

# Newsletter

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CAMERA  
CLUB**

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## Editorial

By Ruari Cumming

This shot of me looking through a concrete hand was taken on Madeira.

I suggested to my wife that it could be considered a creative portrait, albeit of an old, grumpy looking, somewhat portly .....

Yes, well enough said of that! But it is different, and the hand reminds me of the image Peter Ellis recently entered into round one of our PDI league competition, which he titled "Release" and is shown here.

It was created from six individual images and

demonstrates what can be achieved with some imagination and perseverance.



As a member of our club's

external competitions selection committee, I find even less really stunning and thought provoking images to select for inclusion in the many competitions this club enters. We all want **OUR** club to be seen as "first and famous" in the competitions we enter. As Gene Kranz, Flight Director of the ill-fated Apollo 13 mission said "failure is not an option"!

So, whilst we find some images err on the side of traditional, and nothing wrong with that - they have a role to play, but they often don't win. They may not have that "WOW" factor, that "Sparkle" that sets them above the rest. We need images that are more unusual, creative, innovative, "off the wall" to balance our entries. With only one entry per member in our own league competitions, surely we are missing some good work that never sees the light of day.

So **PLEASE** come forward and offer images, and not just rely on us to pick from what we see. Thank you.



## Inspiration or Cliché?

By Bruce Collins

A few years ago, Ruari & I enjoyed a splendid photography holiday on the Northumberland coast. Ruari was passing on some of his landscape skills, while I encouraged his transition from film to digital.

Early one morning Ruari roared at me to get up & raced for the beach to capture the dawn light, not my natural time of day! We made our way along the beach & I saw a range of black boulders along the shoreline. The tide was starting to go out, these boulders were glistening in the low light while the stark outline of the ruins of Dunstanburgh Castle stood in silhouette on the distant cliffs. This all looked very exciting and I scrambled hastily over the rounded & horribly slippery rocks to get the right viewpoint. Setting the tripod low and the aperture small, I took the image I wanted as the early light of dawn enlivened the sky.

Back home, I knew the image would make a good entry to the mono print competition, and I spent ages fiddling about in Photoshop to stop the sky being too bright and to bring out a delicate touch of light in the cliffs. And hey-presto I got a 9 in the competition and won the mono trophy in the Exhibition!



Wasn't I proud of myself! But that is not the story.... The story is that every other photo magazine I pick up these days carries an almost identical picture! Now, I swear that on that day I truly believed I had spotted an inspirational viewpoint and was creating an original and personal interpretation of that Northumbrian beach. But now it looks as though I was simply following a time-worn and clichéd path. Who will believe me?

## Spiritual and Spirit Haunts in the City

By Tony Moussalli



I have always been interested in places of worship. Maybe growing up in a multi-cultural, multi-religious cosmopolitan environment with a 4000+ year history was the influence. I really don't know, but it certainly wasn't dogma.

From the Temple of Karnak in Upper Egypt to the Temple of Fire in Azerbaijan; from St Catherine's monastery in the Sinai to those on Mont St Michel and Mount Athos; from the basilicas in Rome to the mosques of Istanbul, via the opulent Mezquita in Cordoba and the humble Saharan Marabouts; these edifices mesmerise me.

So how luckier could I be than having a square mile saturated with 47 churches virtually on ones' doorstep, and a history to boot. That's it - it's the City of London, all Roman, Norman, and Victorian to post-New Labour times. Nearly destroyed twice, like the Phoenix it rose from the ashes, not once but twice, and in the process dallying between Catholicism, Anglicanism, Protestantism and Puritanism. Throw in a synagogue, but no mosques - there are none in The City, and all the monotheistic religious establishments are accounted for.

On the 12 September 1666 a baker in Pudding Lane baked more than a bun, in fact he sort of accidentally virtually reduced the City to cinders, as the fire rapidly spread through the tar and straw used in the closely packed buildings of the time, devastating the City, and destroying 79 churches. Fortunately no lives were lost.

51 of them were eventually rebuilt under the auspices of Sir Christopher Wren. A varied future awaited them, some becoming redundant, others falling into disrepair, while others were subjected to enhancements, refurbishments and reconstructions.

Five days short of the Great Fire's 274<sup>th</sup> anniversary, Hitler annoyed that Britain had retaliated to the bombing of Coventry, decided to change the London landscape. The sirens wailed the approach of the German bombers that would blitz the city for 76 consecutive days wreaking havoc, death and destruction, which would have been worse had it not been for the invention of the radar and the Spitfires' superior speed.

It was a long hard slog to salvage what could be redressed, repaired or rebuilt.

Today other than the standard bearer St Paul's cathedral that stands on Ludgate Hill, the highest

point in London, and figures highly on the tourist 'must see' list, there are scores of fascinating churches to visit, and not have to cough up mucho dinero for the privilege. Amongst these I have chosen five spiritual haunts, for historical and architectural reasons and as homage to Sir Christopher Wren. My intertwined selected spirit haunts are quite handy for refreshments, and not exactly run of the mill watering holes, and a few not exactly easy on the pocket.

Other than St Paul's, Wren built only two other domed churches, one is St Stephen Walbrook (behind Mansion House), and St Mary Abchurch (just off Cannon Street). The two could not be more different.

St Stephens's antecedent dates back to Saxon times, when the original church was built on stones from the Mithras Temple. It was then rebuilt in 1439 on the east bank of the Walbrook River (now culverted) and totally destroyed by the Great Fire in 1666. Christopher Wren rebuilt it, using the original design for the St Paul dome, which is 63 ft high, and lies over a square of twelve columns.

It is considered to be one of the lightest and finest of Wren's church interiors: a mini masterpiece. Fortunately the blitz did not severely damage it, and it retains a lot of its original features.



FIG 2 - ST STEPHEN WALBROOK

When the property developer, Lord Palumbo, served as churchwarden, he commissioned the sculptor Henry Moore to construct the altar, a massive white polished stone unusually set in the centre of the church.



FIG 3 - ST STEPHEN WALBROOK

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It was here that the Samaritans were formed in 1953 by the then rector Dr Chad Varah operating from one of the crypt. A telephone glass box still stands as a tribute to this cause.

The church which lies behind Mansion House is close to 1 Poultry. It is initially a Lord Palumbo development, where, from the rooftop brasserie 'Le Coq D'Argent', there is a magnificent view of the city. Well weather permitting!

Further east off Cannon Street is St Mary Abchurch, the other domed church that Wren built after the fire destroyed the original structure dating back to the 12<sup>th</sup> century. It has a 51 ft leaded spire, and is very different in style to St Stephens. The plain, rather scruffy brick exterior belies the remarkable 17<sup>th</sup> century art some of the finest craftsmen of the time produced. The painted dome a massive 40ft across cannot be seen externally. There is a profusion of wood panelling, woodcarvings and an altarpiece by Grinling Gibbons, who collaborated with Wren in the reconstructions. His gilded 'Pelican in her Piety' which appears on the reredos was also reproduced in brass as a weathervane, but for safety reasons, such as its tendency to topple over, has been removed and now stands firmly fixed above an internal door.



The church was bombed and severely damaged during the war. The dome and the reredos were painstakingly restored, and the organ was rebuilt using a 1717

casing from All Hallows, Bread Street. However the original side standing pews still remain.

Close by on Martin Lane, lies The Olde Wine Shade wine bar, a 1663 building that survived both the fire and the blitz and trades to this day. For anyone interested, 'shade' was the word used for any covered area that dealt publicly in the wine trade.



Closer to home in Windsor, some of Wren's and Gibbons' handiwork can be seen. The external pillars that are a couple of inches short of the ceiling of the Windsor Town Hall were built by Wren to meet his contractual obligations and prove his point that they were not needed to support the building, & the reredos in the Windsor Parish church are by Gibbons.

Heading west onto Fleet Street is my third choice, St Brides. It is close to the church that de Worde, set up his inherited Caxton's moveable type printing press in 1500 to serve the ecclesiastic and law communities in the vicinity. Other printers followed, and in 1702 the first regular daily newspaper, 'The Daily Courant' was published, and the rest is history.

Two thousand years of history are covered by the church of St Brides, the eighth church to be built on the site since the original one was built in the 6<sup>th</sup> century dedicated to St Bridget (aka St Bride) of Kildare next to an old Roman ditch carrying water from the River Fleet. The river, once reputedly the most polluted in London, now runs underground.

The great Fire completely destroyed the church, and it was rebuilt, as today, mostly of Portland Stone. It was opened to worshippers in 1675 and the steeple added later. At 226 ft, it is the tallest and strongest steeple built by Wren. 8 ft of the steeple were truncated by lightning in 1764.

Reputedly, it inspired one of the local bakers to model his wedding cake on the spire, and the tiered wedding cake design caught on.



FIG 7 - ST BRIDES

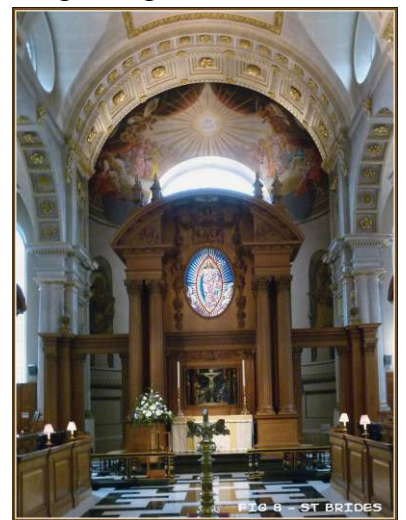


FIG 8 - ST BRIDES

During the blitz, a fire-bomb hit the church with irreparable damage, even the bell melted and fell, but the steeple still stood proud and strong.

The rebuilding adhered to Wren's concept, based on his original drawings.

Magnificent great free-standing canopied oak reredos are erected at the east end of the church, in front of a superbly painted 'trompe d'œil' giving the impression of a half domed apse.

A museum in the crypt exhibits the whole history of the church, and classical concerts, free to the public are conducted most Tuesdays and Fridays throughout the year.

It should be time for a pint at the 17<sup>th</sup> century Ye Olde Cheshire Cheese, one of the oldest pubs in the City at 147 Fleet Street.

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Heading east, towards the City limits, is St Dunstons-in-the-West standing on the site of the original church built around the turn of the first millennium.

On the front, dating back to 1671 is the first public clock to have a minute hand. Two giants turn their heads and strike the hour and quarters.

The frontage appears traditionally neo-gothic, but is octagonal on the inside. Although it escaped the Great Fire of London, it succumbed to ageing, and was rebuilt in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. The tower which suffered during the war was refurbished in the 50s, when the church became a guild church.

The interior fabric mostly predates the 1830s rebuilding. The high altar and reredos are of 17<sup>th</sup> century Flemish origin, and the bronze figures believed to date from 1530.



FIG 8 - ST DUNSTAN IN THE WEST

Although it is an Anglican church it adheres to inter-denominational unity, and as a guild church it caters to the needs of other Christian sects with no place of worship. It contains a number of altars dedicated to a variety of traditions, including Lutheran, Armenian, Coptic, Syrian, Syro-Indian and Romanian Orthodox.

The typical Orthodox iconoclast screening the altar is an artistic masterpiece, salvaged from a Bucharest monastery and brought to this country in 1966.

Across the street is the El Vino wine bar, the watering hole of the lawyer community of the Temples, & once the favourite haunt of the Fleet Street hacks. It also holds the record as the last male only bastion in the city to bow to the gender non-segregation law, and to allow women in its premises.



FIG 9 - ST DUNSTAN IN THE WEST

Into the Inner Temple, one of the areas housing the law chambers spread around the Courts of Justice and the Old Bailey, which originally was the Knight Templars' London headquarters.

Central to it was the church they built dedicated to the Virgin Mary. It was built to a circular design, as all churches were then constructed as a reminder of the Holy Sepulchre church in Jerusalem, the burial place of Jesus Christ. It was first consecrated in 1185.

On the loss of the Holy Land to the Saracens,

Henry II was well displeased, and the Templars, lost royal favour, so he took control of the Temple which he then donated to the Knights Hospitaller.



FIG 10 - TEMPLE CHURCH

The choir was added to accommodate Edward III who expressed a wish to be buried there. However by the time he kicked the

bucket, he had changed his mind and opted for the posher Westminster Abbey, which he decided to rebuild in 1245 in the Gothic mould of the Reims and Amiens cathedrals, as his final resting place.

Two colleges of lawyers rented part of the property, and the Inner and Middle Temples were born. One of the lease conditions was the preservation of the chapel.

In 1540, Henry VIII confiscated the Hospitaller's property along with all the Catholic church's holdings. When James I found himself a bit short of the readies in 1608, he granted the lawyers a Royal Charter allowing them the use of the Temple in perpetuity in exchange for the maintenance of the Temple church.

With lawyers fees the way they are, it is not that surprising that not only a Wren, but a succession of refurbishments were carried out with the ceiling ending up in High Victorian Gothic style, only to suffer considerable damage on the 10th May 1940, and to be eventually restored to its present state.



FIG 11 - TEMPLE CHURCH

Amen !

## This Newsletter.....

...is published six times a season, from August to May. Contributions are always needed. Articles, with pictures, should ideally be of a photographic nature, but not necessarily if you have a particular story to tell. 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](http://www.bracknell-camera-club.co.uk) Besides, the last thing you want to see is all the articles written by our ghost writer - Hortencia Trubshaw ! Thanks !