

SUMMER 1988

The Little Man



The Official Magazine of
**THE UNITED PHOTOGRAPHIC
POSTFOLIOS**
OF GREAT BRITAIN

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President.	S.Berg, ARPS, 68, Mowbray Road, Edgware, Middx. HA8 8JH.	01-958-9555.
Vice President.	I.W.Platt, PRPS, E, FIAP, APSA, 9 Charlecote Close, Farnborough, Hants. GU14 7EG.	0252-547106
Vice President.	R O Couchman, ARPS, A, FIAP, 179, Wilson Avenue, Rochester, Kent. ME1 2SL.	0634-45769.
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Hon. Treasurer.	B A Hirschfield, ARPS., 75 Wheatcroft Grove, Rainham, Gillingham, Kent. ME8 9JE	0634-388192.
Editor of Little Man.	W. Armstrong, ARPS., 4 Mount Tabor Avenue, Kinnoull, Perth. PH2 7 BT.	0738 33896
Membership and Folio Circ. Secretary.	N. Frith LRPS., 10 Lime Grove, Boole, Chester, Cheshire. CH2 3HW	0244-318319.
Publicity Secretary	W R Malcolm, 42 Selvage Lane, Mill Hill, London NW7 3SP	01-959-1924
Competition Sec.(Prints)	M B Williams, 27 Buckingham Way, Wallington, Surrey. SM6 9 LU	01-647-4671
(Slides)	R C Scott, A, FIAP, APAGE 12 Hollisfield, Cromer Street, London. WC1H 8LG	01-837-9432
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	L Holman, 14 Littlecoates Road, Grimsby, S. Humberside. DN34 4LY	0472-53453
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	Dr. A Spier, 24 Merryfield Gardens, Marsh Lane, Stanmore, Middx. HA7 4TG	01-954-6612

PRESIDENT'S VIEWPOINT



I am writing this a few days before Easter and frankly I am cheesed off with the weather. What a dreary winter we have had — rain - rain - rain - and more rain, which has dramatically interfered with my golf and photography. Mind you, it makes you wonder why so few of us face up to the challenge of inclement weather photography. Not every picture needs sunshine, which all too often results in a brash, soot and whitewash reproduction, devoid of any mood or atmosphere. One can usually manage to boost contrast enough to give an adequate range of tones yet still convey the “feel” of winter in other than snow or frost conditions. I shall certainly keep that in mind next winter — or the way it is going at the moment, in the summer too!

Things move apace and arrangements are virtually complete for our A.G.M. on September 24th, 1988 which, hopefully, will be as successful as in previous years. I'm looking forward to seeing many of you again and also some for the first time as well. Let's try and make this a bumper year.

We are hoping that the 'new look' "Little Man" meets with your approval. I know that Bill Armstrong will welcome any opinions and suggestions that your care to make.

HOPING TO SEE YOU IN SEPTEMBER

sincerely yours,

Stanley Berg
President

LIKE A BAD DREAM (Not to be taken too seriously)

by Leigh Preston ARPS

JUDGING..... a few memories. Please note that this all happened! Not all on the same night, not at the same club, but its all basically true -- slightly embellished. This is what could occur if you were..... unlucky?
And nobody has warned you that it could be like this ?

Its dark, raining and chilly. Locating the venue has been a problem. However, despite the experimental one way system and a slightly less than adequate map you arrive....10 minutes early. The hall started life as an air raid shelter and has been going downhill ever since---a fascinating study in corrugated iron and total darkness.

After rousing the lethargic, slightly inebriated caretaker all braces, cap and brown overalls, you are admitted to the premises. Another 10 minutes goes by before anyone else arrives. A three piece suit, with sober tie, informs you that the committee have not arrived yet. Others trickle in making you feel really wanted, huddling round AP back numbers, assembling cups, saucers, placing hand built biscuits on plates. Nobody wants to engage you in conversation. After all you are the judge..... the enemy within.

Enter the chairman somewhat harassed. You introduce yourself and in return are greeted with a smile like a fridge door opening. Meanwhile a scene of frenzied activity is going on behind you...the construction of the print easel. Bits of 4 by 2, hardboard and wing nuts. When finished it bears an uncanny resemblance to something out of Tenko.

The chairman, still ruffled, bangs the gavel. Silence. A sea of expectant faces, then.... A myopic lady thumps out God save the Queen on an old rosewood upright at the back of the hall. Certainly different !

Notices.. lots of them. 8 o'clock is signalled by a series of loud bonges from the church clock next door. Finally, nearly an hour after arriving you are introduced.. by a pseudonym.

You review the prints, a motley collection, some tinged

with age, some faded, some spotty, pictures by Fox Talbot's grandfather, some curly, some atrociously mounted, probably with wallpaper adhesive. Your kindly comments mingle hopefully in the general hubbub and audible complaints.. "when's he gonna get to the slides?"

You fight to be heard above the Edwardian plumbing, creaking chairs and whistling deaf aids. A late-comer effects a really casual entrance, flies undone, carrying a plastic bag of motor cycle spare parts which he helpfully spills on to the floor. Twenty five prints all told, including those you have kept back, carefully guarded by the ever watchful competition secretary. The winner doesn't seem popular with some.

Half time.

Tea arrives, disguised as Bisto with sugar and milk, accompanied by an example of the hand built biscuits. A man comes to the front to examine the prints carefully... with a monocle. A Ukranian speaks to you in broken English, quite what about you are not entirely sure. But he seems a nice chap. The "professional" club member talks at you. What's it all about? Minor accident involving coffee and the winning print.... Running parallel to all this, like some sort of mini marathon, the main event of the evening---- the selling of raffle tickets, goes on which inevitably delays the second half..

The lights go out, the bad dream goes on, the projectionist isn't ready. The first slide doesn't fit the screen. It doesn't really matter as the slide is upside down anyway. The lights go on, the magazine reloaded, the stand adjusted. (Utter the word "patience" under your breath, stay cool, and try not to giggle.)

At this juncture, enter the caretaker announcing, "Anybody got a yellow Skoda, number....?" Darkness falls again. The first slide again---an out of focus cat with red eyes---followed by more really exciting stuff. Nuns in wheelchairs, kids blowing bubbles, Greek housing, gnarled peasants and something called "winter wonderland." Plenty of audience participation coughing, mumbling, snoring, the frantic ripping of raffle tickets and the counting of change. More gems on the screen, centrally placed daffodils, grubby swans, underlit mushrooms, overlit mush

rooms and a red mushroom with spots (just missing the gnome and fishing rod). Its all good stuff. Something is placed on the piano keyboard and issues a dramatic chord which sharpens your concentration.

The retained slides, six in number are put through again plus an extra one belonging to the projectionist ...just in case you missed its overtly long stay on the screen first time round.

The announcement of the winner seems to meet with disapproval. Lights on. Raffle prizes (out of date roll of K64 and a bottle of Japanese cooking sherry). Again the winners prove popular.

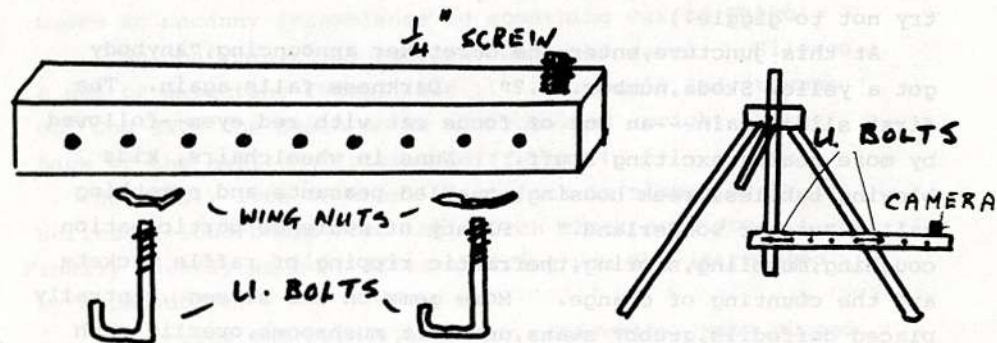
The chairman summarises, and with the help of a pocketful of change. I am almost forgotten in the rush to get away. I have a haggle over expenses... the treasurer isn't here tonight. Eventually I head homewards, weighed down with coin of the realm, proceeds of the raffle.

My God, what an evening!!!!

A LOW LEVEL CAMERA SUPPORT

(Gratefully borrowed from "An Introduction to Close Up Nature Photography" by Richard A. Zuegel of Kodak (USA))

Take a length of 1"x1" hard wood and drill holes every 1-2" as shown. The holes should take cut-off U-bolts. The U bolts should be bent to a shape to suit your tripod legs. A $\frac{1}{4}$ " Whitworth set screw is screwed and glued near the end of the wood. To this when required can be attached a ball and socket head to take the camera. The set up is as shown. For transport the wooden support can be clamped to a leg.



DRY ROT

By John Murdoch

Although much has been written about the various and varied aspects of photography, little or nothing has been said about the causes and possible disruptive effects of this widespread affliction. It will come therefore as neither surprise nor relief that once more it has been left to this column to undertake the research necessary to make good this deficiency.

At first, it was thought that addiction to photography may have been the result of an unhappy childhood, too much exposure to The Sun, or other fashionable forms of mental distress without adequate remedial treatment by stress counsellors. Prolonged investigation has however so far shown that the uncontrollable urge to produce more or less permanent images of virtually anything which moves, plus a great deal of what doesn't, appears to be the result of an infection by one of two strains of a bacterium identified as *b. boxbrownii* and *b. fotophilia*, and subsequently referred to as BB and BF respectively.

The BB strain produces comparatively mild symptoms and these are for the most part associated with holidays, Christmas, weddings, christenings and other domestic disasters. It appears to affect both sexes in about the same proportions and in addition to unnecessarily depleting the world's silver resources, is characterised by the appearance of a multi-coloured and for the most part distressing rash known as snaps. The visual symptoms of this malady usually in turn produce a range of mental disorders from insincere enthusiasm to ill-concealed nausea and thus although widespread, the disease is to a large extent self-limiting.

It can be spread only by contact with other humans who for the most part and not without good reason have learnt to take precautions against such exposure.

On the other hand, the BF strain is much more virulent (as might be expected) and the effects, although spread over a smaller population are consequently much more long-lasting and intense. For no apparent reason mature and pseudo-mature males over the age of 18 seem to be most at risk, females being either immune or at any rate more resistant. The disease is of a manic/depressive nature and is characterised on the one hand by delusions of competence and on the other by a morose belligerency directed mainly against spouses and judges and others who are slow to recognise genius when they see it. The usual manifestation of the disease is an uncontrollable and impulsive urge to spend the family allowance on items considered to be essential to its treatment. In extreme cases, the sufferer will also retreat for long intervals to a dark and airless room thereby not only depriving his family of food and drink but also needlessly exposing them without conjugal protection to the horrors of Eastenders. Only in a few cases does the sufferer recover completely. The majority go on to develop even more distressing symptoms such as rectilinear vision in which everything is seen in either a vertical or horizontal rectangle whose sides are in the proportion of approximately 2:1. They worship idols called Technique and Composition and Pictorialism but only rarely at the same time and indeed number amongst themselves those who claim that none is important so long as what they do is different. All of them have a tendency to leave brown stains on the bath and cause the household carpets to rot prematurely by applying to them solutions of exotic and expensive chemicals. They use the domestic iron to mount their creations and leave it with a brown sticky coating of partly-burnt shellac on the tip thereby provoking even more

domestic disharmony. If they go abroad on holiday and many of them do, two-thirds of their baggage allowance is taken up with what usually turn out to be useless accessories. Indeed they will do so many familiar things that by now we may be identifying ourselves with them, Heaven forbid. Of course, they have their good points and are generally kind to dumb animals with the possible exception of those judges who are less than appreciative of their work.

These then are the general symptoms of this world-wide plague. However and in addition, the patient may suffer from one or more minor indispositions associated with it and it is perhaps the ideal and possible only time to refer to some of them here. Amongst them are :

AUTOMANIA NERVOSA. The idea that intelligence is inferior to science and that microchip-controlled and/or designer-originated operations are invariably infallible. Certain types of this malady are known by more common names such as hocus-focus and even commoner names which we are not allowed to print here. The patient may be assisted in his/her attitude towards designers by giving him/her a dozen milk cartons or bubble packs to open, repeating as often as necessary.

PHOTOCCELLULITIS. The delusion that multi-mode exposure systems are more accurate than any other kind including Watkin's Bee Meter.

SPHERICAL ABERRATION. Distortion of the waistline of the photographer due in part to overdevelopment and insufficient agitation.

CHRONIC CONGLOMERITIS. Persistent ailment arising from the belief that the degree of success of any photographic operation is directly proportional to the number and cost of

the accessories available for its execution. See also SYMBOLIC PRETENTION (below)

SYMBOLIC PRETENTION. Malaise in which an elaborate display of equipment is erroneously associated with ability to use it. Not usually responsive to treatment

HYPERBOLIC BOSOMANIA Tendency, fostered by the photographic media, to assume that 95% or more of all serious photographic activity is directed towards the portrayal of the undraped female figure. This leads to a sense of unfulfilment and inferiority in patients who lack the opportunity, the financial resources or more probably the nerve to indulge in this activity.

OVER-EXPOSURE/-DEVELOPMENT. Characteristic physical symptoms which may be considered desirable when exhibited by photographic models but much less so in the case of photographers. Sometimes referred to as distortion of the characteristic curve. The contra indications of underexposure and underdevelopment in conjunction with hyperbolic bosomania are so rare today that they may be considered as being extinct.

CEREALISMUS. Tendency to exaggerate grain size in the mistaken belief that this is invariably artistic. May respond to repeated applications of disbelief.

CHROMATIC ABERRATION. (COKINITIS). Irrational urge to photograph the beauties of nature inanimate and otherwise on colour film through a tobacco-coloured filter.

CONTINGENTUM GENEROSA. Uncontrolled and excessive consumption of film resulting in the taking of multiple exposures in order to produce one mediocre photograph chiefly of fashion or calendar subjects. In extreme cases

results in neuro-vascular diseases of the shutter trigger finger.

BACKGROUND/MOUNT DEFICIENCY SYNDROME. Depressive illness caused by the failure to select to the satisfaction of critics a suitable background and/or mount in portrait subjects, something which experience has shown to be impossible.

RESINITIS MBLANCHOLIA. The recurring inability to get good blacks on resin coated paper.

CAMERADERIE ILLEGITIMO. The feeling of well being, usually momentary, on entering an assembly of fellow patients for the first time.

It will be seen that for the most part, these are disorders of the psyche. Lack of space and to some extent good taste have prevented the mention of more physical disorders arising from severe BF infection such as fractures and sprains from encounters with rogue tripods, spring roller screens and from changing bayonet-fit lenses on a cold winter's day. There are also other maladies arising from the storing of potassium bichromate solutions in old lemonade bottles and forgetting whether it is potassium cyanide or ferricyanide which is non-poisonous. Survivors are kindly requested to look out for the next article on this subject. If you see it let us know and in the meantime keep on taking the tabloids.

THE JUDGE'S DILEMMA

Once upon a time photography used to be "all my own work". Colour slides arrived and trade processing got its foot in the door and was accepted by clubs and exhibitions alike. It seems that the door is now wide open. Its button pushing for prints as well as slides. I was once in a club where I got an extra mark in the league table for a home processed colour slide. Surprisingly trade processed mono slides were not acceptable. Tradition or maybe just the old brigade on the committee found it infra dig even if quite logical.

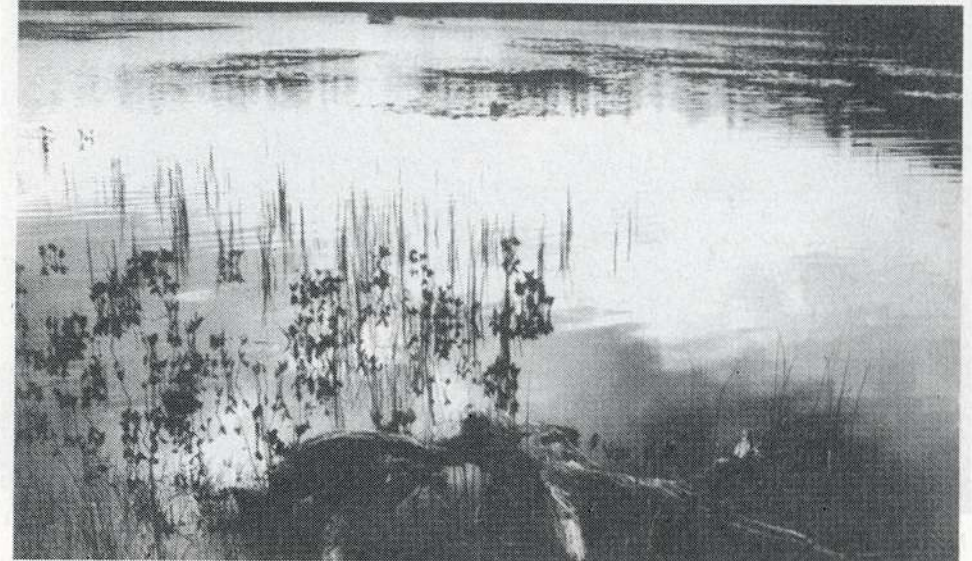
Not so long ago I had to judge a club annual print competition. I was told that all the many colour prints on display were trade processed. (B and W were still DIY.) They varied from 10x8 to 20x16, the latter obviously taken at photo trade shows. Beautiful models, perfect lighting, accurate flash exposure, good print quality. What did the author do apart from plugging in the flash and focussing? What on earth does the poor old judge do, when he is obviously behind the times? I gave the best print award to a rather nice very individual mono, as to my mind club photography is all about personal ideas and artistry, rather than mere technicalities.

But where do we go from here? Even the RPS seem to be wavering.

In a recent RPS Journal it was stated that painting is creative distortion and photography is creative selection. Quite nicely put! Photography is certainly putting a piece of optically selected subject matter on to film and possibly on to paper. In the past we have not unduly cribbed as to the route from idea to final photographic representation, which could involve some funny goings on in the dark room. But this was all done personally, which is rather different from personal instruction. Could I instruct a capable technician to apply paint on my behalf and call the picture mine? Can I explain to a printer exactly what I want and call it my work? Its a very grey area, if you will pardon the expression. Photographers usually like a good black and a reasonable white. I am distinctly fogged at the moment.

A SELECTION OF 1987 PRINT WINNERS

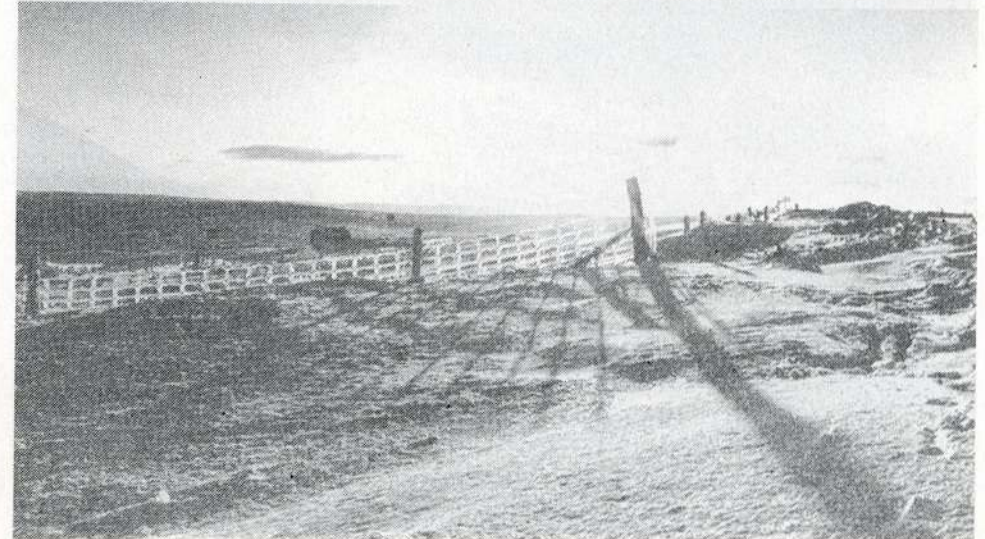
PLAQUE FOR THE BEST SMALL PRINT



HIGH DAM

TOM RICHARDSON Circle, 7

ROLAND JONAS (LANDSCAPE) TROPHY AND PLAQUE



GLASS FENCE

K. A. ROTHERY, Circle 3

BEST PRINT PANEL (Circle 11)



MAN SMOKING CLAY PIPE

TONY DAKIN (Circle Certificate)



ROSS

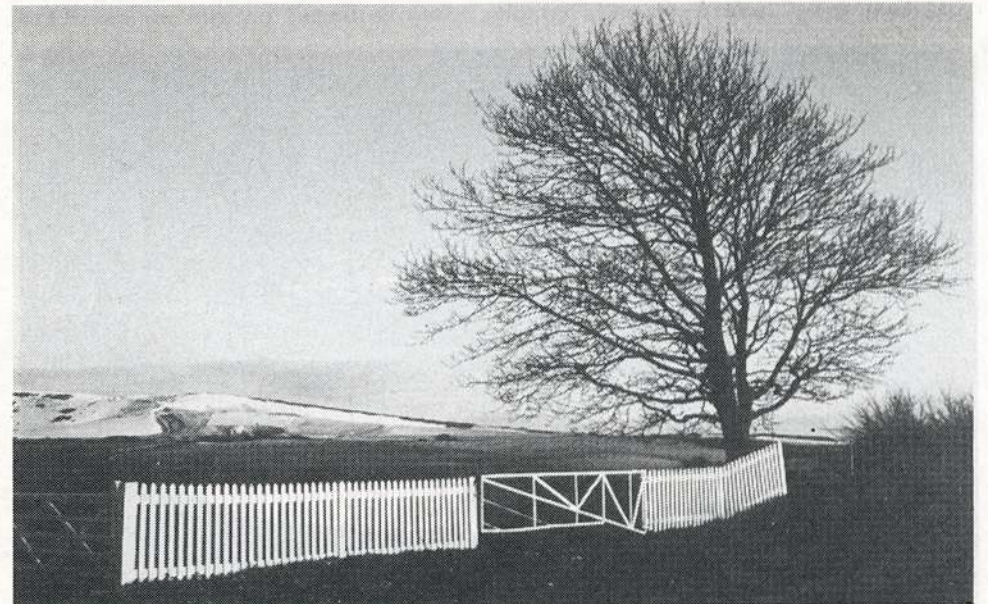
MICK WILLIS

BEST PRINT PANEL (Circle 11)



GOING HOME

PAUL DAMEN, A.R.P.S., A.B.I.I.P.



THE WHITE FENCE

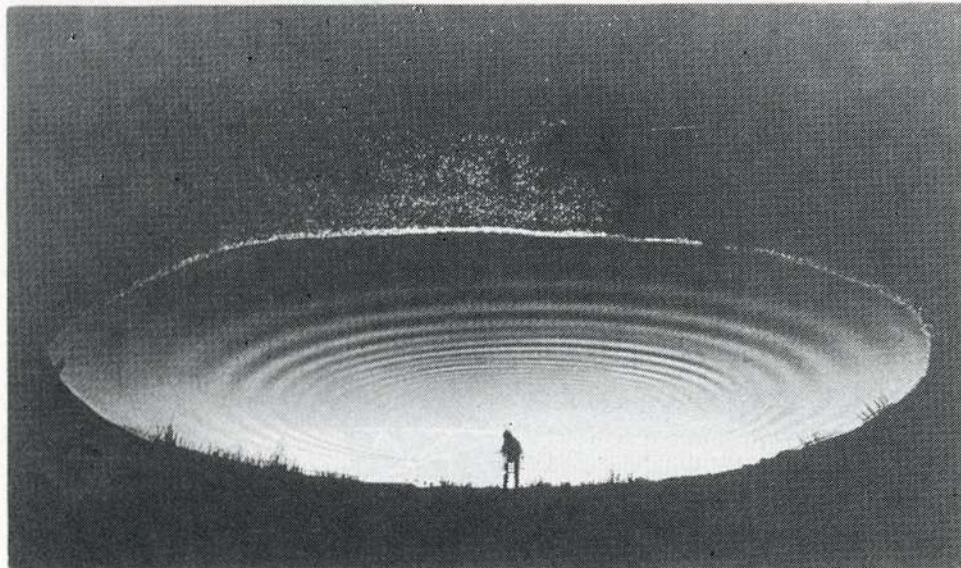
PETER CLARKE, A.R.P.S

BEST PRINT PANEL (Circle 11)



LINES

HUGH MILSON, F.R.P.S.



VORTEX

COLIN WESTGATE, F.R.P.S., A.F.I.A.P.

OUR EXPENSIVE HOBBY (and other musings)

by Ian Platt F.R.P.S.

I have lost count of the number of times that a non photographically-minded relative/friend/colleague, on learning of my major hobby, has passed the remark that it must be an expensive interest. No doubt, dear reader it has happened to you too. Since it is my main spare time activity I never really question how costly it is, but if appropriate I do offer the rejoinder that it is certainly cheaper than trying to commit suicide by smoking yourself to death!

You may recall a recent article of mine in L.M., called "Cameras of Yesteryear" and will therefore know of my interest in camera history. In the course of research into pre-war (39-45) 35mm cameras in general and SLR's in particular, mostly through the pages of library copies of the British Journal of Photography, I managed to obtain a Wallace Heaton catalogue (called the Blue Book referring to its outside colour and not its inside contents!) for the year 1939. It is a lavishly illustrated 343 page booklet that was far more than a price list since it contained many informative articles on how to improve one's photography. Are your ears burning, Jessops? It was the camera prices that first caught my attention especially within the context of our "expensive" hobby of today.

In 1939 a Leica 111b with f/2 lens cost £43, whilst today the M6 rangefinder model sells for over £1300. To put these figures into some sort of perspective I have been authoritatively advised by the DOE that the average wage in 1939 was approx £5 per week compared with about £175 today. It could therefore be said that the price of a Leica has more or less kept pace with inflation, but what of other 35mm cameras? The very sophisticated Zeiss Contax with built in exposure meter and f/1.5 lens would have set you back £78 (£2700 today) and the most expensive of all 35mm cameras the unusual twin-lens reflex Zeiss Contaflex was priced at £87 (£3000 today) with the same ultra fast lens. This last figure was only about £15 less than the then current model of a Ford car. Clearly these cameras were well beyond the means of the ordinary man-in-the-street, who nevertheless nowadays apparently thinks

little of lashing out anything up to £300 or so for on an SLR bristling with features, plus a zoom lens or two.

For the newcomer to photography today, most of the leading Japanese manufacturers continue to offer a more basic model in the price range up to say £190 -- which figure if scaled down to its 1939 equivalent, is in the order of £5.50p! It is interesting to see what was available for this latter sum in those days nearly 50 years ago. Well an SLR was out of the question for a start. Of the two or three different makes, only the Kine Exacta was imported into the UK, and even in its most basic form was £28 (£950 today). Of the non interchangeable-lens cameras, several precision models by Zeiss Ikon were even pricier than the Exacta although they did make a version of the Super Nettel with a cheap lens for £18 (£600 today). In the 1939 catalogue no less than 22 different models of 35mm cameras are listed, and of these only one is priced below £5. This was the Agfa Karat with f6.3 lens that took 12 exposures on what was later known as their Rapid system (cassette to cassette with no rewind). Even the most basic Retina was over £10 (£350 today). Bearing in mind the still very high quality of the cheaper Nikon/Olympus/Pentax/Canon/Minolta etc. of today, 50 years ago the equivalent sum would only buy you a universal viewfinder for a Leica. You would not have been able to afford the Zeiss rotating turret viewfinder at £9 (£300 today), and a Weston exposure meter would have cleaned out your money box and left no small change.

So much for cameras etc., how about materials? 35mm Kodachrome was only available in 18 exposure lengths for 62.5p (decimalised) in 1939-- say a round £1 for an equivalent 36 exposure film. Today Kodachrome is about £6.50 whereas scaled up it should be £35 on a cost of living- equivalent basis. A similar story exists with monochrome film. Printing paper would have cost you 45p for 10 sheets of 15x12", whereas today the equivalent product can be obtained for under £8 - scaled up it should be £15. All in all

I would say that we are exceedingly fortunate to indulge in a hobby that has, over the last 50 years, more or less steadily come down in price relative to the cost of living, and at the same time the sophistication of the equipment has dramatically improved in inverse ratio.

Still browsing through the 1939 price list, the other thing that struck me was the paucity of British cameras. Several large format plate-rollfilm models were available from Thornton Pickard, Adams, Soho etc., but for lesser mortals who wanted a good camera that was a cut above the Box Brownie, the British-made choice rested between two Ensign models, the Selfix and the Autorange and a plastic Purma Special. That was it. Not a single 35mm camera or even an example of the popular twin-lens reflex was made here. From the comparative safety of hindsight, it does seem our camera manufacturers had their heads well and truly buried in the sand in the years leading up to 1939, and that the importers of quality cameras of many formats must have been laughing all the way to the bank.

Post 1945 things did pick up, albeit temporarily, when several British cameras of quality appeared, notably Ilford Witness and Advocate, (later Ilford cameras were made cheaply in Germany), Wrayflex- the only SLR ever made in the UK- , Reid and the highly inventive Corfield Periflex. The MPP Microflex was a very high quality twin lens reflex that compared favourably with the Rolleis, and its Microcord brother was a fine camera too, both being 6x6cm. of course. But all too soon they disappeared, mostly due to the competitive pricing of equal or superior quality from abroad.

Finally, just as I was about to put the 1939 price guide down I spotted two interesting items buried at the back among the cine apparatus. A zoom lens for a 16mm camera at £45 (£1500 today) and a mirror or catadioptric lens for £25 (£850 today). Both items still in use among still- photography enthusiasts nowadays, but unheard of in those far off years.

So, if you are one of those that considers our hobby expensive today, just pause to think the next time you rattle off a 36 exposure slide film, just how big a hole it would have made in your bank balance 50 years ago.

Going Round in Circles

CIRCLE 4

As the first colour print circle in UPP and still going strong after about 15 years, it gives me great pleasure to announce that there are still three founder members contributing, plus myself the Hon Sec. Not bad after an initial membership of twelve.

However, although we consist of 15 members and deaths and illness inevitably take their toll, a couple of vacancies exist in this bi-monthly "no holds barred" circle.

I will even post a box on approval!!!

CIRCLE 6

This year the membership has once again been very steady, no resignations, and just one new member. Andrew Rothery joined us just after his friend from this circle, Allan Fearnley passed away.

One of the new 12" x 16" boxes was put into circulation, and on its return to base was tied up with nylon cord. It was found that the fabric straps were useless, so, with the purchase of two luggage straps and bifurcated rivets, I set to and made the box secure. It is on its way round again and hopefully will return in good shape.

Another box went through the giant P.O. Crushing Machine! It arrived with a hole punched through the lid and through the top print in the box, completely ruining it. Compensation was obtained from the P.O.

Another attempt was made to organize a rally but to no avail. A small gathering has been arranged at Jodrell Bank for the end of May. I hope some members turn up.

Ron Hill has just left us for six months, being on a computer course. He has been granted "Leave of Absence".

The GLs this year were shared between six members, the POTY trophy was again won by Bill Browne and the League trophy was retained by Alan Challinor. Belated congratulations go to Glyn Jones for obtaining his ARPS.

Congratulations must also go to Bill Armstrong ARPS on becoming editor of Little Man once again. (Congratulations??---Ed.) Best wishes Bill. Don't use that blue pencil too much.

Several colour prints have been entered during the year, but all home processed. The question of trade processed prints has not arisen but I feel that if it did it would be frowned upon.

I feel that the Council has put us secretaries in a corner, in the minutes of their meeting, they tell us that our notes are sometimes too parochial. I wish they would tell us what they would like us to say in our notes.

CIRCLE 10

The Circle is now enjoying its 50th year and has decided to mark this fact by producing a "Year Book". Each member, and we are up to strength, will print two of their favourite pictures within a central square on 10"x8" sheets of paper and these will be bound together to form a permanent record of the work of the present members. Would that this or something like it had been done 50 years ago.

We are looking for a large turn out (100%) for our annual Rally at the beginning of May, which this year is in Bradford. The National Museum of Photography is an obvious attraction, and of course it is surrounded by first class "landscape" country. It also offers plenty scope for our candid workers.

A recent member is Nigel Robertson LRPS who should soon make his mark and Sue Thompson has proved that our usual trio of GL winners cannot always have it their own way.

Percy Deal L.R.P.S. Circle 10 is still reeling from the shock of the news that our much loved Percy has succumbed to a massive heart attack, with no warning what-so-ever. He had made his usual complete and speedy contribution to the circle only a few days before. He had been a member of Circle 10 since 1974. He always entered a print. In recent years they were bromoids, which he managed to produce using modern materials, generally regarded as impossible--certainly very difficult. His criticisms were always kind and directed to the meaning of a picture, rather than carping on supposed technical shortcomings. Notebook entries were invariably long and full of interest. They never contained an unkind word. Quite simply, Percy was a model member and totally irreplaceable and our sympathy goes out to Vera and to the family.

CIRCLE 20

April 8th. saw us in Yorkshire, at the delightful resort of Whitby. Twenty eight of us gathered at the Banchory Hotel high up on the West Cliffs of Western Whitby, on Friday evening, in a howling gale with driving rain and very cold.

Saturday morning dawned fair but with a strong wind still whipping up the sea to a fearsome height. As we sat down to breakfast a tragedy was unfolding just outside the harbour as a yacht capsized in the breakers, and sadly one the crew was drowned. It was a daunting start to our weekend, but we rallied to the day and ventured to the boundaries of Whitby photographing everything in sight. Saturday evening was celebrated with video displays from Harry Buck and his friend Edgar, who entertained us with their films of the day.



We visited Staithes, a delightful little fishing village just north of Whitby and of course the obligatory visit to the ancient Abbey of Whitby on the hill east of the town. Sunday was spent touring around the coastline and in Robin Hood's Bay, a very picturesque village to the south of Whitby. All in all, a very happy week-end was spent in the most convivial of company, and now we look forward to our next get together which may be "sur le contient."

LARGEST RANGE LOWEST PRICES



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ARE WE TOO ANALYTICAL?

by Edward Eves, O.B.E.

THIS question came into my mind when I was talking to an artist friend of mine who is a fellow tutor at the same evening institute. He asked to see some of my prints and when we were discussing them I pointed out some of the faults which some of the critics had mentioned. His remark, which struck me as sensible, was "You mustn't be too analytical when looking at pictures and other artistic work".

The more I read our crit. sheets with this thought at the back of my mind, the more I feel he is right. Having discussed this with some members of my own and other circles, I find that many seem to agree.

Perhaps we begin on the wrong foot by calling them crit. sheets, and by continually asking others for their criticisms and to point out our mistakes, as if every print or slide must have something wrong with it. This approach is wrong, of course, because a criticism is an appraisal and not fault finding. So many crit. sheets are just a list of faults, many of which are not faults at all but merely things the critic does not like or think he shouldn't like.

So possibly we could get the emphasis right if we called them discussion sheets. The most useful sheets I've found are those where the members set out to discuss a slide or print rather than find faults. So many of these 'faults' come from so-called rules or sayings devised by the legion of club judges and other critics who have all sorts of quirks and prejudices, to say nothing of a sackful of clichés.

If, when looking at a picture, one's first reaction is to search for weaknesses, one misses the wood for the trees. Surely, every picture is meant to be seen as a whole composition, and if it is pleasing and attractive why bother with the small details? Why get out the magnifying glass to examine the definition when at the right viewing distance the definition is suitable for the picture? After all, would any of us go into an art gallery and look at a Vermeer, a

Titian, a Constable or a Renoir and pronounce that some small detail was a fault, and give him seven?

Art is not to be judged in this way because it is largely a subjective business. We may be admirers of Vermeer's homely scenes and find them rewarding but greatly dislike Renoir's plump little nudes. Others may take opposite views. Much the same happens when viewing photographs. We may abhor a modern blur or soot and whitewash effect which is intended to give impact, but fall for a picture with a great variety of tones. There may be nothing wrong with either of these pictures photographically. It is just that we like or dislike them. How dull the world would be if only our particular sort of picture was produced. Even we would tire of them.

So let us first look at a print or slide and see if it is a good piece of photography. If it is, forget about the clichés and don't go seeking tiny faults. Sit back and enjoy it.

If you don't care for a picture and it isn't your kind of photography, nevertheless try to appreciate the merits of other kinds of work. The dyed-in-the-wool pictorialist may think his is the highest form of photographic art, but that is little more than a conceit. No good photography is easy and all good photography has a beauty of its own, whether it be illustrative or record work, architectural, close-up, studio, derivations or what have you.

I have come to see that my artist friend's way of looking at pictures has merit. We should, therefore, set out to appreciate the prints and slides we see, even if they are not our sort of work. Though we may not like them let us remember that it is likely to be a purely personal or subjective dislike and that art has no absolute rules by which it can be assessed. After all, the author is not always wrong: it could well be the viewer's eye that cannot behold the beauty.

MY PLEASURES and OTHER MATTERS

by Bill Jackson, Circles 22 and 35

One of the pleasures of our hobby (is that a provocative word?) is to produce better pictures as we become more experienced. There are others, of course. Let's face it, there's a lot of pleasure to be had from playing with our toys and showing them off to our friends. I remember reading a story years ago about a crippled, impecunious teenager on a beach in the south of France who had some fun with his mates setting up situations to "photograph" using an empty camera. Another pleasure is trying out different processes and techniques. Although my father had been into photography since long before I was born, my own interest was not aroused initially by the results, or even by the hardware, but by one aspect of the chemistry. At the age of 13, I became infatuated with toning, replacing the silver image with various insoluble metallic compounds - iron for blue, copper for red, vanadium for green, lead for yellow and so on. In due course I had toned all my father's spare prints (except for those that I had hand coloured) and I was driven to take some pictures for myself. This launched me on the path to becoming an equipment fanatic and over the course of 40-odd years I progressed from my first decent camera (a Voigtlander Brilliant) to my present all-electronic marvel (with a spare all-mechanical body, just in case). At various times I have owned (in succession--not all at once) two Rolleiflexes, two Mamyaflexes and a Yashicmat 124G, before I decided that I could only use this format to compose square pictures, which I don't really like, except Fay Godwin's. Now at last in my seventh decade, I have to confess to myself that I have been doing it all wrong when it comes to actually producing pictures. This realisation is one of the many good things I owe to my very dear wife.

Before we married a little over five years ago, she had never taken a photograph in her life. So I bought her a camera a reflex that did everything but focus itself and wind on the film. We soon changed this (it was too heavy for her and did not fit into her handbag), for an auto-everything-except-see-the-picture compact. Joan is mainly a holiday photographer. Before very long at all she started turning out quite a few snaps which were better than mine of the same subject. Why was this?

My wife is a planner and a thinker. I am impetuous. She studies what she sees in the viewfinder and if she is not completely sure that she will get what she wants, she puts the camera away. I tend to be snap-happy and blaze away in hope and, to be honest from the sheer sensual pleasure of working the machinery. It's a classic case of "Don't do what I do, do what I say". When Joan started I gave her good advice, which she followed. I suffer from decades of bad habits. Mercifully, my sub-conscious eye has learnt a bit and I do manage some reasonable photographs, but not yet good enough for an RPS distinction.

A lot of my problems, of course, are due to the photographic industry. Cameras are so easy to use and films are so good these days that it's quite difficult most of the time to get the technicalities wrong, and it's all too easy to blast off a whole cassette with great zest, only to find that you have 34 complete duffers. This highlight forms the distinction between enjoying photography and producing good photographs.

One is self-indulgent and the other demands self-discipline. What I really must do is to decide whether the effort of working really hard at disciplining my photography is justified by the prospect of reducing the frustrations caused by less than perfect results. Suppose I do decide to work-- what is the best way to go about it? One extreme would be to take everything with a view camera-- unworkable without discipline. Once quite a few years ago I encountered an American wandering around Leicester Square with a 10x8 inch Deardorff on a tripod sloped over his shoulder. I know that he was an American because I was so amazed that I spoke to him. He in turn was fascinated with my Olympus Pen S, guess-focussing, guess-exposing and half frame.

Less extreme and not totally impracticable would be to resolve to use a tripod always. I mean, there's not much point in setting up a tripod and then not doing everything else right. Can anyone recommend a tripod as rigid as my Mark 2 Benbo which is light enough to carry everywhere?

Another option would be to try to establish the habit of thinking really hard about each shot before pressing the shutter.

Shall we petition a camera manufacturer to develop a model that flashes *LOOK**THINK* in the viewfinder on the first pressure? I think this is the most practical answer and hereby resolve to use a tripod whenever it's reasonably convenient.

Come to think of it ,Practical Photography gave away last year a little booklet called "Get it right every time". On the front cover it says, "Fed up with failures? Want 100% success?" "You need never take a bad picture again-- all you have to do is Think before you shoot." For copyright reasons it would be wrong to copy the whole thing out for you, but in 24 pages they have condensed the essence of a whole shelf-full of books. I don't suppose reprints are available but borrow one if you can. I have noted the main points on a card to be carried in my camera bag and to be looked at frequently!

THINK THINK THINK

LIGHT---is it right?

MOOD ---Is it present?

COLOUR---does it contribute?

LENS---is it the right focal length?

GET CLOSE--- is the frame filled?

COMPOSE---is the arrangement OK?

FOCUS-DEPTH of FIELD--- is sharpness OK?

EXPOSURE--- is it right for light and movement?

HOLD STEADY--- brace camera or use a tripod.

I hope that I can stick to this.. I hope that it will help you.

CIRCLE SECRETARIES

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