



Newsletter

**BRACKNELL
CAMERA
CLUB**

Issue
Number

72

**August
2009**



Editorial

By Ruari Cumming

Well, another season of our club starts on 10th September and despite assurances, now being refuted, by the Met Office that we were in for a “scorcher” it never really happened, apart from a week in June which was oppressively hot. Mind you, it didn’t bother me as the weather in the Hebrides was just sublime. The last two of the three weeks I was on Colonsay, it was warm or hot blue sky from dawn to gloaming, forcing me into shorts every day & with some 2,900 shots “in the can” I am not complaining !

Welcome to Stuart Skelsey, our new Chairman, who we wish well in his new role. I also want to thank Alan for all the work, drive and devotion he has put into our club during his tenure. He has built on the sterling work of his predecessors and encouraged our members to get involved also. And you don’t have to be on the Committee to help either.

During the short time I have been visiting clubs in this area with my show or judging, the welcome I have had is often mediocre. I was warned of this by one of our esteemed members and they were so right.

We are famous for giving speakers & judges the right sort of warm welcome, every time, and they tell us so. We’re famous for being one of the first clubs in this area to run excellent, varied and instructional workshops geared to what members want. We were one of the first clubs to start a good quality newsletter and keep it going too whilst many others have folded.

We were one of the first clubs in the area to gain funds from the National Lottery for a laptop and digital projector.

We are famous at welcoming new members and helping them settle in quickly. Let’s make sure we all welcome prospective new members properly, talk to them, make them at ease and wanted - we can all do this and not rely solely on committee members.

So we have an excellent club that’s healthy and well run for the benefit of all members alike. Let’s all work to keep up it’s good name and reputation.

Let’s make our club truly “*First and Famous*”.



The Great Exhibition

By Helen Kean

Our Annual Exhibition is over for another year & 11 Crossway stands empty once again. A few days before our opening, the unit had been a hive of activity as display boards were brought in and erected & the prints hung and numbered to correlate with the catalogue. The window was cleaned, the DVD tested and the last finishing touches were made before members, their guests & a few VIPs, including both of Bracknell’s mayors, turned up to mark the opening of the event.

The following three days saw over 370 people visit the Exhibition itself with others seeing the small display stand we had in Princess Square. Many visitors expressed an interest in the Club and took our promotional leaflets, others simply wanted to browse and one or two expressed an interest to buy! The Exhibition has always been viewed as an opportunity to showcase the members’ photography as well as to canvas new members. The evidence so far suggests we have achieved these aims.

Over two-thirds of visitors took time to cast a vote for their favourite print and digital image. The results were very close, but there were two clear winners. The favourite print was Jay Heiser’s “Chaotic Garden Shed” and the favourite digital image was “Wisdom” by Ingrid Demaerschalk, so many congratulations to you both.

A short article like this cannot hope to cover the full range of Exhibition preparations which started slowly in February but really ramped up to be full-on in the last few weeks. Nor is it possible to thank individually all of those members – over 40 of you – who pitched in to help set up, take down, print, collect display stands, prepare the food, publicise the event, organise rotas and generally run round being that crucial extra pair of hands. A big thank you to you all!

So now the keys have been returned & we can draw breath and reflect on the success of our 52nd Annual Exhibition. One thing is for sure, it will be time to start the planning again all too soon.

Arctic Wilderness

By Eileen Riley



Our cruise around Svalbard in July 2006 was an intensely visual experience. I can't communicate this in a newsletter item, so I have included web gallery reference.

We flew into Longyearbyen from Oslo in cold, damp, misty drizzle. It was lunchtime so we went in search of hot food before boarding our home for the next 11 days for a cruise in the Svalbard archipelago in search of wildlife and wilderness. Our group of 48 people had the whole expedition ship, the Professor Molchanov, with several guides and wildlife experts. During the cruise, we would see only one other ship and a few sailing yachts. The bird list for the archipelago has maybe 35 species, and there are no trees for them to hide! Alan and I saw 25 of them.

In July here, the sun never sets. We left Longyearbyen during dinner, and headed north-westwards along the west coast of the main island Spitsbergen. Our wakeup call at 0730 brought our noses to our cabin window. We were at anchor in King's Fjorden, in NW Spitsbergen in bright sunshine.

After a substantial breakfast – typical of the ship's excellent catering in this cold climate – we went ashore in five Zodiac RIBs, each with a boat-handler and a wildlife expert. Rinie van Meurs was our expedition leader. He and his two helpers, with two of the Russian ship's crew, expertly assisted us between the ship and the Zodiacs and also handled the Zodiacs. All carried rifles, and Rinie carried a hand gun, in case of need against Polar Bears. Dressing up was quite a performance, with long-johns, fleece-lined trousers, waterproof over-trousers, two pairs of thick socks, wellie boots (for wet landings), thermal underwear, fleeces, big jacket, life-jacket, balaclava, gloves....On top of this were cameras and binoculars. The water temperature survival time was about two minutes.

Ashore, we usually split into three groups: a slow one for the botanists, and two more energetic groups. The environment was wilderness. There are only three real settlements in these islands, all very small.

The scenery was magnificent and magical – rugged mountains, snow, ice and blue sky. We had the hillside at Blomstrandshalvøya to ourselves, walking slowly, looking for birds and taking photographs. A Long-tailed Skua with a chick on the

ground was unperturbed by our interest from about 4 metres distance. Nesting Arctic Terns attacked us as we unwittingly approached their nests on the ground. They also gave the same treatment to a Reindeer! Aad, Rinie's helper, held his rifle high in the air to distract them. These birds, including the young at the end of their first summer, migrate to the Antarctic for the northern winter.

We passed the site of an old marble mine which had not been a commercial success. The quality of the marble was poor, and it had a long way to travel. A couple of old huts remain, along with a splendid wooden wheelbarrow, a bedstead and a rusting heavy machine bearing the logo of a Leicester engineering firm!

After lunch, we went ashore again on the opposite side of the fjord at Ny Ålesund. This small village is the second largest settlement, and the base for a team of scientists. The main wildlife interest here was a family of Arctic Foxes who lived in the space under the wooden houses. The mother repeatedly went to the water's edge and caught a Barnacle Goose chick for her hungry pups. The adult geese were helpless, and I doubt if any chicks survived. We watched them for some time. Although the morning had been still, the wind here was bitingly cold.

Before leaving Ny Ålesund, we visited the mast to which the Amundsen-Nobile Zeppelin had been moored on their successful attempt to overfly the North Pole in 1926. Back on Professor Molchanov, clutching hot drinks, we continued along the coastline watching sea birds and spectacular scenery.

Next morning, we adopted Plan B for going ashore because of a Polar Bear with two cubs – our first sighting! Alan and I really wanted to see Polar Bear, and thought we had a reasonable chance on this trip. So now we were happy! The ice had melted early this year, and the pack ice was a long way north. These bears had been left stranded – a Polar Bear on land is a hungry bear, as they normally hunt seal from ice floes. This family would probably not survive the summer. Also at this point, we saw the first of several Minke Whale.

In the afternoon, we landed at the Andøyane Island group, which consist of Devonian sandstone, similar to Orkney and part of Shetland. These rocks contain fossils of some very old jawless fish, and some early amphibians. Kent, one of Rinie's helpers, was an academic geochemist and could explain the geology. With the descending sun, we quietly glided around the islands, with Black Guillemot, Eider and a few King Eider, before landing on Vesle Anøya.

...../contd

Again under attack from Arctic Terns, we found Grey Phalarope and Purple Sandpiper, both with chicks.

Back on the ship around 1700, we proceeded under blue sky into Liefdefjorden towards the face of the Monaco Glacier. Crashing blocks of ice from the glacier face revealed the deep blue of fresh ice and put literally thousands of feeding Kittiwakes, Arctic Terns and Fulmars into the air, accentuating the immense underlying tranquillity. The chefs brought dinner's first course on deck so that we could be in the scene a while longer.

The next day began with wind and low cloud. We anchored off the island of Phippsøya to the north of Spitsbergen at about 82°N. Rinie knew that a group of over a dozen Polar Bears were on a beach on the north of the island, feeding on what remained of a beached Sperm Whale, just under water. Our Zodiac ride lasted over an hour, in a brisk, cold wind on choppy water. It was worth it! There were several big males, younger animals and cubs. One of the adults would dive and bring a chunk of blubber onto the beach. The cubs were suckling one minute, then wrestling with blubber the next! But the whale would not last much longer. We were less than 50m from them. I, for one, was glad not to be wrestling with a film camera in those conditions.

In the afternoon, we landed closer to the ship on the opposite side of Phippsøya from the Polar Bears, to look for Walrus. It was calmer now. A few of these large inquisitive creatures greeted us as our Zodiacs approached the shore. On the beach, we slowly approached very close – they smell!

Next morning, again in bright sunshine, we sailed round the north side of the Nordaustlandet ice cap. This large island looks much as Britain would have done at the end of the ice age. During the afternoon, we slowly crept up the uncharted Duvefjorden, and encountered winter ice.

What an amazing afternoon and evening! We had up to 15 Polar Bears in view at any one time, with a couple of seal kills on ice floes. On one ice floe, there were three huge males devouring a seal, with Ivory and Glaucous Gulls voracious for the leftovers. Some distance away, a mother left her cub on an ice floe and slowly, submissively, approached the feeding males, with low growly noises. Surprisingly, the males allowed her onto the ice floe. We wondered if she knew them – maybe her sons. But as she began to feed, a male further away left his ice floe and began to swim towards her cub, probably with murderous intentions. She left her meal, and returned to the water to protect her cub.

There were bears all around us, very close to the ship. Our view point for photographs was ideal. Rinie set up his tripod with huge lens, and Captain Ocheretny manoeuvred the ship to give Rinie the angle

of light that he wanted. Rinie has published books with stunning photographs from both the Arctic and the Antarctic.

This whole experience was unforgettable, thanks to our Captain's flexible attitude and Rinie's sharp eyes. Dinner was a barbecue on the lower deck, with bears munching on seal alongside.

On a partly overcast morning, with fog banks, now some distance further south, we went off in the Zodiacs after breakfast to Alkfjellet. This towering vertical basalt cliff hosts zillions of nesting Brünnich's Guillemots. They ignored us as we approached close, where they huddled in groups along the ledges, protecting their eggs and young from predatory Glaucous Gulls. Indeed, we did see a gull grab a chick and gulp it down. An Arctic Fox prowled close by on a steep snow fan between rock stacks.

In the afternoon, we went ashore at the head of a fjord. The light reflected from its glacial river, where a pod of around 50 ghostly white Beluga Whale was cruising. There were several calves, and one whale was acting as watchman. Up the hill, we found a Ptarmigan with six small chicks, and Reindeer. The tundra vegetation, even July, is low and sparse so it is difficult to see how these large land mammals survive.

We circumnavigated Nordaustlandet and returned to Longyearbyen via the north of Spitsbergen. We had covered 1051 nautical miles (1947 kilometres) during an amazing trip with over 40 Polar Bears. I have to admit that I was so gob-smacked at the bears that I did not deploy my camera! Sometimes, I want to see through my own eyes. Good news from friends on a similar cruise in 2008: they saw many bears, all on ice with access to food.

For photographs, go to www.sohaila.org.uk

This Newsletter.....

....is published six times a season, from August to May. Contributions are always welcome & in fact needed. Articles, with pictures, should ideally be of a photographic nature, but not necessarily if you have a particular story to tell or a scene to set. If you have a contribution to make, however large or small, then please see the Editor for more details or view requirements on our website at www.bracknell-camera-club.co.uk. Without articles from members, this "much enjoyed" newsletter won't continue and will fold (pun intended) like many other club's who couldn't sustain contributions. Besides, the last thing you want to see is all the articles written by our ghost writer - Hortencia Trubshaw ! Thanks !

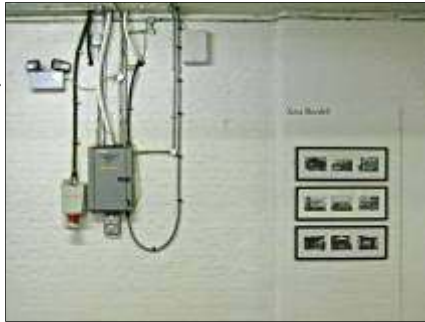


Graduate Art Summer Show Visit 13th June

By John Bickerdike

On a sunny Saturday in June nine BCC members, led by Brian Steptoe, spent a fascinating day at the 2009 Graduate Arts and Design

Summer Show. This event, held at the Old Truman Brewery in Brick Lane is a changing, eight-week exhibition showing the work of over 3000 of this year's graduates in art, photography and design from all over the UK.



We saw week three of the displays featuring photographic work, in eight galleries, from Maidstone, Swansea, Amersham and Wycombe, Farnham, Falmouth, Essex, Plymouth and Lancashire.



There was an enormous variety of work, most of it interesting, some of it puzzling and some impressive. It was a real eye-opener to see the range of work being attempted.

There were opportunities to talk to some of the exhibitors and I was impressed by their enthusiasm and dedication; it seems such a pity that their chances of employment, in the near future, cannot be very good.

It is not easy to single out a few examples of the photographs we saw but my own, admittedly very subjective, recollection settles on James Bell's panel aimed at countering the current negative perception of young black males

(www.bellphoto.co.uk see Recent Project), Suzanne Osborn's highly professional staged dance sequence



(www.suzanneosborn.org see Exhibition 2009), Amberly Valentine's intriguing installation shown here in this photograph and Anni Skilton's light-hearted environmental series based on rubbish skips entitled "Partners in Grime"

(<http://www.free-range.org.uk/cgi-bin/portfolios.pl?yearID=14&exhibitionID=512&memberID=14900>). At the exhibition Anni's pictures were mounted on sheets of corroded metal, enhancing



the message and the appeal of the panel.

This great day out was enhanced by our being able to experience the colourful bustle of a Saturday in Brick Lane. The area around the Galleries is particularly attractive

with its many ethnic food stalls and almost carnival atmosphere.



Many thanks to Brian for arranging it all.

Annual Exhibition Statistics

Kindly provided by Bruce Collins



The limit of ten entries per member enabled the numbers to be slightly reduced despite a 20% rise in entrants from 52 to 63, of whom 41 shared a total of 75 awards, with 3 of the 11 trophies being won by new members this season - excellent!

Class of 2009	Prints	Digital	Slides	Projected (D+S)
Pictorial (<i>mono prints</i>)	14			
Pictorial	65	43	3	46
Portrait	36	23	1	24
Applied	34	28		28
Nature	29	23	2	25
Standard	102	58		58
	280	175	6	181