

Newsletter

**BRACKNELL
CAMERA
CLUB**

Issue
Number

69

January
2009



Editorial

By Ruari Cumming

Welcome to this, our fourth issue of the season and what a bumper issue it is too. I can't remember when we had such a myriad of items for your delectation!

However, the price you pay is that the editorial coffers are virtually dry and

more articles are now urgently needed, without which you would have to suffer some inane stories from our resident ghost writers, the keyboard bashers known as Marcia Trubshaw and Hamish MacWattle!

So do knock something out soon. 400 words, plus the title & your photo nicely fills a column, whilst a page is only 800 words. We do like the subject to be related to or have a bias towards photography. A few images to illustrate your article is ideal & we do insist on your photo to head up the column - as can be seen in this issue. Ideally the article would be a MS Word document but please supply any supporting images (600x400 pixels) separately (not embedded in the document). Just note where, in your article, they are to go. Ask me if you would like any further details.

You may be interested to know that both Jeff and myself have now had our "judges baptism" at local clubs. Whilst such an event, first time around is somewhat daunting, I personally found it both interesting and informative. It was another way to meet like minded people and to see what sort of images they produced. Subjects seen spanned a vast range of "club type" images. Although I do have to say I saw one image which clearly was trying to put across a message. I was delighted to find out later that I had not only interpreted the photographers' message correctly, rewarding it with a justified 9, but that my verbal support for it, and more like it, was met with much approval from the audience! So it may be a long and hard path which I now tread, but if that road opens up new views, aspects and images not seen in club competitions before, then I will be delighted. In fact I am waiting for the words "I don't understand this image" to form in my mind! Then I will know I have found the challenge I aspire to.

South Hill Park Project

By Jeff Lawrence

I'm sure you all know South Hill Park as a premier Arts Centre set in a historic house. What you may not know, is that the grounds around this Grade II listed building are also of historic

interest & as such Bracknell Forest Borough Council (BFBC) has been awarded a £2 million grant by the Heritage Lottery Fund to restore them to their former glory. While they won't be able to turn the clock back completely, as this would mean removing roads and houses, it will still be possible to improve many features which have deteriorated over the years, including the lake & woodland, and to restore some of the fine views from the house. Plans to do this are already underway although physical work won't actually start until the end of 2009, at the earliest.

I discovered this at a meeting of the newly formed Bracknell Creative Arts Network (part of the national Voluntary Arts Network) where I represented our club's interests & offered our services to the attendees. This was taken up by Helen Tranter, BFBC's Head of Culture & Visual Environment, who suggested we might be able to document the South Hill Park grounds restoration, suggesting I contact Richard Scrivener, who is managing the project. In December, Richard gave me a brief tour of the grounds & explained what he was hoping to achieve. We agreed the value of a photographic record of project progress.

So, I would like to start a club project as soon as possible to capture images of the grounds, covering especially its landscape & natural history, as well as the reconstruction process, from a photographer's point of view. The project will probably run for around two years which will allow us to amass a collection of images which we can develop into a book, or an exhibition, or whatever is appropriate. Some of you may already have pictures to contribute (I do, myself, though I can't say much for their quality!). Would anyone who is interested please add their name to the appropriate sheet in the Workshop Book or contact me directly.





RPS Digital Projected Images Exhibition

By Eileen Riley

I am not a member of the RPS, but this does not stop me from attending events organised by the Society's Thames Valley and Southern Regions. On 7 December 2008, Southern Region held its

AGM at Sparsholt near Winchester. The day's event also included an opportunity for members to bring along up to four prints for exhibiting on the day, and in the afternoon we saw the slides and digitally projected images selected for the 2008 RPS International Projected Images Exhibition.

We arrived in time for morning coffee, and the walls of the room were already adorned with many high quality prints. We began with the AGM, chaired by the regional organiser Mike Jones. Some of you will remember that he came to Bracknell a while ago to show us some Photoshop tips and presented some of his wonderful prints of flamenco dancers.

Mike took most of the morning for the AGM, using it to report on the group's activities and financial position. But he also took time to listen to feedback from the meeting about what they liked and didn't like about events in the past year, and to ideas for the future. It was worthwhile, and I think most people learned something.

After the AGM, Mike announced which of the displayed prints were his favourites, and the photographer then talked about the images. With about 25 people present, we could walk around, look at the prints, and chat to each other about them. Then the rest of us had the chance to say which prints took our eye, and again the photographer would explain about the circumstances and technical aspects of the work. Subject matter varied greatly, with some wonderful wildlife images, landscapes, abstract works and more.

We sat around chatting over our packed lunches, followed by tea or coffee before proceeding to the RPS International Projected Images Exhibition. The exhibition included two classes, Open and Wildlife, both for slides and digital images. Of course the standard was high, especially for the winners of certificates or medals, with many countries represented. Congratulations to the BCC members whose images were selected! But, in my opinion, some of the images selected for this exhibition would not have scored a Perfect 10 in our club competitions. Jeff Lawrence, who was present, may not agree with me! The exhibition is open to all, not just to RPS members. So give it some thought. All the information is at www.rps.org.



Match an Image Competition

By Anne Eckersley

In mid-December, Bruce, Sue and I represented our club at Alton with 36 pre-chosen images, and detailed instructions from Jeff how to get there and then what we needed to do to take part in this, the second (Bracknell won it last year !) annual "Match an Image" competition with Alton and Aldershot & Farnham camera clubs.

This was a fun evening, each club taking it in turn to select an image, which the other two then had to match, within thirty seconds, from their own collection of 36 images, where necessary justifying their choice of picture. The judge, after a fair amount of heckling from everyone involved, particularly Sue, decides whether there is indeed enough or sometimes any similarity between the pictures, before choosing a "best" image from those he agrees a match for.

Each opening picture scores one point, each matched picture gets one point and so does the best image. A maximum score in any round is two points - the opening picture does not also get a match point.

We found the place with very little trouble, the map given to us was good. Which was lucky - do you know you can get a SAT NAV to talk to you in practically any language or accent? Croatian isn't particularly easy to understand, so the map was invaluable. We were in high spirits by the time we got there, nice & early.

The club room was packed. Steve (who was at Oakley) had written a great programme and sat poised with his computer. The Alton Chair introduced the judge. A quick run at the rules, and down to business. Firstly, I should say they were certainly an interesting & well chosen selection of images entrusted to us. We sort of assumed, looking at them, that Jeff knew something about Alton and Aldershot & Farnham that we didn't, and frankly we were worried !

But we opened as suggested with the potato masher. It was matched with a rope ladder and a building. That sort of set the tone for the evening. The building got the bonus but we were undaunted. A picture of a tooth and a dentist drill followed, we decided some people might have been taking pictures just for the competition. Surely it hadn't been shown in a quarterly. Well it might well have had lesser mortals stumped, but

...../contd

we had Nightmare at Bedtime. You know the one where the girl had her mouth open. We used it, got a match and won the bonus for best image that time round.

We used "Feet" when one of the other clubs put up a still life of some toys with a ghost. We argued they were ghosts' feet. The judge agreed we could have a match. Unfortunately he didn't feel the same way about the rusty chain we matched to the circuit board. Sue and I aren't engineers, how could we have known it was something to do with Bluetooth. But Bruce argued passionately for that one - pointing out of course there was a link. In fact there were lots. Couldn't the judge see - it was a chain.

Image in the sand was our next opener, the others struggled, so much so, neither were given a match and we won the bonus too. Lucky because on the next round I'm afraid we rather sacrificed Flying Legends. It had a yellow tip - as did the match picture the others put up. Or rather picture of matches. The yellow was very close, really. As colours went it was a perfect match - sorry, couldn't resist that! We were all surprised the judge didn't agree.

Three ducks bottoms, no it's all right that one wasn't us. We matched it with the thirsty avocet. The other team put up a picture of the US Air force Thunderbirds display team. The judge gave us both a match. But when it came to best image, it started to get ugly...Sue started to heckle. Absolutely essential parts of any nature picture, she told the judge, were the catchlights in an animal or bird's eye. As the ducks had their heads under the water they were clearly missing. And there were four planes in the picture. Anyone knows good composition should have an uneven number of subjects. Sue was impressive, she knew all the technical merits of rules of thirds, odd numbers of subjects, little pieces of red etc. etc... We were proud of her. Unfortunately the planes got the bonus. The judge said he liked planes.

The next team took this at face value and opened with a plane picture. This one had two planes in it, doesn't anyone else know about composition. Actually they were Extra 300s to be precise - two of the Blades. We put up the Blackbird. If we'd been playing paper, scissors, rock we would have cleared up.

A dead, plucked chicken, we matched with Debbie's snowy egret - after all it was the same colour and both were birds, even if one was dead. The other team's link was more spurious. They put up a picture but it wasn't a bird, but their argument was because the chicken had been plucked and was technically naked it couldn't be compared to a fully dressed bird.

Millennium Bridge and Tate Modern we matched with a table full of medical instruments. Don't scoff, the lines did it, we got a match and won the bonus. We held our own and at half time all three teams were equal on 21 points.

But club honour was at stake, so we had one of those things Americans have, you know a brainstorm. Actually we had chocolate digestives. Do you know Alton have two biscuits with their mid-point refreshments? Anyway as a result of our brainstorming, well Sue's actually, we should ditch the rest of your openers and open with our strongest pictures even if others could match them easily. So we opened the second half with "The Look." It became clear quite early on things were getting harder. Our lily petal was matched with a picture of a cat that had clearly been through a tumble dryer. Yes - we laughed too, but the judge's wife likes cats and she was there. The cat got the bonus. The judge tried to make us believe his life wouldn't be worth living if he'd done anything else. We matched the trumpet player to a motorbike. His trumpet resembled the exhaust of the bike. Well it did if you were sitting where we were. Strangely the other club put up a photographer in an all-in-one pink outfit. I think it must have been an in-house joke because the judge didn't get it either.

Red Square at night we matched to a lighthouse - it was the shape of the towers what done it. Our graffiti picture brought out sunsets. The motorbikes we matched to hot-air balloons, both were forms of transport & covered in sponsorship. We matched cycling to rugby on the basis both were sports & took place in bad weather. We matched our jeans picture to a row of military badges, winning best image for that one too.

And the communion wine could have been Madeira. So we matched it to an elephant in a muddy hole. The judge didn't think the Flanders and Swann reference sufficient & didn't give us the points.

In the "Eyes of the Beholder", we matched to the other two's pictures of birds on the basis they could have been his lunch. It seemed the judge's wife didn't like cats that much so we didn't get a match. It was a shame we'd used our cat picture really because the next picture up was a man, with blackheads, as the judge pointed out, gazing straight at the camera over the head of a rather cross-eyed cat. We matched that one with 32. Yep! - The gazelles! The cat picture took on a whole new meaning..... They probably won't use it again, our reasoned arguments nearly brought the house down. When the judge couldn't cope with our image on the screen any more, he gave us a match AND best image.

The final results were Alton 40, Aldershot & Farnham 42 but we won with 44 points, a massive two point lead. What an evening! Thank you for asking us to go - it was most enjoyable. We look forward to being asked out to the next external competition - soon !

4 Go Explore Flickr

By Ellen Pirie



Some of you may not yet have come across Flickr so I thought it might be helpful to provide a brief introduction and explain a bit about how you can use it and some of my own experience using it.

At its simplest level Flickr is a photo-sharing website enabling you to let your friends and family see your latest pictures – or maybe even just keep a back-up copy of your photos. However if you look further you'll find that Flickr offers much more – an incredible interactive resource providing inspiration, amusement, competitions, advice and friendship to name just a few.

Flickr is probably the best well known photo-sharing website worldwide and now claims to host more than 3 billion photos! (If you want the full history of Flickr go check the Wikipedia article here at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flickr>)

You can have a basic account on Flickr for free – this limits you to upload 100MB of photos per month – which is fine to start with however I'd recommend upgrading to a Flickr Pro account which costs approx £16-17 a year (it varies based on the \$ exchange rate) and provides unlimited uploads (although there is a max size of 20MB per photo). The Pro account has lots of other extra nice features which I think you'd benefit from after your first few weeks.

However let's go back to the start – to join Flickr you go to www.flickr.com and sign-up for an account. If you already have a Yahoo account you can use this. Most people sign-up using some sort of nickname rather than their real name and I'd recommend that you also do this for privacy/security reasons. You'll have to provide a valid email address but you can set this up so that it's private and won't be visible to people – which I'd also recommend. When you've set up your account look for an option at the bottom of the page called 'Your Account' – go into this and you can set up your profile information and all your privacy and permission settings.

After you've signed in I suggest you go and have a look round Flickr, there are lots of different ways to explore the photos that have been made available publicly. You'll see on the top menu bar a number of options, one of these is Groups. Groups are fundamental to Flickr, there are millions of different groups on Flickr covering an incredible range of topics. You can view the photos in a group but if you want to add a photo to a group or comment on a photo you'll need to join. This is usually very straightforward – just click the 'join' link that you'll see in blue text. Sometimes you'll get a message that your application to join has been sent for review and approval by the group owner – this is because they've set up a closed group and want to control who has access. Depending on their rules you may or may not be accepted for membership.

You'll generally also see guidelines for each group explaining their rules for posting and whether they expect you to comment on other people's pictures. Generally it's seen to be polite that if you post a photo to a group hoping to receive comments and feedback on it from other people then you should be prepared to do the same for them. It's also a great way of getting people to come and look at your photos.

I said before that there are an incredible variety of groups. Here's a selection of just a few so you can see what I mean.

- Photos taken in and around Bracknell at:- www.flickr.com/groups/bracknell
- Photos of the British Countryside at:- www.flickr.com/groups/britishcountryside
- Photos of ears at:- www.flickr.com/groups/ears
- Photos taken to show Depth of Field at:- www.flickr.com/groups/DoF
- Monthly scavenger hunt – there's a list of 20 things you have to find and photograph – there's a voting system to pick the best ones at:- www.flickr.com/groups/monthlyhunt
- Photoshop Elements Advice – often with links to tutorials on particular topics. at:- www.flickr.com/groups/pse - see screenshot over

...../contd



- New photographer assignments and advice go to:- www.flickr.com/groups/newbiesdoyourhomework
- Photoshop Tennis – you make an edit to a picture, then someone else makes a change, then someone else and so on until everyone gives up. Very silly game but fun at:- www.flickr.com/groups/pstennis
- Photos taken with a Pentax K200D camera at:- www.flickr.com/groups/k200d
- Photos from the London Wetland centre at:-www.flickr.com/groups/london_wetland
- 365 Days – take a photo every day for a year at:-www.flickr.com/groups/365days. In a moment of madness I started doing this last year, with a self portrait, only to realise just how hard it was – but I did make it through to the end – with some

terrible pictures and some that I really liked and some that were completely bonkers! – see some examples below



Most groups will have discussions – these will sometimes set specific challenges within the topic – or will be a request for help or advice. Taking part in these is entirely up to you but can be good fun and useful.

Another option on your top menu bar is Explore – if you select this it'll take you to a selection of 500 of the most interesting photos uploaded onto Flickr in the last 7 days. Many people hope to see their photos on Explore at some point. Exactly how photos are selected for Explore is a bit mysterious – it's based on some algorithm in the Flickr site. Lots of people viewing your photo is a factor as well as it having a variety of interesting tags.

Flickr uses “tagging” a lot – many of you may already use Tags within Photoshop – and it's the same idea. In fact Flickr will import your tags when you upload a photo and will automatically add them to your photo – unless you tell it not to – which you can. Some groups will require you to add a particular tag to any photo you upload to their group.

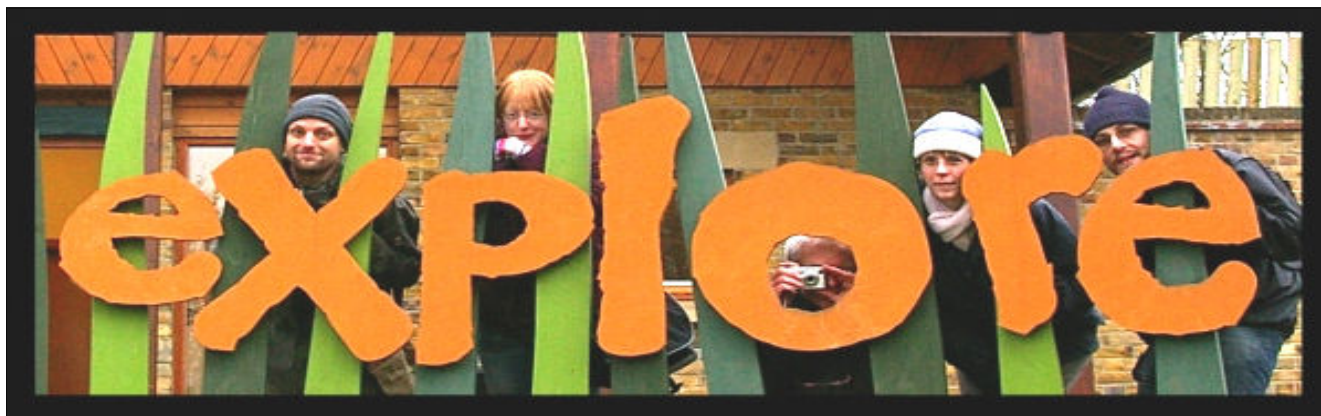
Tags are another way to search Flickr – you can see the most popular tags if you select the drop down option under the Explore main menu option. Or you can enter in pretty much any word you can think of and it will find photos tagged with that word – it's good fun to combine strange tags and see what it finds!

You will also see that you have an option called Contacts on the top menu – to start with this will be empty. If you know other people using Flickr you can add them as Contacts – this gives you a quick way of finding them and their photos. However you can also ask new people to become contacts – if you see that someone is taking photos you really like, you

...../contd



can ask if you can add them as a contact – this will give you a shortcut to all new photos that they post. Sometimes they will add you as their contact. This can be a way to make friends on Flickr – by regularly viewing and commenting on their photos you can get to know them and maybe even arrange to meet up with them as I did with a group last year at the London Wetlands Centre – see photo below.



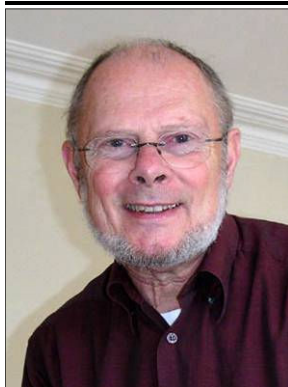
One of the key concepts to understand with Flickr is the difference between private content and public content. You have control over any photo you upload and can decide whether to share it with just family and/or friends or whether to make it visible publicly. Some of you may be concerned about copyright and that is where you need to understand that although you can put a copyright notice on all your photos you can't stop people copying anything that appears in Flickr – or on any public website. So you need to make your own decision about how you feel about this.

When you upload your photos you can set the privacy level for each photo. There are various ways to upload photos to Flickr – you can either browse to an individual photo on your computer and upload it or there's an option to upload six at a time or you can download a whizzy tool called the Flickr Uploader which enables you to upload multiple photos at once. See the 'Upload' option at the bottom of the page to find out more.

When you upload photos it is helpful to organise them into what Flickr calls 'Sets' – you can choose your own definition for a set. It could be all the photos you took on a particular trip, or it could be pictures of a particular type or topic. This helps both you and your friends and contacts to more easily navigate your photos. An individual photo can be in several sets.

There are many other things that you can do with Flickr and I don't think I can possibly cover them all here. If you don't already use it then I'd strongly recommend you go and explore it. Some people get addicted – at least for a while – but there are many worse things to get addicted to ☺

It would be possible for us to set up a closed group for Bracknell Camera Club members to share photos, get feedback from each other and maybe even run some less formal challenges or competitions. If people think this would be worth trying then I'd be happy to help set it up. Please let me know what you think by e-mailing me at ellen_pirie@hotmail.com.



Portfolio Session 1

By Peter Handford

On Tuesday evening, 25th November, 14 of us attended the first meeting of the Portfolio workshop run by Brian Steptoe and Caroline Colegate. The brief was fairly open and it was interesting to see how different members of

the group responded to this open approach.

Questions like "Where am I going with my photography?", "How can I improve my images?" were raised and discussed in a non judgemental way.

It also proved really interesting to see these collections of photos presented by their authors and

being discussed by them.

Their portfolios came to life during these discussions. The whole group were encouraged to contribute which I felt was good and enjoyed by all.

It says a lot for Brian and Caroline that their flexibility of approach, wisdom and experience created a really good workshop. Their reactions to the material presented proved to be complementary, giving a broad reaction to what was shown to them.

For myself I found that I learned a lot just selecting photographs for the evening and deciding what I wanted to say even before the meeting began, yet alone what I gained from the feedback!

So thank you Brian and Caroline for a really good session. I found I gained more from it than I do from a typical competition evening.