuse trucks are called in the Hebrides.

But then the right moment arrives. The light and weather are starting to improve and that long awaited shot that I have been planning and reconnoitring for so long now, is beginning to look like a reality. Into the car and off to the parking place I have espied. Camera bag packed with what we need and with tripod in hand we set off for our target site.

How you take the picture is now down to all you have learnt, your experience and practice. Perhaps we can explore this more in the third & last article of this trilogy, "The Final Push", which appears in the next issue. In the meantime here is a little snap of mine, taken in September,



Lindisfarne Castle, Holy Island

¹ A small hard backed note book, about 5" x 3" & hinged along the shorter side, with a built in elastic page holder, works very well. You can use it to record details of where each shot was taken for reference when the images are downloaded.

² See BCC Newsletter No. 46 - April 2005 or <http://www.inversnaidphoto.com>

³ Shooting spots are marked with a piece wire cut from a wire coat hanger & a "flag" cut from an old rubber glove attached to it. Very basic, cheap, it works & can be left behind, if you can't collect them and at no cost.