



Newsletter



Sheffield Photographic Society

Summer 2008

www.sheffield-photographer.org.uk

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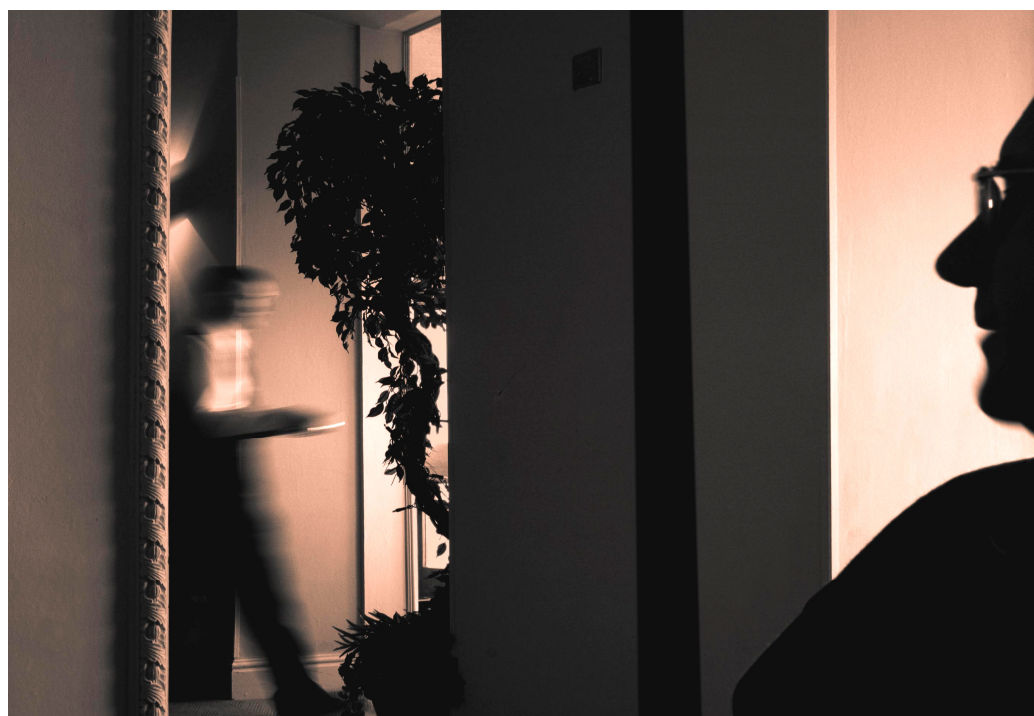
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The Waiting—Keith Lord

Accepted in this year's London Salon Exhibition

PRESIDENT'S PIECE—Peter Mason

As I write my first president's piece at the end of July, the programme of summer outings has come to an end. Those who came on them will be aware that we were blessed with wonderful weather this year for most of them. I remember particularly the Tuesday evening walk on Bamford Edge; the day had not been very good, and it was still raining as we drove to Curbar Gap car park, but the rain stopped, the sun came out, and the evening light on the moors was something very special. To cap it all, there were highland cattle with new-born calves up there, and the warm evening light lit up their rich brown colours beautifully. It was a very memorable evening.

The visit to the Ball Street Bridge area of Sheffield led by Paul Cutts was less lucky with the weather - raining stair rods as we say in these parts - but it did clear up and the area is very interesting. In general the Tuesday evening walks have been very popular but fewer people have come on the weekend ones, so perhaps we need to change the programme a little for next summer.

When you get this newsletter the new season will be almost upon us, and Keith Brown, with a little help from me, has arranged a very interesting programme for 2008-2009. We have some new lecturers visiting, including Dianne Owen and a double act from Keith Parcell and John Fontana, and welcome return visits from past favourites such as Karen Frenkel and Robert Falconer. We also have as usual talks from several of our members, for full

PRESIDENT'S PIECE—Continued

evenings or parts of evenings, which are often the most popular meetings of the year. If you think that you could show some of your pictures for anything from a whole evening down to 'ten pictures in ten minutes' please let us know - you may find it a challenge, but it can be very rewarding.

One welcome event this season is the showing of the London Salon exhibition prints. We hope to be able to show the 2008 prints this year, but this has not been finalised yet. Several of our members got acceptances and medals this year, due in large part to Colin New encouraging entries and helpfully offering to take prints along to the judging day.

I hope you have been taking pictures for the Sheffield Life exhibition which is scheduled for April 2009 in the Winter Garden. Jim Charlton will be encouraging you to get some prints done and hand them in during the autumn for possible inclusion in the exhibition. We will also of course be holding our regular Perspectives exhibition in the Winter Garden in November and the Annual Exhibition in the cathedral in February, so get to work printing all those wonderful pictures you have taken recently!

We meet again on Tuesday 16th September, so I must get down to preparing my talk for that evening. I look forward to seeing you all again then.

Peter Mason

APOY08 COMPETITION—Colin New

I recently bought a copy of Amateur Photographer – it is a good way to check out current prices of photographic equipment. Within the magazine were the results of Round 4 of their Amateur Photographer of the Year 2008 Competition. The theme for the round was “**Humanity.**” All of the pictures were meaningful, emotive or beautiful – sometimes a combination of these characteristics.

The first thing that struck me was the number of monochrome pictures in the 30 winning entries. The top 3 were all in monochrome. In fact 20 out of the 30 published pictures were black and white images.

I wonder why? Was it because the theme was especially appropriate for black and white interpretation? Possibly – but I am not convinced. I think we have to finally admit that monochrome – particularly for “art” photography is finally back in fashion. I am using “art” in its broadest terms and am thinking of enthusiast photographers who want to make an image that stands out from the crowd.

We are bombarded by colour pictures – we get them in newspapers, magazines and billboards. Our televisions are getting bigger and better at delivering superb hi definition colour images into our living rooms. Is it surprising therefore that a monochrome image stands out from the crowd?

I also believe that monochrome takes away a lot of the “prettiness” of an image and can give a gravitas that is difficult with colour.

There is also no doubt that modern printers and papers have finally made the making of high quality monochrome digital prints straight forward. For a long time monochrome printing lagged behind digital colour printing and it was only possible to get high quality prints in the dark room. That is no longer true.

The other surprising statistic is that only 16 out of the 30 winning entries were taken on digital cameras. The other 14 were made on transparency or negative film. One was even made on a Thornton Picard plate camera (the author says he took the image in 1949 and one can only wonder what it is doing in an AP of the Year competition in 2008 – even though it is a good image.) I wonder if the images were printed in the darkroom or if they were scanned and printed digitally. We are not given this information.

Now that decent digital monochrome prints are possible I find I am increasingly returning to the black and white print. Like most people I now very rarely use film. My pictures are taken in colour in raw and then converted into monochrome in Photoshop or Lightroom. I know some people have tried in camera conversion to monochrome but this is not something I would ever recommend.

By using in camera monochrome conversion the author is throwing away a huge amount of digital information. This type of conversion is very crude and does not compare with the subtlety or high quality conversion that is possible in Photoshop or Lightroom.

APOY08 COMPETITION—continued

So next time you review your pictures – have a look carefully and ask if any of the images might benefit from conversion to monochrome. Even better – at the taking stage imagine your picture in monochrome – visualise what the final print might look like and remember this when it comes to print making.

Sometimes a monochrome print can say much more - have much more impact than the standard colour one. We too should aim to make pictures that are **meaningful, emotive or beautiful** (sometimes a combination of these qualities.) If at least one of these is not present what is the point of making the picture?

PHOTOGRAPHY WITH A MESSAGE

It's funny how things can come together to create an impact. Those who were present will never forget Colin New's presentation on 15th March. Colin gave us a sensitive insight into what life may have been like for single mothers abandoned and forgotten by the world once they were taken into monastic care. He used his photographic skills to convey the nature of the place (i.e. the monastery) and the pain of the experience. This was photography with a moral message.

Only two days later a book arrived through the post. I had sent for it because of my love of (and past connections with) Africa. It was Sebastiao Salgado's book "Sahel – the end of the road". I should have seen it years ago; after all it was originally published in 1988. This book of world-class images portrays the desperation of the people of the Sahel and their fight against hunger and the loss of their farm land. Salgado uses monochromatic images with the skill of a master to portray the despair and anguish felt by the inhabitants of a land rapidly returning to desert as the rains failed. I defy anyone to look at these images and not be moved. We have seen many television reports and published articles that have covered the same catastrophe, but none have been crafted with the same skill and evocative power as these images by Salgado. This is photography with a moral message.

Only a few days later I became aware of skilled photographers, such as Dan Chung, who have approached the problems of Africa in a different way. Salgado showed the utter despair of the people of the Sahel. Chung shows the normality and the hope that surrounds the pockets of despair. In this way he lends encouragement to the idea that there is a brighter future and that support for the people of Africa is not all wasted. He uses his images to reveal happiness and laughter where it can be found. Chung reveals a resilient people (though in Uganda rather than the Sahel) capable of care and warmth. He too provides us with photography that carries a moral message.

Then, a few days later, I re-opened Salgado's monumental work "Africa" (published in 2007). Like his earlier work in the Sahel this too carries distressing imagery, but it also shows that hope exists that the future of much of Africa could be so much better. This is now photography with a hopeful message.

There are many other examples of photography used to convey a message that is designed to make a difference. Colin might be the first to admit that his account is pseudo-historical rather than "of the moment". In every case, however, I get the feeling that photographers seek out and publish these images because they care. It does not matter whether the topic relates to degradation of human beings or fouling, or litter, or pollution – the sense that a photographer cares comes through the images.

Photography for a cause, as Roger Hicks called it (Amateur Photographer, 19 April 2008), requires great photographic skill if it is to be effective. Salgado has it in large measure. Funny how my fuller awareness of his work came hard on the heels of Colin's presentation. Strange too how the context of hope provided by Chung reveals a future that a photographer can show to the world. Together they have made me think hard about photography with a message. The first question that leaves is whether or not I would be competent enough to use my photography effectively for a cause. The next question is: "Do I care enough?"

John Doornkamp

Salgado, S. 1988 *Sahel: the End of the Road* (University of California Press) 140 pp

Salgado, S. 2007 *Africa* (Taschen) 333 pp.

On April 15th last season - along with other work - I presented my sequence about a disused women's mental hospital in Leuven Belgium. Since my presentation I have received a lot of feedback and been asked a lot of questions from members. I thought it might be of interest to our club members to hear how it has been received by other societies and organisations.

It was first shown to a very small group of enthusiast photographers in Nottingham who I know very well. We are a non competitive mutually supportive group. I received detailed positive and helpful feed back – suggestions about sequencing, recommendations that certain pictures be taken out of the project and so on. I did not agree with everything that was said but I needed those objective assessments from close friends I respected in order to fine tune the project. When you work closely on a project it is often impossible to stand back and see things clearly. There is a huge temptation to see what you want to see – to convince yourself that you are getting your message across because you were there – because you know what you wanted to say.

I then looked afresh at the work and made a number of alterations. I took out some pictures – added others and rewrote a couple of the letters. I then showed the work to Keith Brown and Ken Doney and listened to their feedback.

The first public presentation was to Gamma in November – six months after my visit to Leuven in May 2007. It was well received and promoted a lot of discussion. I asked if it was suitable for showing at Photographic Societies and Camera Clubs. Most Gamma members are also members of local societies and I know the members well enough to be confident of an honest response. The feeling was that the piece should be shown. One programme secretary said “I sincerely hope you will bring it to our club when you come to speak later in the year – I feel it is the sort of work that needs to be shown.”

So, armed with this advice I decided to include it in my talks. Most people have responded very well to this down beat project although there have been exceptions. One person objected to “this polemic against the National Health Service.” I did say I felt this was well wide of my intention and said I was disappointed that he had seen it in that way. Another person did say he felt it was unsuitable “I want presentations that are more uplifting – this one just left me feeling depressed.”

However, in the main it has been welcomed. At one club the person giving the vote of thanks spoke with tears running down her face. She kept stopping and apologising but explained that she had spent many years working in a mental health hospital and it had brought it all back.

I have been amazed at the number of people who have wanted to come up and talk about the presentation at the end of the evening. Many of those are people who have worked in mental health. One man said he had been employed for some years in a large mental hospital in Sheffield and even at the end – just before they closed the place down – the custom was to line up inmates and hose them down. “It didn't just happen in Belgium” he said. Other people spoke of relatives – great aunts etc. who years ago had been taken into mental institutions because they were lesbians or had become pregnant out of wedlock.

Another man came up to me and said “It wasn't just young girls that were locked up in these places. I went in as a teenager and was locked up for 15years. You are right about the erosion of personality and the sense of isolation. Those years scarred me for life. “

The strangest coincidence was a man who said “My wife comes from Leuven. My mother in law's sister became a nun and worked in a mental hospital in Leuven. I don't know if it was Salve Mater. She is very frail now and keeps telling us she wants to talk with us about her years in the hospital. It seems to be very important that she tells her story but after seeing your presentation I am now nervous about asking her about it.”

One man responded to the piece by saying “If I had been doing it I think I would have dressed my characters in 1920's dress. I am not sure about the nudity.”

Before I had a chance to respond a person in the audience said “No – I think the nakedness was absolutely necessary. These people were stripped of everything – every shred of personality has been removed and the nudity symbolises this perfectly.”

I explained to the person that wanted my model to be clothed that I had been taking part on a “Fine Art Nude Workshop” – I had no intention of making a documentary about life in a mental institution. What I had attempted was a fictional, creative, imaginative response to the very powerful stimulus of being in Salve Mater.

SALVE MATER - Continued

The work had been put together after the pictures had been taken and while I had used a few images from my back catalogue and a couple of images taken in a studio after the trip to Belgium these were only there to back up and support the Salve Mater pictures. The other advantage of using the nude is that it gives a sense of timelessness to the piece – costume can pin things down to a certain era too precisely. I wanted my piece to be timeless.

Some people wanted to talk about the letters. Some even asked where I had got them from and assumed they were real. (I was very flattered by that idea.) I explained that when I worked on the project I realised that some sort of text – some sort of commentary was needed to make sense of the story. I have never been sure about combining text and image – I have often said that if the photographer needs words to explain the meaning of a piece – then the project has failed. However, on this occasion I decided that without the words the piece would not work. When I sat down to write I decided that the letter format would work best as it was a way of keeping words to a minimum and would allow the audience to fill in the gaps of the story.

It was interesting that when my wife (who is a writer) saw my pictures she was moved to write – but her writing was very different from mine. It was filled with anger and vitriol and took the stance of “How dare you abandon me in this place!”

Interestingly people have responded in different ways to the completed project. Steve Dorey asked “What are you going to do with the pictures now?” I guess I should have said “I have done what I intended – what do you think I should do with them?” Some people have urged me to turn the piece into an audio visual – others suggest an exhibition – and yet others suggest a book.

I am a printer and although over the years I have learned the special qualities that the audio visual format can bring, there is something about sitting in a darkened room where the images are on or off screen for some pre determined period of time that I feel could diminish the project. I am also unsure that it would work on the gallery wall. Most people rarely take the trouble to stop and read pieces of text and this piece needs the words.

I have come to the conclusion that if it is to be transformed into another format then the home made book is the answer. There are lots of companies offering a personal book making service nowadays and I think that could be the answer. I hate the idea of revisiting a piece of work – when I finish a project I want to move on to the next piece of work. For the time being the book idea sits on the back burner.

I have been invited to return to Salve Mater in September. I don't know how I am going to respond this time. I am sure my response will be quite different as I now know what to expect. This time I guess I will be much more measured – less emotional – heart will no longer be allowed to rule head. I can't imagine I have anything more I want to say about the place – but I will try.

NATIONAL POLICE PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION & EXHIBITION 2008—Erica Oram

The National Police Photographic Competition and Exhibition (the Police Family Album) 2008 was opened at Wath-Upon-Deerne Library on Wednesday 25th June. Six of our members went to the opening and were very impressed by the standard of photography on display.

Although the competition is a national one most of the entrants are from South Yorkshire and a large number of entrants are not in any way linked to the police force. This was especially the case this year because a new competition for South Yorkshire clubs was launched alongside the exhibition. All South Yorkshire clubs were invited to enter and eight clubs did so, competing for a new (and rather large) trophy. The Competition was won (by a whisker from Dearne Valley Camera Club) by Sheffield PS with entries by Adrian Richardson, Jim Charlton, Eileen Cooke, Erica Oram and Colin New. Eileen's print “The White House” was also awarded a Highly Commended certificate. The exhibition of individual entries included prints by Ray Brightman, Lilian Alsop, Erica Oram and Gerry Sweetman. Ray and Gerry were each awarded a Highly Commended certificate. There was also a showing of the accepted slides which included entries by Ray Brightman and Erica Oram.

You can see some of the accepted images on the website (<http://www.policefamilyalbum.org.uk/>). I would like to encourage other members to support and enter this competition when it comes around next year. Look out for the entry forms on the notice board from next April.

YORKSHIRE PHOTOGRAPHIC UNION ANNUAL EXHIBITION 2008—Erica Oram

The Yorkshire Photographic Union Annual Exhibition was opened at the Northlight Gallery in Huddersfield on Saturday 10th May. Eleven of our members had accepted prints on display and seven of our members had accepted projected images which were displayed on a continuous AV show in a side room at the gallery throughout the week long exhibition. Four of our members (Keith Allchin, Keith Lord, Peter Matthews and Judy Smith) gained certificates.

All members with accepted entries are to be congratulated as the exhibition was of a very high standard with only 17% of entries in both the print section and projected image section being accepted. As a club our best result was seventh place (out of 34) in the general colour print section.

I would like to encourage more members to submit work to this prestigious exhibition next year. Although you must submit through the society the decision of whether to enter and what to enter is entirely up to the individual. All entries, accepted or not, will count towards you qualifying to apply for a PAGB award. Look out for the call for entries on the notice board in February next year.

YORKSHIRE PHOTOGRAPHIC UNION KEIGHLEY DAY 2008—Erica Oram

The Yorkshire Photographic Union Keighley Day will be held on Saturday 18th October at the Selby Community Centre. The three guest speakers will be Hugh Milsom, Derry Brabbs and John Smith. The event will run from 10am to 4.30pm and will include lunch. Tickets are £16 and can be obtained from Peter Thompson, 13 Stockton Lane, York, YO31 1BP (please enclose an SAE for return of your ticket).

LONDON SALON—Colin New

This year saw the largest ever entry from SPS into the London Salon Annual Exhibition. Our entry was also joined by two members from Bakewell.

We had great success with acceptances for Keith Lord (2) Rebecca Nex, Adrian Richardson, and Gold Medals for Guy Brown, Fred Bean and Jim Edmonson (Bakewell.) Well done to all who entered.

JIM LONG

Members were saddened to learn of the death of Jim Long on 17 June. He'd been active within the society for over 40 years.

Jim was a keen member of the AV group. Most of his sequences concerned foreign travel, notably India – a country he loved.

Foreign culture apart, he produced an item on the RAF display team. He was an avid fan of the Red Arrows and frequently went to see them in action. This stemmed from a professional interest. After leaving school at 15, he'd trained as a machine operator at Laycocks – and made parts for military aircraft during WW2. At the end of the war he was stationed at Mohne in the Ruhr (Dambusters) valley. As part of his duties, he supervised recreational facilities (sailing, fishing and hunting) for the soldiers stationed there.

Jim had met his future wife before the war at a dance at the City Hall. While engaged, he said he'd got the two things he most wanted in life: a Leica camera and Audrey – in that order! They wed in 1950 and were happily married until Audrey's passing 54 years later. Jim and Audrey set up a part-time business as wedding photographers. Audrey told many a tale of how Jim managed to be late for these events. Once he was late for two marriages on the same day!



Jim was promoted to inspector within Laycocks. Subsequently, he moved to Guthrie and Craig and stayed

JIM LONG—continued

with this company until his retirement at the age of 75. He loved his work. It entailed him travelling both within the UK and overseas. As well as India and many European countries, his career took him to Belize – inspecting bridges. Wherever the posting, he always returned with a set of slides.

In the 1980's, Jim organised a number of long weekends to Scotland and NE England to photograph birds. Prominent among these were trips to the Isle of May in NE Scotland, Ailsa Craig in NW Scotland, the Farne Islands and Bass Rock. These excursions were very popular with members.

SPS was well represented at his funeral.

Tony Morris

KEN DONEY

Like many members of Sheffield Photographic Society I attended the funeral of Ken Doney on Saturday April 26th at St Luke's Church. It was no surprise that the church was full to bursting. As I looked around I saw that many different community groups were well represented – Ken had helped and supported so many people.

I am not a religious person – I envied Ken his conviction and faith – but like many people on that day I sensed Ken's presence in that place.

I first met Ken some years ago when I rejoined SPS. During the period of time when I was a lapsed member Ken had joined the club and very quickly become a key figure. He brought with him unbounded enthusiasm, a huge generosity in the way he was prepared to help other people and a wonderful willingness to explore new technology. As digital imaging emerged into the consciousness of the society there was Ken to help and teach people how to best understand and use this new way of working.

Ken was a wonderful teacher. It was his profession of course, but not all teachers have that great ability to make a complicated idea seem simple. As someone said to me "Ken could always explain it to me in words I could understand. He always had time – it was never too much trouble. I never felt embarrassed to ask. He never made me feel that I should have known."

I got to know Ken when I asked him to help Keith Brown and I work on a commission for Sheffield Education Department. We had been asked to make an audio visual celebrating Sheffield and the original plan had been to make a conventional AV using transparency slides. However, the Education Department had booked the Cutler's Hall and when Keith and I visited it we noted that there was no black out. As the AV was to be shown during an evening in June we decided that our only option was to go digital and use a very powerful digital projector.

Keith said "There is a chap in the club who is very capable with all things digital – I think he might be the person to ask. His name is Ken Doney."

I invited Ken to a meeting in a coffee house in town and a partnership was formed. Little did I know that we would work together for over five years and make 10 digital audio visuals together – many of which were shown in the City Hall to audiences in excess of one thousand people.

We found we got on very well together – there was huge mutual respect for each other's area of expertise. Not only did we become good work partners we became close friends. The "Gentlemen that do Lunch Club" was formed and Ken was always at the forefront of finding new places where we could eat. We really enjoyed each other's company.

At SPS on most evenings it was customary to find Ken surrounded by people – all wanting a chat. "How can I do this in Photoshop – how can I do that?" "I have a new camera but am baffled by the instruction book." "How can I manage dissolves in a slide show?" and so on. Sometimes he was so busy answering questions and helping people he had no time for coffee. On one occasion he said to me "I really wanted to go and have a close look at the visiting speaker's prints – but people kept coming up and asking me questions so I didn't get the chance." People had confidence that this amiable jovial man would always have time for them. He was a people person.

KEN DONEY—continued

Do not make the mistake of thinking Ken was some sort of genial push over. I once saw him give the Director of Education the most amazing, award winning, tremendous tongue lashing because he felt an injustice had been done and that he had been taken for granted.

Ken was a collector. He loved gadgets – all sorts of gadgets. He took a child like pleasure in exploring and playing with them. It didn't matter if they were TV Wii players, coffee machines, computers, sound recording equipment or cameras he wanted to try them all.

He also had a love affair with eBay and could not resist a bargain. I remember him saying to me "I have just bought a Bronica ETRS camera system." This 120 medium format film camera system seemed an odd purchase for someone so heavily committed to digital photography. "Why on earth did you buy it?" I asked. "Well it was a bargain and I couldn't resist it. I came late to photography – I missed out on all the darkroom work and like to think that one day I will set up a darkroom. I want to give it a try."

Ken was a very good photographer. He always underestimated his abilities with a camera. He used to say "Well I have the technical expertise but I lack the creativity I see in other people." There were a number of occasions when clubs asked me to recommend a speaker. I had no hesitation to suggesting Ken. He responded by saying to me "I am very happy to give talks introducing people to Photoshop or to Digital Audio Visual" but I don't want to set myself up as some sort of expert. In the years I knew Ken his work got better and better and I felt his photographic achievements were considerable.

I am not the tidiest person but Ken's computer room was legendary. How he managed to find whatever he was working on I will never know. There were bits and pieces of equipment everywhere – I have no idea what most of them were for. He always seemed to have 101 projects on the go at the same time. Many of those activities were voluntary projects for other people and other organisations.

Never has the saying "If you want something doing ask a busy person" been more true. Ken was that busy person who would always offer help if he could.

Keith Brown and I both met with Ken on the Monday before he died. Although physically very weak his mind was still as bright as a button. Knowing that I was doing a talk on the Tuesday for SPS he asked me to take the Infra Red pictures I planned to show. (He had already insisted on seeing all the other work.) He told me he too planned to have a camera converted to shoot digital infra red. He then brought out his latest acquisition – the newly published book about American Diner's by Tony Worobiec. It had just arrived and he was thrilled with it.

How do I sum up this rambling piece?

Ken was one of those very special people that do not come along very often. I miss his warmth and generosity – I miss his sense of humour and his wisdom. I treasure the short time that it was my privilege to know him. I miss him.

Colin New

FRANK HURLEY—PHOTOGRAPHER - Colin New

A few years ago Channel 4 showed a wonderful "dramatised documentary" starring Kenneth Branagh called "Shackleton." The film was shown over two nights – along with a film called "The Making of Shackleton". It told the story of Shackleton's failed trans – Antarctica expedition – a failure in that his ship got stuck in the ice – a triumph in that Shackleton remarkably managed to save the lives of his men.

The film also told the story of Frank Hurley the young ambitious Australian photographer who was contracted to take both movie photographs and still images of the expedition. Hurley knew that if the expedition was successful it would make his fortune and by much hard bargaining he managed to secure a percentage of the rights of the images.

There is no doubt that without Hurley's pictures the Shackleton expedition would have been consigned to that long list of failed expeditions but Hurley's pictures showed just what the men had endured. His pictures vividly told their story.

FRANK HURLEY—PHOTOGRAPHER—continued

When I watched the programme I was as much taken by “The Making of Shackleton” as by the dramatised documentary film itself because it showed many of Hurley’s amazing images. We saw his original film of The Endurance cutting its way through the ice. (Hurley strapped himself to the mast for long periods of time to make these pictures.) We also saw his incredibly beautiful pictures of the Endurance stuck in the ice and pictures of the expeditionary force playing football on the ice while waiting for a break in the weather as well as many other superb images that made the story come alive. I was spellbound by his beautiful pictures and could not understand why I had not heard of this man’s work before. I knew of the work of Herbert Ponting – to my eye Hurley’s work was as good if not better.

Recently I discovered, that after many years, Hurley’s work is now back in fashion. At a recent sale in Christies a collection of his original prints were sold for many thousands of pounds.

Then – later I managed to catch a programme on BBC2 that gave a profile of the work of Frank Hurley who they described as the man who **“faked the truth”**.

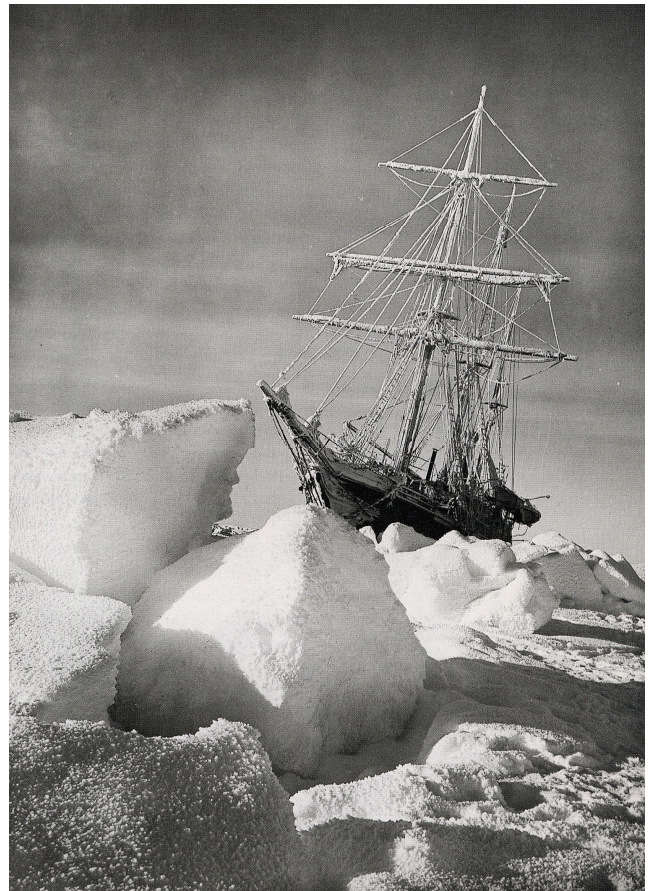
Fake? Surely those wonderful images could not be fakes. Those of you who know the story of Shackleton’s expedition know that the Endurance had to be abandoned as it was crushed by the ice and the men had to make a long and very hazardous trek to Elephant Island. Shackleton instructed Hurley to throw away the majority of his 10 by 8 glass plate negatives and spools of movie film to reduce the weight that had to be dragged and carried across the ice. Many many negatives were smashed and swallowed up by the Antarctic ice – much exposed film was abandoned. Imagine how Hurley must have felt. These pictures were supposed to make his fortune when he got back home. Hurley was only allowed to save a small percentage of his images – just the very best ones. This was surely editing under extreme circumstances.

Eventually after a miraculous escape, brilliantly led by Shackleton, the explorers managed to get back home – only to find that their exploits were not really headline news. The First World War had started and thousands of young men were going off to war to be killed in the trenches. Nevertheless Hurley started to give lecture tours showing his pictures and films and gradually people started to become fascinated by the story of Shackleton’s expedition.

It was later discovered that Hurley had “enhanced” many of his pictures. By studying Hurley’s original glass plates it was seen that the dramatic sky showing Shackleton setting off in an open boat from Elephant Island to seek help had been dropped in from a different negative. The picture described as showing Shackleton’s return had in fact been taken at a quite different time. When other pictures were studied it was found that these too had been enhanced – usually with more dramatic skies.

When asked about this Hurley was unapologetic. He explained that he was trying to convey the feelings and atmosphere of the occasion – it all helped to better convey mood. In this way he was able to give his audience more insight and understanding of this heroic story.

Soon after his return from the “Shackleton Expedition” Hurley was called up into the “Australian Army Photographic Department” to work as a war photographer. His job was to record the war. Hurley continued to work with his 10 by 8 camera – not the most flexible of tools. Before long he had become very frustrated with his attempts to record the activity on the battlefields and complained that it was impossible to convey the full truth and atmosphere of the heat of battle on one negative. He decided that he would therefore montage his pictures – sometimes using 3 or 4 negatives blended together to make a print. His technical expertise was stunning and in this way he made amazing pictures. His battle fields showed carefully placed explosions in the trenches along with aircraft - set just at the right place in the sky. Hurley constructed his pictures of



FRANK HURLEY—PHOTOGRAPHER—continued

the war to try and convey to people just what it must have been like.

The head of the army photographic department was furious when he discovered what Hurley was up to and demanded that he stop “**faking**” pictures. Hurley for his part said he was certainly not faking he was only doing the same as the war artists. They were working with pencils and paint brushes – looking at the scenes of battle and then composing and creating pictures - his instrument of creativity was a camera and he was using it as a tool just like the other artists.

A fierce row broke out which eventually went to the Australian Government. As a compromise Hurley was moved away from the front to pastures new where he set about creating re-enactments of battles – all beautifully photographed and filmed.

After the war the Australian Government and the War department refused to allow Hurley’s pictures to be exhibited although a dozen were reluctantly allowed to be shown in London.

Hurley went on to make a number of dubious and very suspect films about the “Long Lost Tribes of Israel” in New Guinea where he exploited the tribal people and managed to get them to **perform** for his camera. A series of lecture tours based around the material he had gathered made him a lot of money – especially in the USA.

When World War 2 arrived Hurley was again there with his camera but the soldiers in the Australian army objected strongly to his methods and felt that being asked to “perform for the camera” was insulting to the soldiers and general public.

Finally after the war Hurley was employed by the Australian Government to make a series of films and photographs to sell the “Australian Dream”. These were images designed to promote Australia and show “the good life.” The plan was to encourage emigration and the £10 poms were the prime target. Hurley’s pictures and films showed lots of blond lovelies playing on the beach – people having a wonderful time. It was just like one long holiday but it forgot to show the hard grind and work that made such a life possible. The aborigines did not feature in these films.

So what of Frank Hurley? Has my opinion about him changed after seeing this BBC film? Was Hurley the great Antarctic photographer I thought he was when I first saw his work?

Hurley was a wonderful pictorialist – his photographs make very beautiful pictures. In the early 1900’s it was not unusual to montage a number of images together to make pictures – Hurley had been brought up in this tradition. Hurley was not trying to deceive and cheat, he was honestly trying to make a picture that to his mind best conveyed what he had seen. Of course when we look back at these pictures as “historical evidence” the pictures are seriously devalued. To darken one area of the picture and lighten another at the printing stage was totally acceptable – to add elements that were not present at the original scene was not. Just imagine what he would have done with digital imaging!

It did not occur to Hurley that sometimes the truth – the cold unblinking reality of the camera lens can be more eloquent and more expressive than his carefully constructed, montage pictures. It was for the Larry Burrows, Don McCullin, generation to hammer home that point.

Hurley did not think of himself as a historian but as a maker of pictures and he was using all his incredible talents and skills to do this. To me Hurley was a wonderful photographer who made some great images.

MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

Unfortunately this edition of the Newsletter has far too much input from myself. This is your newsletter and we need more people to contribute. I understand that during the Summer months a lot of people forget SPS and are off doing other more exciting things but if we are to continue publishing a newsletter – then we need something worthwhile to put in it! Please think about writing something for your newsletter. Do it now! Please do not put it off!

Please send contributions for the newsletter to me asap. It is best for me if they are in Word through e mail – but articles on disc are fine.
