



Newsletter

**BRACKNELL
CAMERA
CLUB**

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Editorial

By Ruari Cumming

Welcome to a new season at Bracknell Camera Club. Enclosed in your "Welcome Back" envelope is your Programme for 2008-2009, from which you will see some very interesting people will be visiting us during the season, some new

to us and others making a very welcome return.

I do admire people who have the ability to stand up in front of an audience and deliver their words in a suitable fashion without getting "stage fright" and dry up. Some will say it's a natural ability and others will say it's all down to training and practise. Over the years, whilst being part of the "corporate machine", I too have addressed groups on numerous occasions but still find it a daunting task.

I was extremely impressed with how the actress Sheila Hancock, widow of the late John Thaw, and currently Chancellor of Portsmouth University, addressed the students during their graduation ceremony. Her schedule was arduous over the two week period of both morning & afternoon graduation ceremonies. And yet after shaking hands & giving a short word of congratulation to each student she was still able to give her speech to them, demonstrating her interest, humour, candour and praise for all the effort & sacrifices they, and their parents, had made to get their degrees. Yes, it was a well scripted act but delivered from her heart in such a professional way it didn't come across as "acting". Truly inspiring and I certainly came out of the Guildhall feeling very proud of my daughter's efforts.

As you would expect, the students were delighted and relieved it was all over too, and demonstrated that in their usual fashion !



Words from our new President

By Caroline Colegate

Firstly, let me say how honoured I was to be asked to be President. I can honestly say, with hand on heart, that I had no idea that the rest of the committee were considering me for the role. It therefore came as a bolt out of the blue and I think Alan took my initial stunned silence to indicate that I wasn't keen.

Secondly, I'd like to say a personal thank you to Minch for the excellent and most professional way he has presided over the club for the last 5 years. Of course some committee agenda items require lengthy discussion and Minch had a very special talent in listening to the often animated thoughts of others for a long time and then, in a most calm way, summed up the situation and added his own thoughts. He will be a hard act to follow but it's a challenge to which I am looking forward to.

I think BCC is lucky to have so many very dedicated members, both on and off the committee. So many people put in lots of hours to ensure all our events are well run and enjoyable. I often think that sometimes our events are so well run that many of the membership don't realise how much effort has gone into planning them !

BCC is also fortunate to have members willing to take on committee posts. I am not saying that our recent change of treasurer and secretary was easy to fill but we did get volunteers rather than blank spaces, which is so often the case with other clubs. Over the years I have seen clubs fold because nobody can be found to take on committee roles. Many of the clubs I visit have one or two members doing everything. The net result is that those one or two members are struggling to cope while the rest of the membership sit idle and complain.

So why does BCC have willing volunteers?

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I believe it's due to being part of a successful club and people genuinely want to help make it even more successful. People want to take part in something successful but don't want to get involved in something that's floundering. I therefore urge you all to 'belong' to BCC, not only by paying your subscriptions but also by helping in whatever way you can. No matter how small your contribution I can assure you your skills and talents whether it be in photography, organising or helping out on club nights will not go unnoticed by your new President.

Long may BCC go from strength to strength, I for one feel immensely proud to be the President of the best club in the Southern Federation, and I say this not because I *think* it is true but because I *know* that it is true.

PORTFOLIO EVENINGS

Brian Steptoe and Caroline Colegate will be running two evenings at Coopers Hill Centre for members to bring some of their images for discussion with the aim of encouraging development of an individual's style of photography, without the constraints of looking for competition marks. The aim would be to draw out what participants are looking for as a direction to go with their photography. We would be encouraging discussion of images and perhaps opening member's eyes to other ways of looking at pictures rather than the conventional club judging approach.

To participate, we would like attendees to bring up to eight images of about A4 minimum size each evening, mounted sufficiently rigidly for display together on one of the club's print stands. The work may or may not be themed, but should be your recent images and not include any already submitted to club competitions. For example, you could bring some images that satisfy you but which you would not think suitable for a typical club judge. This will give the best opportunity to give feedback on your current photography. Brian and Caroline will give a critique of the set as a whole. Discussion by attendees on each other's work will be encouraged, within the limits of time available.

Presentation in print form is strongly recommended, but if any attendees would prefer digital projection of their work, can they please bring their images as a set of large thumbnails which can all be viewed together on the screen (in a similar way to a set of prints on display together). Please do not bring both prints and images for projection. Each participant's images will be displayed together, one participant's set at a time.

The same people would be the participants in the second evening, showing images which hopefully take

on board some of the comments from the first session (in fact several could be the same images as before if they wish, with other images changed or new ones added)

There will be a limit of 20 to those bringing work, but other members can attend as observers if they wish.

The dates of the evenings will be Tuesday 25 Nov 2008 and Tuesday 3 March 2009. Attendees will be asked to contribute £1 per person to cover room hire costs.

A list will be put up at the club at the start of the season for members wishing to attend these evenings.

These portfolio evenings are additional events to the "Developing work to a Theme" evenings.



Graduate Photography Shows visit

By Brian Steptoe

Eight intrepid members of the club ventured into the Indian restaurant flavoured Brick Lane E.1 on 14 June. We visited the final degree shows of students from eight college BA courses plus one at a lower BTEC level. Our first destination was Block F, T1 to T5, which we assumed had been named by an ex-military person employed by the former Truman's brewery which had occupied the site. First we saw the BTEC level work from South East Essex College, suitable for that level but noticeably less interesting than the BA work from Swansea, Gloucester, Kent and Thames Valley, Reading colleges. Swansea showed output from BA arts and photojournalism courses, with some impressive images, but were generally less inspiring than those some of us saw in 2007. A rooftop panorama of Polaroid's of San Francisco taken on a Polaroid 20x24 inch camera in 2008 was shown compared with that, taken from the same spot, by Muybridge 130 years previously.

Next came Amersham and Wycombe College, with their star pupil Elizabeth Gordon who won the Channel 4 competition early in 2008. Then a Gloucester and Kent University student displays which shared one of the rooms in the block. These were much more impressive, particularly with their use of supporting props. Coloured benches matching two dreamy landscapes, three images on Dungeness set up on a corrugated aluminium fence/contd

and a complete dressing room set-up with photos of two drag queens really caught our eye.



Welcoming notice at the 1001 café

Lunch at the 1001 Café, which, from their doorway notice, had been expecting us, followed. We nearly passed by the mixed course show from Havering College, mostly design and fashion as seen from the street, but with photography also featured. We were all very impressed here by the



Touring Uzbekistan and the Silk Road

By Peter Ellis

It could very well be the case that having read the title of this article your first and very reasonable thought was “where’s that ?” followed by the equally good question “why ?”. I say this with some degree of confidence as this was the universal reaction when friends and family were told of the holiday my wife and I had booked for September 2007. If you did ask yourself the first question you would be with the majority of the population of this country (me included at that time) who would be unable to stick a pin in an atlas to locate this country. So, let’s start by saying that the Republic of Uzbekistan is in Central Asia and has the distinction of being one of only two doubly landlocked countries in the world (remember that for your next pub quiz) and shares its borders with nearly all of the so-called ‘Stans, i.e. Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Turkmenistan. Most of this region had been absorbed into the old Czarist Russian empire, piece by piece, throughout the nineteenth century. After the Bolshevik Revolution, Stalin sought to dilute Muslim solidarity in the region by creating new, smaller, countries and as part of that process Uzbekistan came into existence as late as 1924. Its population today is 28.2 million and its landmass is nearly twice that of the UK.

As for the “why”, here the finger of blame can firmly be pointed at Dan Cruickshank, the architectural historian and BBC presenter who is

quality of the many student photobooks created by blurb.com.

Afternoon visits to shows by Falmouth and Farnham showed us some brilliant images and we all felt these were the ‘best in shows’ and a suitable finale.

We compared our thoughts over drinks in a nearby Brick Lane bar, noting that the vast majority of the work was in colour, although there was one set of lith prints and one of ambrotypes, plus a few traditional black & whites hidden amongst all the colour work.



At the 1001 café, with Peter Ellis away on walkabout

This Newsletter.....

is published six times a season, from August to May. Contributions are always welcome and always needed. Articles, with pictures, should ideally be of a photographic nature. If you have a contribution to make, however large or small, then please see the Editor for more details. Without articles from members this “much enjoyed” newsletter will fold. Thank you !



Independence Square, Tashkent

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most readily recognized on television by his ever present panama hat and his frequent use of the words “golly” and “gosh”. In 2005 the BBC broadcast his series “Around the World in Eighty Treasures” and in one of the programs he visited the Uzbek cities of Samarkand and Bukhara. These were two of the major crossroads towns on the Silk Road, the trade route that connected China with the Mediterranean for over a thousand years. The television program included some stunning photography of the mosques, minarets and madrassahs, and I was hooked. I wanted to go there.

Any thoughts of immediate travel were squashed by news of internal unrest and violence in the Andijan province of the country so Uzbekistan as a travel destination went to the back of the wish list for a couple of years. In early 2007 it surfaced again when we came across a 10 day tour visiting both Samarkand and Bukhara together with the old city of Khiva and the capital, Tashkent. The Foreign & Commonwealth Office didn't have any worrying advisory travel notices in force so we signed up.

The Uzbekistan Airways direct flight from Heathrow to Tashkent was 6.5 hours, the food was good and the cabin service was friendly if somewhat relaxed. Upright seats and fastened belts seemed to



Barak Khan Madrassah, Tashkent

be optional when taking off or landing. Baggage retrieval at Tashkent was somewhat protracted, immigration controls were relatively painless if a little grumpy but bear in mind this is ex-USSR we're talking about.

Tashkent is a large city with a population of 2.3 million which made it the fourth largest in the old USSR after Moscow, St Petersburg and Kiev. Not particularly photogenic, much of its architecture is in the old Soviet monumental style bisected by eight lane boulevards but in many areas the parks and green spaces bring to mind southern European/Mediterranean cities. Green uniformed police every few hundred meters remind you, however, of the country's history and its present authoritarian nature.

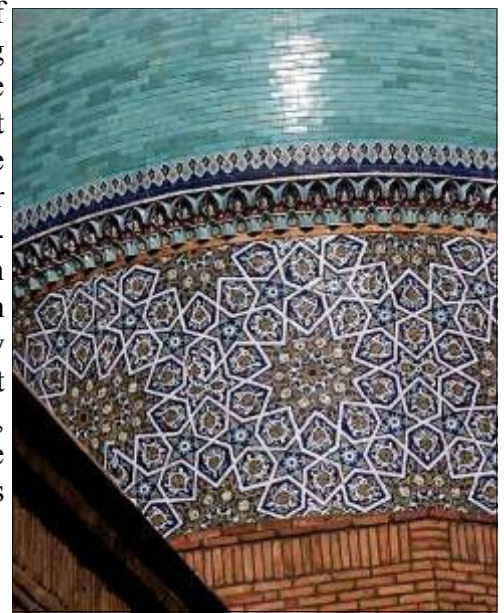
In the city, western style of dress is very much the norm and the mixed ethnicity of the Uzbeks is very apparent with Persian, Mongolian and Russian faces being seen on the streets. The city was badly hit by an earthquake in 1966 and the rebuilt Tashkent is what you see today. The city boasts a truly impressive metro system, all marble and



Khast-Imam Square, Tashkent

chandeliers, but here again the police presence is very noticeable and taking photographs is absolutely forbidden. Taking a ride on the metro, groups of westerners are openly viewed with friendly curiosity by the locals.

Independence Square was once the largest city square in the Soviet Union and must have been perfect for those grand military displays. Now it is mostly well-manicured parkland with sprinkling fountains surrounded by very modern and quite attractive public offices. In contrast, old Tashkent can be found with its baked-mud alleys and near windowless houses to the west of the city, especially near Khast-Imam Square, the site of the 16th century Barak Khan Madrassah and the Tellya Sheikh Mosque first built in the same era. This was our first sight of the stunning peacock-blue tile work that was to become a familiar sight throughout our stay in Uzbekistan and especially in our next destination, perhaps the most famous city of the Silk Road - Samarkand



Tellya Sheikh Mosque, Tashkent

Peter Ellis will continue his travelogue in the next issue when he tells us of Samarkand