

Newsletter

**BRACKNELL
CAMERA
CLUB**

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Editorial

By Ruari Cumming

So, I hear you ask, where is he that he has to burden our esteemed President with handing out the Newsletters ? Mind you, she is better looking than he is! Well you know, on that I have to agree with you. So where do I begin ?

Well actually I'm on Colonsay, in the Hebrides, but more of that later. This is the last issue of our Newsletter for this season - it comes back again in August when you are all invited to rejoin for another fun packed season. I have had a sneak look at next years programme and it tells me I am right. But more on that at the AGM.

I was particularly amused by Jeff Lawrence's article on page 2. It is reminiscent of those call centres you occasionally have to spend a small fortune on 0870 calls to get the service provider to do the job you have paid them to do but due to a severe case of indolence they have failed. And once you do get through, having paid 8p a minute to listen to some ghastly pop music from groups called the "Brass Necks" or the "Chicken Wishbones", you are then presented with a person of indeterminate gender who becomes extremely annoyed with you because you don't appear to be able to understand his/her pronunciation of the English language. Yes - it's all "Techno Babble" to me too !!

We are even blessed with not one but two pieces from our illustrious Chairman.

It seems I finish every season with the Newsletter containing a story of lavatorial humour. Well many said how much they enjoyed last year's story so page 2 has another !!

And finally, although my professional photography centres on the Hebrides, it was well founded on my continuing passion for such a wild, romantic, isolated and mystical place. Whilst my article (page 3) is not strictly of a photographic nature, it does embody my love of the Hebrides. And if you want to see more of this island, its' people and the life they lead, then see my next presentation, "The Island Dream" here on 4th March 2010.



Bracknell Camera Club Member Survey 2009

By Alan Fretten

First of all I would like to thank all of the people who took the time to complete the survey. There were 59 completed survey forms in total. The results were encouraging and would seem to indicate that the club members, or at least those who participated, are happy with the way that the club is running. To summarise the results:-

Most people thought that the balance of lecture evenings, print competitions and digital competitions was about right. The quality of the speakers was thought to be excellent or good, judges faired less well, the majority thought they were good but a significant percentage thought they were only average. The topics that people wanted more of were Portraiture, Practical Techniques, "How I got this picture", Macro and more Members nights.

The quality of the equipment that we use (sound system, digital projector) scored mainly excellent or good. The accommodation scored average to good with the most complaints being that it was too cramped and too hot and stuffy. With the increase in membership this has become a problem that we recognise but may be difficult to fix without significantly increasing the clubs costs. The method of showing prints also came under criticism and we will be looking at ways of overcoming this in time for next season.

Two thirds of respondents have attended one of the club workshops in the past year & most of you thought they were good or excellent. The main reasons for not attending workshops were too busy, already fully booked and one respondent said "I can't be bothered!!" Future suggested topics were Photoshop, Using flash, Lightroom, Macro & Close-up, RPS/PAGB awards, Elements, Getting to know your DSLR, A/V and Portfolio. There were not too many volunteers to run future workshops though.

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On the question of how people assess their own Photography Skills there was a fair degree of modesty, I feel with most falling somewhere in the middle. Landscapes, Travel, Plants and flowers and Candid Portraits were the most popular subjects that members like to photograph.

Most people knew who the committee are and what they did, to help those who didn't know a sheet has been added to the notice board with mug shots and job titles; these are also on the website.

One very pleasing statistic was the high percentage of people who have joined recently who said that they had been made to feel welcome when they first arrived. This is something that the committee strive to ensure happens so it is good to see that it is working. 100% of respondents said that they would recommend the club to others.

Other key comments were that some people thought that the range of ability in the Standard Class was too wide and we will be looking to perhaps having an Intermediate category in addition to the Standard and Advanced categories for next season. People wanted more club outings especially with the more experienced photographers and there was a request for more photo critique either in person or via the web. Hopefully the sessions that Caroline and Brian run and the BCC Flickr website that Ellen Pirie has started will address this latter need.

As with any survey the results will be flawed by the way that the questions were phrased or interpreted or perhaps we just didn't ask the right questions. That said, I think what we got out of this survey is that by and large we are getting it right, there were no real surprises and the things that did get highlighted were things that we already knew were an issue.

The full results can be downloaded from the website at www.bracknell-camera-club.co.uk/survey2009.pdf

cylinder mowers, brought us to a side gate into the castle precincts. On our right I espied a public toilet, standing alone at the edge of a grassed area near the car park. It was a wooden structure, painted light blue, I guess for ease of recognition.

I shot off towards it, with Bruce hard on my heels. In I went and stood at the one and only urinal. In came Bruce, still wearing his rucksack/camera bag ensemble, with tripod strapped athwartships beneath it. Finding me occupying the only stall, he was forced to enter the one & only cubicle.

Getting in seemed straight forward but turning around to conduct an exit was clearly a problem. I listened to all manner of bangs, knockings, curses and expletives as he attempted, I presume, to turn himself, backpack with attached tripod, through 180 degrees. After what appeared to be several minutes, but must have only been seconds, he announced he had no alternative but to resort to unbuckling several straps, webbings & buckles in order to release his rucksack enough to allow him to exit!

This whole event, shielded from my eyes by the wall of the cubicle, was just a "picture in sounds", causing me to get a fit of the giggles and losing all interest in what I was supposed to be doing!

Jeff's Eighteen Rules for Good Riting

By Jeff Lawrence

For those members considering submitting an article to the Newsletter I would like to offer the following advice:



An encounter with a tripod

By Ruari Cumming

As some of you will recall, Bruce and I visited Northumbria in September 2006. During our visit to many coastal castles, I am reminded of the events surrounding a particular visit



to a public loo.

We parked successfully, in a road opposite Warkworth Castle, not realising we could have used the castle car park "for free". Anyway, a short walk past the cricket ground, where the grounds man was busy cutting the grass with one of those "sit up on"

1. Each pronoun agrees with their antecedent.
2. Just between you and I, case is important.
3. Verbs has to agree with their subject.
4. Watch out for irregular verbs which has cropped up into our language.
5. Don't use no double negatives.
6. A writer mustn't shift your point of view.
7. When dangling, don't use participles.
8. Join clauses good like a conjunction should.
9. And don't use conjunctions to start sentences.
10. Don't use a run-on sentence you got to punctuate it.
11. About sentence fragments.
12. In letters themes reports articles and stuff like that we use commas to keep strings apart.
13. Don't use commas, which aren't necessary.
14. Its important to use apostrophe's right.

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15. Don't abbrev.
 16. Check to see if you any words out.
 17. In my opinion I think that the author when he is writing should not get into the habit of making use of too many unnecessary words which he does not really need.
 18. Then, of course, there's that old one: Never use a preposition to end a sentence with.
- Last but not least, avoid clichés like the plague.

(with grateful acknowledgment to the Maths Department of Nottingham University)

BCC Specialist Groups

By Alan Fretten

Something that I have been interested in setting up at Bracknell Camera Club for a while now are some specialist groups concentrating on a particular area of photography. To a certain extent we have already started this with Brian Steptoe's working to a theme and Britishness projects and the South Hill Park Project that Jeff Lawrence has organised. But I would like there to be more of these groups. With a membership of over 100 and regular attendances at meetings of over 60, we cannot cater for the more practical aspects of photography on a normal club evening, the logistics will not allow it. So the idea is that they are organised alongside and in addition to the normal club activities, organised by any club members and not the committee & they should be self-financing.

A few examples would be audio visual, portraiture, motorsport, wildlife etc. The activities would be organised by the group and could consist of outings to places or events, projects and maybe sessions to discuss the pictures taken and techniques. A group can meet as frequently as they see fit. You do not have to be an "expert" to set up a group and that is important, just interested in the topic and a good organiser.

Neil Attard and myself are already thinking about setting up a studio portrait specialist group, the idea would be to arrange shoots for small numbers of photographers (no more than 4 at each session) with professional models, perhaps even hiring a professional studio for a day or half a day and organising professional tuition.

Anyone who is interested in forming a specialist group then please outline your idea and we will announce it on a club evening & on the website. I will even set up a forum for your group on the new club forum.



First Impressions of Island Life

by Ruari Cumming

I was just 11 years old when I first visited Colonsay, with my parents, in 1957.

We had such an enjoyable holiday, we came back the next three years as well, before I went on to Nautical College. My mother was born in Dunoon, moving to the south when she was still a child and my father, whilst born in London, was of Scottish extraction, his ancestors coming from Busby, just outside Glasgow.

I suppose you would have called us a typical "South of England" family in those days. We enjoyed, and took for granted, the amenities available to us in that part of Great Britain. We had no thought of life in the more remote parts of the country. The previous year we had our holiday at Fort William, where I first fell in love with Scotland. Even during that visit, I don't think any of us realised what the islander's "way of life" was really like.

Our journey from Reading to Colonsay took nearly 30 hours and involved ten changes of transport. The last few legs being from Gourock, through the Kyles of Bute to East Loch Tarbet on the old, 1912 built, SS "Saint Columba". After sailing from Gourock, we descended into the restaurant for our "silver service" breakfast, finishing in time to be on deck again to see Dunoon, the birthplace of my mother and always a very emotional moment for her.



Ruari & mother enjoy the sea air

From East Loch Tarbet, a coach took us across the peninsula to West Loch Tarbet, where the TSMV "Lochiel" was to take us on to Colonsay, via Gigha, Craighouse on Jura and Port Askaig on Islay. On arrival at Scalasaig, the "Lochiel" dropped her anchor and



Dad (seated) playing the "Laird"

alongside came a small motor boat. We had to climb down a ladder, which was hung out over the side of the steamer. At the bottom of the ladder we had to wait for the right moment to step off and into the motor boat, as it rose & fell in the sea's swell. Not only did the passengers disembark this way but also all the luggage & general stores for the island were off loaded into this tossing motor boat.



TSMV "Lochiel"

Once ashore at the small sloping jetty, we were met by David Clark, from whom we had rented Baleromindubh farm house. David, who was also the local JP (Justice of the Peace), was a tall, impressive man with a soft, quiet Gaelic voice and a calm manner. He put us and our suitcase, the latter of which was replaced with a sturdier trunk in subsequent years, into the back of his van and we headed off inland. By now it became evident as to just how naïve we were to island life. Our ordnance survey map showed the main road as being an "A" class road but what we didn't expect was to see heather growing up the middle of it! My father sat up front, with David, and was happy to open any gates for him. After we passed through the gate at the bottom of the track to Baleromindubh, the van started to lurch all over the place as David negotiated the small boulders that littered this track. Father turned and looked at mother, as if to say, "...where on God's earth are we going to?" Little did we know what an idyllic place awaited us with hospitality second to none.

After passing through the last gate, David steered the van up onto the crest of the hill, which overlooks Baleromindubh farm. The view that beheld



"Lochiel" below Baleromindubh Farm

us I have not, nor will ever, forget. It was, in the calm warm evening air, with the "Lochiel" sailing back to Islay, simply a Hebridean utopia.

David manoeuvred the suitcase down the hill and at the door to the farm house we were warmly greeted by David's sisters, Mary Clark and Mrs Paris, who both helped David with the farm.

What a wonderful welcome, with a fire lit in the lounge and a supper prepared for us. Electricity hadn't come to Baleromindubh yet, so paraffin lamps gave us our light and the big black cooking range gave us lashings of hot water. A large scrap book and photo

album, compiled by previous guests, sat on a table in the lounge, together with a wonderful book, "Colonsay and Oronsay in the Isles of Argyll" by John De Vere Loder.

Our rooms were wonderful, one looked inland over the farm yard to the hills beyond whilst the other looked out to sea, with Mull &

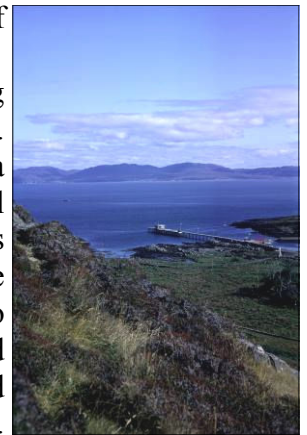


Scarba in the distance. The walls were so thick, I could sit in the window and gaze out at the view. Between

Paps of Jura from Baleromindubh the bedrooms, the bathroom looked out to a large paddock, totally enclosed by tall oaks & elms, with the Paps of Jura visible through their stately trunks. Each morning, whilst shaving in the peat coloured water, father would always open the sash window to see the view.

As evening fell, we all went out into the gloaming and stood, taking in the atmosphere. The silence so noticeable that our ears "rang" with the lack of noise!

Our first morning was to buy provisions. Father & I donned a rucksack each and we all three walked the 2½ miles to Scalasaig. Across the rough track and down to the main road, passed Milbuie, then the hotel and on down to the harbour.



Scalasaig Pier

Our naïvety hit us again, as we expected to see a shop with a large plate glass frontage and a painted fascia board displaying the name of the shop owner, as you would have seen in southern England. But no, just a very large plain wooden building, with a single word painted in large letters on it's side – S H O P.

Once inside, it was an "Aladdin's cave" of all you would need on a remote island. Pots, pans, rakes, wellington boots and all sorts of hardware hung from the beams in the ceiling. The shelves were stacked with not only food, but all miscellany of other items, many of which were not necessarily for internal consumption. Packets of biscuits rubbed shoulders with horse liniment and boxes of matches. Mother launched off with her list by asking for a pound of Anchor butter. She soon found out that brand names were not the "in thing" on Colonsay. /contd

Butter was butter. Who manufactured it was immaterial ! This gave father an immediate problem, as he realised he wouldn't be able to buy his favourite brand of pipe tobacco. In later years, having learnt from these experiences, we brought any "specific" provisions in the trunk. Mother, having bought all she needed, finished by asking for two pounds of bananas, only to be told, very politely, that "there were none on the boat yesterday, perhaps they'll come in next week".



Colonsay Hotel

We walked back up the road to the hotel where mother thought we ought to buy some gin and whisky for the farmhouse. Father pointed out that it was only 10.20 a.m. and that pubs didn't open until 10.30. We sat on the wall, outside the hotel, admiring the fuchsia hedge that grew alongside the wall. Twenty minutes later, we entered the "bar" and rang the bell on the counter. After a little while, a man came and sold father the bottles he wanted. During the conversation, father explained we were staying at Baleromindubh and mother told him that we had been sitting on the wall outside until opening time. The man replied that he knew who we were and went on to say that the bar was never closed and that doors were never locked on the island. Apparently we should have "...just come in and helped yourselves. Pay before you leave the island". "But what about the Custom & Excise ?" mother asked. "We don't worry about them, we can see them coming 10 miles off !"

The next day we embarked on the long walk from Baleromindubh, passed Scalasaig Farm, where David's brother John was the tenant, over the pass on Beinn nan Gudairean, passed Loch Fada, through the woodland gardens behind Colonsay House and on to Kiloran Bay. What a bay it was, stretching ahead of us, half a mile of golden yellow sand. But when you picked up a handful, the granules were of many and varied colours. After our day at Kiloran, we set off to walk the 5 odd miles back to



Kiloran Bay

Baleromindubh. I must say, I was flagging on the way back and it was only by playing a "game", to keep my spirits up, that we made it. When recounting this to David, he suggested that we could always walk to our destination and pre-book for Finlay, in his taxi, to come & collect us. This was welcome news and we

did this on several occasions later. In fact it was Finlay who gave me a beautiful crook, with a carved horn hilt, which I have treasured ever since. What kindness & generosity to virtual strangers.

The telephone system was, of course, "manually operated". I believe the telephone number for Baleromindubh was something like "Colonsay 5" ! I remember one day, when I was playing in the dining room, David asked if he could use the telephone. "Of course", mother said and told me to leave Mr Clark in private to make his call. "Oh that's alright" said David, "the little lad is fine where he is". He picked up the handset, turned the handle to attract the switchboard operator and said "Hallo a Mhòrag. Am faod mi bruidhinn ri mo bhràthair ?" in his soft Gaelic voice. Of course privacy was not important in such a situation. The telephone system had other uses. We called somebody on the island, one day, only to be told by Morag on the switchboard, that "I think they've gone to Oban today". Saved us the cost of a call !

Of course this "bush telegraph" did have other advantages. One day we decided to walk down to the Strand and cross, in bare feet, to Oronsay. We had just got to the road end and were in the process of



Ruari crosses the Strand removing shoes & socks, when a vehicle appeared from Garvard Farm. This was Mrs McNeill, who had heard from David Clark of our intended exploit and kindly offered to take us across in her Land Rover. I don't think for a moment she had need to go to Oronsay herself, but just wanted to make visitors to the island as welcome as possible.

My memories of this wonderful, peaceful island & the warm and genuine welcome from it's inhabitants, will never leave me. I have been back since, in the late 60's & early 70's and then, after a 30 year break, in 2002 & 2003. Every time I get that "thrill" on arrival and that "sadness" on leaving, like parting from a lifelong friend.

I vowed then that I would visit again in my retirement as I just can't get enough of this island jewel. As someone once wrote "...the people of the island, who have lived there all their lives, have the hallmark of the true Celt - a dignity of eye and bearing that one no longer expects to meet in great cities, save once or twice in a lifetime..."