

TRAVEL LOG

The Journal

of the
RPS Travel Group

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THE **RPS**
ROYAL PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY

TRAVEL



Chair

John Riley
travel@rps.org

Secretary

John Speller
travelsecretary@rps.org

Treasurer

Robert Akester, LRPS
traveltreasurer@rps.org

Digital Communications

Kathryn Phillips ARPS
travelweb@rps.org

Members

Richard Lewis
rlewisuk1@aol.com

Justin Cliffe ARPS
justin.cliffe@gmail.com

Navin Kukadia
nav.kukadia@gmail.com

Travel Log Editors

John Riley, LRPS
editortravel@rps.org

John Minter
travelsubeditor@rps.org

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The Journal of the RPS Travel Group

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I have been invited to write a column having been given the choice of subjects of either my tasks as Group Secretary or the benefits of being a member of the Travel Group. Believing that a description of my tasks would cause you to start watching paint dry I've chosen the alternative.

Having said that, while the benefits are outlined on the Travel Group website, they do need some expansion, particularly as while the Committee members coordinate the various activities, the activities seek the participation of the members or, alternatively, you, the reader, to indicate what other activities you would like to be offered.

First benefit, and possibly foremost, is Travel Log, the Group magazine, published three times a year. The Editor, whose decision on what is published is final, balances publication of the images which have been successful either in the award of distinctions or Group competitions with illustrated articles received from members on their travels.

Since we are an image-based Society, good images will outweigh the written word so, if you have some good images but are not a brilliant word-smith and have an article you would like to have considered, please contact the Editor whose email address is in the adjacent masthead.

Secondly, for more general news we have an e-news letter circulated about 6 times a year. Our Digital Communications Coordinator should be contacted should you have any item you would like included although, again, the Coordinator's decision is final in the inclusion of any item.

Unfortunately, for the time being, the Covid 19 pandemic prevents the organising of photographic trips either inside or outside of the UK. Again, the Society has a committee considering its position on sustainability and pollution so, even when we are back to the new normal, we will have to take their findings into account in arranging such trips. In the interim, the Committee have arranged various lectures by video conferencing.

The Group runs two competitions for travel images.

1. The first is allied to the Spring Event. Up to four images can be submitted to be judged singly.
2. The second, on a monthly basis, again for a single image. It is intended that at the end of the year there will be a run-off competition of the winners of the monthly competition.

Last, but not least, is the Group's Facebook Group which enables the display of images which may attract positive criticism and open up discussion. Like many of the other Groups and Regions of the Society, our Facebook Group is a closed group in that it is only open to members of the Travel Group. If you are not already in the Facebook Group and wish to participate, please contact our Digital Communications Coordinator who will arrange access to the Group's Facebook pages.

In closing, my working title for this piece was "What you can do for the Committee" which can be summed up as participate. I thank those who have submitted images in the competitions and Facebook and items for Travel Log or e-newsletter. I hope that you will continue to do so. For those of you who have yet to participate please do. Your Committee is there not for their own benefit but to meet your needs.



John Speller
Secretary, RPS Travel Group

Reflections

Dear All

A lot has changed in our world since the last issue of Travel Log. So many changes that have affected us both individually and collectively.

During lockdown, my workload with the RPS has increased with me having to, once again in my life, face steep learning curves. Zoom, mute, unmute when the computer tells you to do so. Finding the buttons at my age is difficult enough on my cardigan never mind on the screen. Not ventured very far from my doorstep physically, but thanks to technology I have met up with others from around the world with nearly two hundred at the last presentation.

Like many others, as represented by articles in this issue, I have spent a considerable amount of time and energy reflecting on my relationship with my camera.

Looking back at my days with film, I think they call it analogue now, has made me realise how disciplined I was with framing the shot. I very rarely took more than two images of the same subject. Mainly I took just a single exposure. It is a lesson that I am going to take forward as I believe that going digital has made me somewhat lazy.

I have spent the last five years engaged in giving talks on photography onboard cruise ships. Cruise and Maritime have literally sailed me to every corner of the globe. That is if a globe can have corners. They have taken me, Linda and our cameras five or six times a year to literally every ocean and to many of the world's seas. Unfortunately, the current pandemic saw the demise of the company and the auction of all their ships. My best job ever simply gone.

The thing I am missing the most is not the travel or photography but the company of many people. The company's guests, the crew, and the entertainers. Some we got to know well and have become friends and are keeping in touch. The officers, crew and the performers simply have nowhere to go as cruising has come to a halt. Most cruise lines are pushing their sailing dates back further, with many now pausing operations way into 2021.

It was for the social aspect of our Spring Event 20/20 Vision that made me sad that it had to be cancelled. 20/20 Vision is not a title that we can take forward to next year, but I do hope that we will be able to meet up in Bristol and share our common ground. A passion for photography.

So, do we need to see this as a pause and look forward to the new norm or is this just a long exposure that we will all learn something from?

Take care

John Riley LRPS

Travel Group Chair
Travel Log Editor



Cover photo:- Weather Station



I captured this scene during the ancient Tibetan Buddhist festival at the Hemis Monastery, in Ladakh, Northern India. (It reminds me of a souvenir weather station I had as a child!)

Sue Dall

RPS Travel Group



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Bognor

BUCKET & SPADE HOLIDAYS

COVID EXCURSIONS
WITH A VW CAMPER



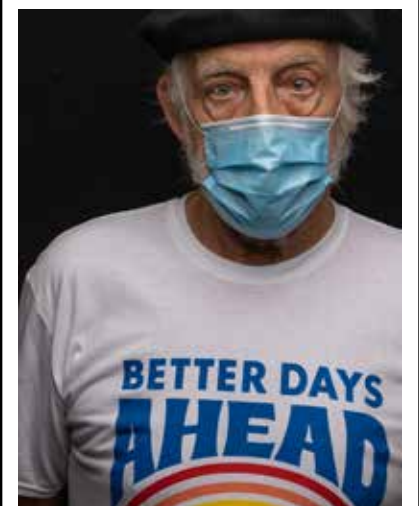
Southampton University



Teddy Boys in Lowestoft

On that day in March 2020, when our freedom was curtailed, I had flights booked and paid for, itineraries planned and my dreams were formulated, then suddenly it was all off. Gone was the prospect of visiting new places, meeting new and different people, the smells and sights and all the things that touch my emotions - and in their place, well nothing!

After the shock came the reality and travel took on a whole new meaning. Initially it was just "life threatening" visits to the supermarket and daily walks around Winchester, which became increasingly boring as the weeks passed and each day became the same as the one before - and the one to come. After a while I did venture further, firstly to photograph the architecture of Southampton University and then to Bognor Regis to capture some seaside atmosphere with a couple of photo club friends, separate cars and socially distanced of course. Then things picked up with trips in the VW California Camper with my wife Pamela firstly to East Anglia, home to Wales and to the north west of Scotland, when it just rained.



Tony Smith



Bognor Pier

We enjoyed East Anglia in the nice weather, Aldeburg in particular and Lowestoft where we met up with a Teddy Boy reunion, (I the term boy in the loosest sense) and in Aldeburg we must have witnessed the world record queue for a fish and chip shop. The Norfolk Coast and the Broads never disappoint, and it was exhilarating to be free for a few days, whilst still constantly on edge in the towns where self-distancing was ignored if not enforced by a facility or business.

The trip into Wales took us from the Monmouthshire valleys to Abergavenny, Hay on Wye and Brecon via the Black Mountains, Brecon Beacons and the Cambrian Mountains and on to the coast. In my youth, in Monmouthshire, the valley towns were grimy places of coal and smoke with mountains of shale, busy pubs and packed chapels. Not anymore, they are now sanitised sleepy dormitory towns for the bigger towns down the road, left in the daytime to the retired and those unlucky to

be unemployed. Abergavenny, on the other hand and just few miles away, is a bustling twee foody destination full of flowers and atmosphere with far too many people given the pandemic, we didn't hang around too long.

Onwards and upwards towards tiny Capel-y-ffin and Hay Bluff on Wales' highest road, the route taken by Saint Paul bringing the Gospel to Wales, going in the opposite direction. The highest point is 549m and in the clouds.



The Scallop of Aldeburgh



Chapel at Capel-y-ffin



Old mine buildings



Blaenavon



Llantony Abbey

On the way we stopped off at Llanthony Abbey, a beautiful ruin with a small hotel built inside and sitting in the Vale of Ewas under the misty Black Mountains. A favourite place for as long as I can remember and a delight to revisit. First a hermitage founded by a Norman Knight and then a monastery for Augustinian canons from 1118 to 1539 when it was suppressed. It was one of Wales finest medieval buildings. Next stop up the single track road was Capel-y-ffin, a hamlet of few houses and two chapels and beyond that Hay Bluff and the drop down into England and the book town that is Hay on Wye.

The final leg took us to the Elan Valley in the Cambrian Mountains, via Brecon, to check out the three reservoirs that supply drinking water to Birmingham and the West Midlands before driving the mountain road to Aberystwyth.

I particularly enjoyed the route from Elan to the coast and stopped several times to take in the long views and big skies and explore and photograph the disused mines in the moon like landscape at Cwmystwyth in the Ystwyth Valley. They mined silver, lead and zinc here from Roman times, reaching its peak in the 18th century. It is said that the average age at death of the miners was just 32 as they died from lead poisoning. There are still no fish in the river for three miles downstream from the mines, such is the toxicity underground here. Soon at the coast but with children out of school and parents not working it was just too crowded to enjoy, so after a night wild camping beside the Towey Estuary we headed back to Winchester.

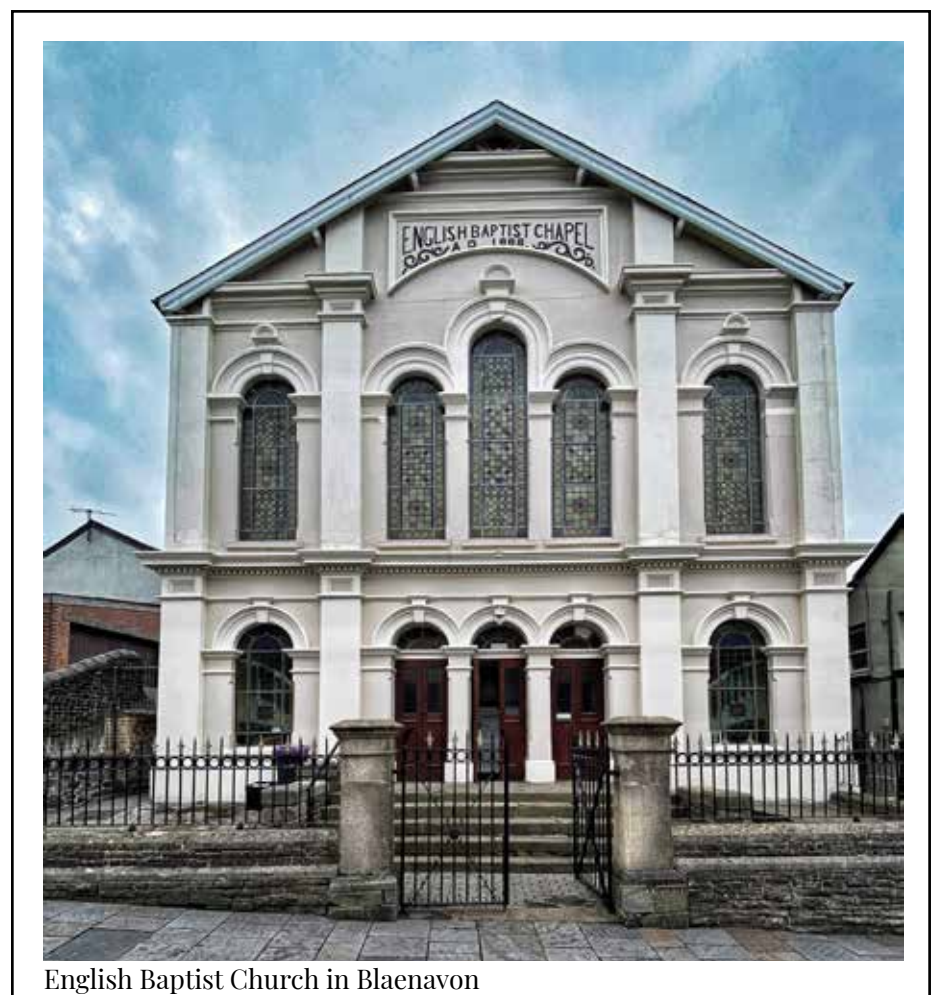
I've been to Scotland a few times but never to the west coast whilst it has always been on my radar. With a BBC weather window of opportunity and the midges gone it was a good time, thought I, to venture north. It's a long way, but with a pre sunrise Sunday start we avoided the congestion on the M6 and made it past Glasgow

and Loch Lomand to Crianlarich in unexpected driving rain. The next four days were as wet and windy as it gets with only glimpses of the coast and countryside, which unfortunately included much of Skye. En route a landslide forced us to detour for 70 miles via Inverness and miss a ferry. The weather slowly improved as we trundled north along the coast to Durness staying there and exploring the area before slowly heading south. The highlight for me was the single track A838 from near Scourie to Lairg and the Moray Firth. Driving through that vast area of emptiness, past lochs and between mountains was a wonderful travel experience. It was slow to Perth but once on the motorway driving was easy. By now the promised good weather had arrived, 5 days late but still very welcome. I will return.

Most of my photography these days is with my iPhone, as is the case here. I enjoy the versatility of the iPhone camera, the tactile enjoyment of editing on my phone

and iPad and the sharing on social media with friends around the world. Since lockdown it has been my best friend as I photographed and shared daily.

As I'm writing this new Corona restrictions have been announced, where this will lead as Winter approaches goodness knows. What I do know is that travel will never be out of my head, it's the oxygen that keeps me going. The first anniversary of lockdown is looming large, I just hope that before it arrives the cost of my cancelled international flights is returned to me.



English Baptist Church in Blaenavon



Lochstack Lodge



Old Man of Storr



You'll take the high road and I'll take the low road

And I'll be back home afore ye

Tony Smith

www.instagram.com/taffymelange
www.instagram.com/taffysmith



A back street west of Id Kar Mosque (2016)

No News from Kashgar

Rob Morgan ARPS



There is no news from Kashgar's Old City. It is not news that every person must go through x-ray and ID security at every entry point into the old city; it happens every day. It is not news that police patrol the old streets; you are reminded every five or ten minutes. It is not news that many businesses are shuttered and gone, while others have been tidied up and prettified; it's been like that for a couple of years or more. It is not news that local children no longer congregate and play in untidy laneways; it is silence.

Late in 2019 I was back in Kashgar, in the Uyghur heartland of far western China. The change in the once-vibrant Old City in three short years was depressing. When I say 'Old City' I mean the reconstructed, new Old City that was built with wider streets and safer structures after 90% of the original ancient Old City was razed by authorities between 2009 and 2015. The most obvious change in three years was the extreme increase in police presence and security checkpoints.

At one corner I recognised the late afternoon kebab vendor. He was one of the few still there. The nearby baker was gone, as was the friendly butcher in another street. Three helmeted riot police officers arrived at the corner and positioned themselves in a line beside a shuttered business, opposite. The kebab vendor viewed them with what looked like a mixture of apprehension and contempt. After about five minutes in silence these armed and shield-carrying 'public security' officers headed off to work their magic at another intersection. Before they got there, they passed other police in an electric buggy and one on an electric scooter; they also passed under several new highly visible public security cameras.

I'd been told before arriving that it was OK to photograph anything, except the police. That seemed normal for this part of the world (not just China), until I needed to put it into practice. I pointed my camera at a corner I'd photographed three years earlier. Now it was a police post, with a police vehicle outside. I went back past another occupied police vehicle, then past riot police at the next corner and over a busy road and into the main Old City. To get in, there was an x-ray and ID security point and police with metal detectors. Three years earlier there was unhindered entry. Back then the only obvious intimidation in Kashgar was an armoured personnel carrier and a few riot police opposite the statue of Mao; now they were everywhere. The daily message was obvious.

Yet the main streets of the Old City weren't empty: instead of the previous buzz of routine local activity, the streets were now full with a new attraction: Han Chinese tourists – on foot or in electric buggies, with guides showing them what I knew was no longer there. It had all been tidied up; pot plants lined each street, cute wooden 'gateways' had been built and in anticipation of National Day celebrations there were little Chinese flags everywhere. The Old City had been turned into a soulless, sanitised, half-empty, ethnic minority theme park, completely safe for Chinese tourists. Mind you, I'd found it completely safe – and friendly – three years before.

On my earlier trip there'd been one original mud brick section of the Old City (Qozichi Yarbeshi) on high ground near the river, still intact and inhabited. I had wandered through it, unhindered. By 2019 it was closed off and empty, apparently due to earthquake damage in 2017. With two or three earthquakes a year in this area and the old city having survived for centuries, how true that explanation was I do not know. It will be reconstructed, I was told, though apart from works to stabilise its base there was no activity, just decay. If its higgledy-piggledy collection of laneways is replaced by neat and tidy streets, with security cameras and enough width for tourist buggies, that will not be news.

There is no news from Kashgar's Old City. Only tears.



A back street in 2016 - local teenagers walk past a street food vendor



The same back street in 2019 - few locals, lots of domestic tourists and two new security cameras



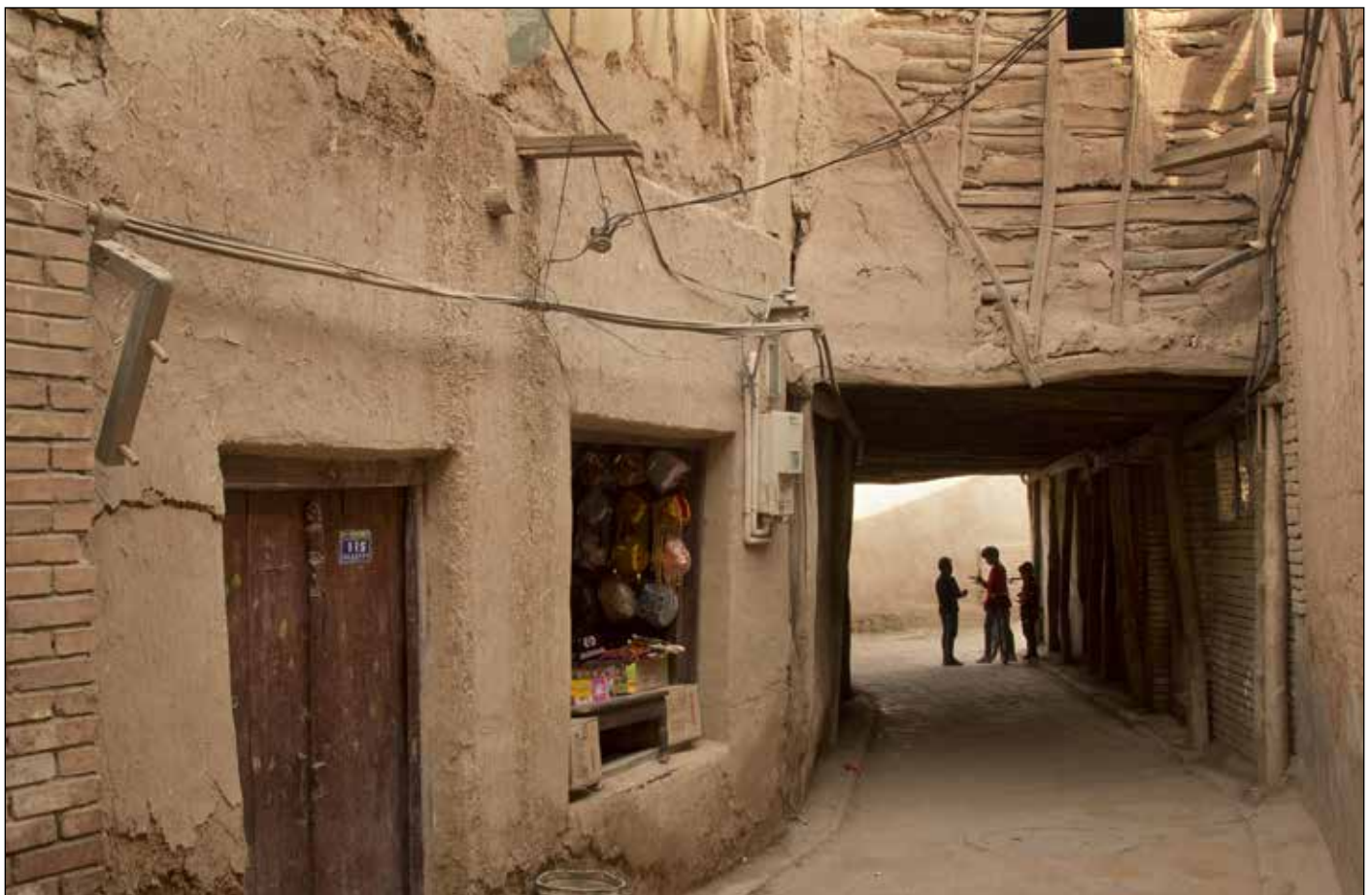
Conversations in one open air shop (2016) - still there in 2019 but tidied up



In Kashgar Old City in 2019



The last mudbrick quarter, closed off and vacated (2019)



A laneway and shop in the one remaining original mud brick quarter (2016)



A friendly butcher in 2016 - the business was gone in 2019



Sister and brother in a Kashgar back street (2016)



Madonna and child in the Hartmann Mountains



Tim Rubidge LRPS

mail@timrubidge.co.uk
www.timrubidge.com

LIFE IN THE DESERT

KAOKOLAND & THE HIMBA

The Namib, some 2,000km by 200km, has endured arid conditions for longer than any other desert on earth; only the Atacama of South America rivals it. The one permanent river flow in Namibia is the Kunene along the border with Angola and over the Epupa Falls. This is a truly wild but stunningly beautiful place. The zebra roam unfenced with oryx, desert-adapted elephants, giraffe and ostrich. Occasionally you may see a leopard relaxing in the shade of a mopane tree, replete after killing a springbok. The very isolation of this remote region saved the Himba from the worst of the colonial genocide (1904-1908) meted out to their cousins, the Herero, and to the Damara and the Nama. Much of the liberation struggle of SWAPO, too, passed the Himba by relatively undisturbed. Life is hard enough.

I flew to Windhoek, Namibia's capital, after a long flight via Dubai. I stepped out of the terminal into the heat and took a taxi along the smooth, newly-surfaced highway past the usual city-edge shops, distribution warehouses and garages to the hotel. My first impression was of a busy, traffic-clogged and rather dusty city not unlike so many others in southern Africa. But several chilled Tafel lagers, a dip in the pool, and a wonderful springbok steak helped counteract the effects of eighteen hours of flying.

At seven the next morning I was met in the courtyard by my driver and guide, Caesar Zandberg, in a Landcruiser equipped for all eventualities. Most tourists head for Etosha National Park, where the artesian waterholes are a haven for elephant, rhino, zebra and giraffe.

Antelope of many species come to drink beside the ubiquitous but wary scavenger, the black-backed jackal. For many visitors, Etosha is the climax of their trip. Some will pull further to the east towards Victoria Falls through the Okavanga Delta. But we continued north and west. Tarmac roads, or any discernible roads at all, disappeared for the coming weeks.

We camped beside the Kunene where it tumbles over the Epupa Falls then made for the Marienfluss and its notorious van Zyl's Pass. The track is barely distinguishable from the mountainside rocks. I did not demure when it was suggested I leave the vehicle and walk. Meanwhile, Caesar inched the heavy vehicle down 45-degree gradients and metre-high steps over loose boulders alongside the lip of the chasm on the left.



Leopard dozing after the morning kill

Driving up the pass is impracticable. This is fortunate as the alleged “road” is no more than 3 metres wide and passing is impossible. The pass is some 15km long but it can be a tense and draining three hour descent. Later, as we drove along the dry, soft-sand river beds and the rubble-strewn Hartmann Valley, I asked how many vehicles passed that way. “It can get quite busy. Sometimes there can be as many as three a week.” It is not unknown for over-ambitious hired-truck self-drivers to be lost for days. Occasionally, breakdowns in this isolated and poorly-mapped wilderness have fatal consequences for the unprepared.

This is the Kaokaland, the homeland of the Himba. They hold passionately to their traditional way of life. Village kraals seem to be the domain of women and children as the men can spend weeks or even months away with the cattle and the goats. There may be four or five huts for sleeping and, water

being so scarce, another for the herb-scented smoke-baths. The women anoint themselves each day with a rich red paste of pounded ochre. As they crowded around for me to show them the camera LCD images of themselves (usually to great amusement!), there was a pleasant, faint otjize scent in the air of butterfat and the herbs they apply to their skin.

Amongst the women, complex hairstyling has important meaning, symbolising status and place in the community. Whereas young boys have a single, short stiff plait to the rear of their heads, young girls have two frontal plaits hanging to their cheeks. These tied backwards indicate that puberty has dawned and that marriageable age is approaching. The women who have children spend many hours together shaping each others’ hair into elaborate erembe headpieces. Multiple plaits are coated with otjize and supplemented with animal hair. Married with children, a

woman completes her adornments with an iron necklace falling to her bare breasts, a short many-layered hide skirt and iron anklets. As in Britain, a husband is altogether less fastidious about fashion and his attire: on marriage his hair is merely tied in a turban, not to be released until or unless he is widowed.

The Himba are closely related to the more sedentary pastoralists, the Herero. They share a common language, but the Himba have been less impacted by missions and have developed unique customs allowing them to live in such a challenging environment. Inheritance passes both through maternal and through paternal lines and individuals identify with the clans of both parents. After marriage - often polygamous - young women move to their husband’s family group but retain close links with their natal families. With the men often away for many months, tradition accepts that both parties may enter into temporary relationships



Zebra at an Etosha waterhole

Descending Van Zyl's Pass - carefully





Waiting for a pick-up truck lift back to the village after shopping

An extended family homestead near Orupembe





Himba girl at the Epupa Falls

during these long periods of absence. Any resulting children will be acknowledged, nursed and raised as part of the mother's group, communally in the village like the other children. Strange though these customs can seem to us, and alien, too, they ensure that everyone has the wide supportive networks of kinship essential in a land where one of our tidy nuclear families could not survive.

Often we camped in the bush or stopped for an impromptu braai, a barbecue cooked over fragrant and almost smokeless mopane wood. Children would appear as if by magic. How this happens in a Kaokaland with a population density more than 500 times sparser than England remains to me a mystery. And that calculation includes those Himba who have settled in the handful of small towns scattered across northwest Namibia. One often sees online discussions of how one should approach photographing local people across Africa. Although

we carried practical gifts for the villages - rice, sorghum, sugar and salt - there were no demands for payment nor, indeed, did I meet with any refusals where nothing was given nor anything requested. I was travelling well away from the tourist paths and not as part of an intrusive convoy and Caesar spoke the people's language. I was never pestered for money or for sweets, as I have experienced in Asia and north of the Sahara, nor was a polite request ever dismissed, as it can be closer to home. Helping save a several-day trek to a tin-roofed trader shop seemed fully reasonable and a cheerful exchange for allowing me to indulge my photography.

There is much debate in photography circles as to whether any payment in money or in kind is ever justified. And I have seen in North Africa and Asia the insensitive voyeurism of enthusiastic groups of holiday snappers as well as the aggressive bargaining of local people. I can only observe that in

my circumstances here in Namibia as a single photographer, the community gift-goods were never a price negotiated and bartered and individuals always agreed to be photographed without any prior suggestion - or subsequent demand - for payment.

It is tempting to romanticise the lifestyle and a people as photogenic and charming as the Himba. It is convenient for us to forget for a short while the allegedly indispensable in our own way of life: GPS, four-wheel drive vehicles, mobile phones, clean running water, vaccines and all the other essentials of our own daily experience. Few would deny these benefits to the Himba who indulged me with a cheery "Moro, moro!" several days walk from the nearest road. When these things are within closer reach, their lives will change forever. Meanwhile, they stand as an uneasy reminder to us of what our Facebook-society is losing: family, community, and a tenacious confidence in who we are.

The Stopover



Mike Cook

One of the pleasures of planning a long-haul trip has been to explore the possibility of breaking the journey with a brief stopover rather than having too much or too little time between connecting flights at an airport (what seems like a comfortable margin between flights can quickly evaporate if local officials decide that you are not "in transit" but required to go through immigration entry and departure formalities). A stopover creates the opportunity to experience, for a few days, a different country or culture, and maybe to whet the appetite for a longer return visit. There is even the potential to sample different locations on the outward and return journeys.



Buenos Aires - 9 July Avenue

To make the most of the limited time available, an orientation tour with a local guide usually makes for a good start, and whilst they may aim to cover the most popular highlights of a place they are often forthcoming with suggestions for further self-guided exploration, places to eat, cultural experiences, and where to avoid!

Of the many places available at which to break a journey, Buenos Aires, Rio de Janeiro, Cape Town, Hong Kong and Singapore have, over the past decade-and-a-half, served us well en route to destinations in the southern hemisphere; as busy cities they were, for the most part, in sharp contrast to the scenic or nature locations we were travelling to or from, and eased us into the holiday mood or geared us up for the return to everyday living without upstaging from the main event.



Buenos Aires, La Boca



Floralis Genérica



Rio de Janeiro,
Metropolitan Cathedral

Little did we expect to find on arrival in Buenos Aires that the main street (9 July Avenue) is a fourteen-lane highway which lays claim to being the widest avenue in the world, though many of the principal points of interest in the city are easily accommodated on a walking tour.

A short distance away, the vibrant La Boca district is rightly famed for its brightly painted buildings, outdoor tango demonstrations, street artists and much more.

The enormous stainless-steel sculpture *Floralis Genérica*, which is designed to open and close just like a natural flower, is situated in a public park and readily accessible.

The Recoleta cemetery is worth a visit, not only as the final resting place of Eva Perón, but also for the multitude of elaborate mausoleums in diverse architectural styles. There is an interesting waterfront area for an easy stroll and alfresco dining.

Rio de Janeiro has the obvious attractions of Sugarloaf Mountain, Copacabana Beach and the statue of Christ the Redeemer, all of which are must-sees. In addition, the modern, conical shaped Metropolitan Cathedral has excellent stained-glass windows, whilst a multi-storey building beyond is constructed with the shape of a cross as an opening in the upper floors as if to reinforce the spiritual significance of that part of the city. We did not visit the favelas shantytown located on the outskirts but when viewed from a vantage point or if a tour could be arranged in safety, they would be a bonus.



Evita!



Iguazu Falls

On this occasion we opted to make the stopover a two-centre affair and moved on to Iguazu Falls which are truly spectacular both as to the area covered and the volume of water flowing. Awesome is an overworked word, but these falls are certainly awe-inspiring and vastly different from Niagara or Victoria. Viewed from both sides, Brazil and Argentina, the scale can be fully appreciated.

Cape Town offers Table Mountain, penguins on Boulders Beach, the colourful Bo-Kaap neighbourhood, and an attractive waterfront area. A full day trip to the Cape of Good Hope added another dimension and included a boat trip to see wildlife offshore. Standing on the shore at the Cape one is aware of the vastness of the ocean and the emptiness of what lies beyond, to the south, east and west.



Cape Town, Waterfront and Table Mountain



Cape Town, Bo-Kaap



Cape Town from Table Mountain



Cape of Good Hope



Hong Kong - rush hour.

Hong Kong, recent troubles apart, was fascinating. The density of population as illustrated by the cityscape overview from Victoria Peak, the ease of movement by tram, metro and ferry (between Hong Kong Island and Kowloon), plus the attractions of the flower market, the bird market (perhaps not to everyone's taste if you don't approve of caged birds), and the Symphony of Lights sound and light show after dark all made for a memorable introduction to the people and culture of this most populous city.

Singapore has spectacular orchid gardens, the cable car to Sentosa Island, or sip a Singapore Sling at Raffles Hotel, enjoy the cleanliness of the streets, and take a stroll along the harbour. (This trip was pre-digital, so I have chosen not to include any images).

Incorporating these brief interludes en-route has enhanced the overall international travel experience for us and provided an insight to places we might not otherwise have visited.



Hong Kong from Victoria Peak



Hong Kong - Symphony of Lights



John Riley LRPS

The Golden Triangle

Many moons ago I started a video and tv production company making training and educational programmes. BBC 2, British Telecom, British Council and Cambridge University kept me busy for quite a few years.

The British Council sent me, my crew and presenter, Maggie Philbin around the British Empire filming its education activities. I use the term British Empire as it often felt that it still existed. I also made a documentary for TV in St Petersburg on how the fashion industry was coping with the effects of perestroika. There are strong links between the two countries.

It is funny that one thing seems to lead to another. I filmed a documentary style promotional video for a cycle tour company, 'Bike Inn'. This required me and my camera assistant (also known as Linda Riley) following a group of cyclists around North India. It was great fun, and it gave me the idea that I could do something similar with photography. The craze at the time was camcorders.

Linda Riley LRPS





I had been asked by two local Camcorder Clubs to give talks on Video Production. This led to me running a few hands-on courses. So, I thought to myself why not combine this with my other love, travel.

I got in touch with the travel agent in New Delhi that the cyclist had used and together we planned a route and activities. A combination of large cities, small towns, and tiny villages of Rajasthan.

We did some of the normal tourist attractions like 'The Palace of the Winds' 'Red Fort', 'Amber Fort' but from the outset I realised that we needed more than this to meet the needs of our video enthusiasts. I had learned from my time with the cyclists that there can be one fort too many on the normal tourist route.

In February 2002 we departed from Heathrow Airport on our BA flight for Delhi where we were met by the entire staff of our agent's 'Travel Inn'. Owner, Ravi, and his team were truly wonderful.

We were made welcome wherever we went. Without hesitation people invited us into their villages and homes. We were asked not to give the children any money as they did not want to encourage them to beg. We did, however, manage to give them some treats from the kiosks that sell sweets and pens, which were seen as gifts so gained the approval of their parents.

One day we stopped in a small town to get something for one of our guests from the pharmacy. We just happened to have parked outside two schools, a junior and senior.

We were asked by the heads of each to join them for assembly. Mike, one of the photographers was asked to speak to the students. I am not sure what he said but I could hear them laughing and applauding from the junior school I was in next door. It has become one of Mike's after dinner tales.



For fifteen days we travelled on an old bus with rather firm seats, quite solid suspension, and windows for air conditioning. We were well looked after by our guide Padma, a great bus driver and an extremely helpful bus boy. Linda is pictured with Padma and the driver.

The travel days were long, and some had a little moan for the first few days of bumpy roads and early starts but when they reached their destinations all were delighted. I cannot recall any further complaints after the third or fourth day. I see tours advertised nowadays on luxury coaches, but I am pleased that we had a taste of the real India.

Having said that some of our accommodation was a taste of the real wealth of the Kings and Princes of India. We stayed in some amazing places, from Forts to Palaces. The Rajah was still in residence in at least three of our locations.

In some Linda and I were given the bedroom of the Maharani. Pure luxury. One with a bed that could have slept ten with room to spare and a phone either side in case we needed to talk to each other.

Now a hotel, Niwas Palace, was built for Sir Ganga Singh, Maharaja of Bikaner. It was designed by the British Architect Sir Samuel Swinton Jacob and was one of my favourites for its outstanding carved stonework.

The Mandawa fort was amazing. Its bedrooms were furnished with genuine antiques, exquisite rugs, huge cushioned stone window seats and swings. Yes swings. We had three in our room.

After a camel ride across the desert we arrived at a camp and stayed in en suite army tents. It was freezing. So cold that I got out of bed after a few minutes and got dressed again. I felt for the young ladies performing traditional dances in below zero temperatures whilst we all sat around a campfire.





India is such a magical and intriguing place. Cows lying in the middle of the road whilst huge trains cut through the centre of the city within a few feet of peoples' homes. It all seems so normal. I visited both north and south four times and how I wish to return.



We also stayed in Ranthambhore National Park Tiger Reserve in timber huts with stretched canvas walls and thatched roofs. We did see a tiger that will always be with me. We both caught it on video from separate jeeps, but Linda managed to get a still of it as it casually strolled past us. All the party had to rise at four in the morning on two days but well worth it.

Linda and I each had a Video Camera and a Nikon 35mm SLR that we shared. During 'Lockdown' I found the CD's of the Kodak film, the scan said hi-res, but I do not think so. Nevertheless, they have kept me busy.



Videos edited from sections of the tour made their way onto TV being aired by Meridian who used them as fillers between their community programmes broadcast during the night. A cure for insomnia.



One Image



This is the story of a single image that underwent a radical re-crop and re-edit during our Covid-19 lockdown in March 2020 and subsequently - to my immense surprise - won the June Travel Image of the Month competition.

The photo was taken on a September 2019 photography tour in Morocco - a somewhat nostalgic trip for me because I hadn't returned to Marrakech and the Atlas Mountains since hitchhiking with a girlfriend to and around Morocco in the summer of 1968. Our tour spent a night in one of the desert camps in the Erg Chebbi dunes area of the Sahara Desert. Whilst most of the group went by camel, I joined one of the others who had decided to walk instead, thinking that this might give us better opportunities for taking photos.

The walk took about two hours and was timed to arrive at our camp at sunset. We were about half way when I spotted this couple far away. I liked their positioning in this vista, together with the dimple in the sand dunes to the right of them. One of the advantages of my travel photography kit (a Canon 80D with a Tamron 16-300 mm lens) is the focal length flexibility of the super-zoom (in this case taken at 211mm).

As a member of the Digital Forum Blog, each three months I put a single picture up for comment by the other members of the group and I chose this one, which I entitled 'Sahara Desert Duo', for our Round 52 which coincided with the onset of our Covid lockdown. I always find members' comments interesting and helpful and they often lead to internal debates amongst members concerning possible ways in which the photos could be improved. With this picture, one of the early commentators, Rob Morgan, wrote:

"When I frame out the sky on your image, suddenly the focus is the two people - so I'd delete the sky (It's such a dramatic change). For me, that gives a great 'two people lost in a sea of sand' look about it. That belly button in the dunes on the right looks really interesting, but is a little lost at the edge. So I hope you got some images with that at one of the 'thirds' points (top right) and the two people at the other (lower left)."

Two Interpretations



With subsequent commentators there was about an equal split between those agreeing that the somewhat bland sky was best cropped out and those who disagreed because such a crop would lose the far sand dune, together with the shapes of the dune tops.

During lockdown, with no opportunity to take further travel pictures, I decided instead to re-visit earlier pictures on the computer and experiment with some re-edits. This photo was an obvious candidate because I found that, with a radical re-crop of the same image, I could follow Rob's suggestions almost exactly - and even reveal another 'belly button in the dunes' on the right hand side. I liked his 'two people lost in a sea of sand' idea and so re-titled the picture 'Lost in the Sahara Desert' before submitting it to the June Travel Image of the Month competition.

Such a radical re-crop raises interesting questions concerning the permitted degree of post-image manipulation in travel photography. In his Editorial to Issue 84 of Travel Log John Riley notes that 'all committee members agreed that manipulation where sky colours are changed out of recognition and subjects are cut and pasted to form a composite photo have no place in Travel Photography'. I would agree and my own simple maxim is that I never add something in to one of my travel shots but I will crop things out if I feel that it improves the composition. I recognise, however, that such a maxim can sometimes lead to uncomfortable questions as to how far such cropping out can lead to distortions of the 'true representation of the subject' to which we, as travel photographers, aspire.



Graham Vulliamy, LRPS

My Lockdown

I fully recognise how lucky I am to have a home in rural Dorset. As Lockdown was established I disciplined myself to go for an exercise walk every day, sometimes with camera (always with Smartphone, in case) and sometimes without. One positive from the pandemic for me was how much better I have got to know my local area and I hear this echoed by many. This included conversations with local farmers from whom I learnt a lot about the crops and some issues with the business of farming. One thing of interest to photographers was that because of a ban on a certain pesticide this is the last year that this particular farm will grow rapeseed. This may well lead to a different looking spring landscape in the UK.

As I sat down and looked at news and social media content I found the pessimistic content a bit overwhelming and thought that I should balance this with some more positive posts. I started to look through my travel images for those that contained a smile. As I started I was thinking that I would share perhaps 15, one a day. Responding to the very positive feedback (these posts were eventually to garner over 50,000 likes) I started to dig deeper into the archives!

I have to say that most of these images are not ones that I would normally share. Photographically, many are just a smiling welcome which do not necessarily tell much of a story. Personally, however, they are records of some glorious moments of travel. This search unearthed many images that I had paid no real attention to in the past and I came to really like several of them.

I really enjoy sharing my images. One of my ethical beliefs, however, is that it is wrong to benefit financially from an image of a people taken on my travels. This is one of the reasons why so many of the Smile images had not been seen previously. I am certain that the subjects would enjoy the role that their portraits found. As days went by my daily posts were becoming a bit more of a project. After about day 40, I thought I might make it to 50. After about day 60, I really thought that I would be ending on day 75. However, a further trawl kept me going and eventually, and hopefully without diminishing the interest of the images, I reached 100.

To round up the project I created a poster featuring all of the images. I have done this to raise money for a charity that I have supported for many years, WaterHarvest. They run water engineering and capture projects in Rajasthan in areas where many of my Smile images were photographed. I have been able to visit one of these projects to see the impact they have, particularly on the lives of the women and young girls who are being freed from the endless task of water-fetching.

I was really finding smiles to lighten people's day, in however a small way, but I have to recognise that it became part of my care for my own well-being. Unlike the viewers of my posts, every one of the images is a personal memory of wonderful moments of travel which I was revisiting. This was all a distraction for me from worrying about how I get back to my wife and home in Hanoi.

Overall, I think that I found a new purpose for some of my photography and this will be one of the things that I will remember from this difficult year.



Paul Sansome

www.paulsansome.com
www.water-harvest.org



Smile

REMOTE

Ever since 1961 when the 264 inhabitants of Tristan da Cunha were evacuated to the UK after the volcano on their island erupted, I have wanted to visit what is often called the most isolated inhabited island on Earth. Given its lonely location I never thought I would get the chance. But in 2018 I was lucky enough to spot a trip on an Antarctic expedition vessel leaving Ushuaia, taking passengers north through the south Atlantic as it repositioned for its annual overhaul and the following Arctic season.

All our Tristan da Cunha group island visits required benign weather, or we would only get a look see from the ship. During our trip north we encountered a force 10 gale. On the bridge the anemometer was registering 63 knots at times, although the ship's speed, such as it was, may have exaggerated this. Waves occasionally broke over the Bridge, so it could be described as rough...fortunately I seem to be immune to seasickness, though not all were as lucky. The weather became more benign towards Tristan, thankfully.

First stop was Gough Island situated about 250 miles southeast of Tristan Da Cunha. A South African meteorological station sits on the island, this puts into question Tristan da Cunha's claim to be the loneliest inhabited island in the world. The weather played ball, we got our zodiac ride, but with strict instructions not to land. We spent three hours in a magical world of towering cliffs and wildlife, a kind of lost world. Perhaps the highlights were the rockhopper penguins, hopping in line whilst ascending a cliff. On the ornithological side we saw many Antarctic terns and two endemic species, the Gough Island bunting and Gough Island moorhen. The ornithologists were very happy...

Next stop Tristan da Cunha itself. We arrived as dawn broke, barely a cloud in the sky and light winds, we were in luck. The Tristan fishing fleet (three small fiberglass boats) were leaving the man-made harbour. It was the first time in weeks that it had been calm enough for the boats to go to sea, and presumably for visitors to land. We zodiaced into the small harbour, a replacement for the natural one covered by magma in the 1961 eruption.



Gough Island Cliffs

Gough Island - Waterfall





Gough Island - Rockhopper penguins

Gough Island - Elephant seal



I was with a group that climbed the fumaroles responsible for the lava that pushed the locals into evacuation. There was a great view across the settlement, grandly named Edinburgh of the Seven Seas (population c260), from atop a fumarole. It was warm in the sunshine, so after descending and a quick look into the Thatched House Museum it was straight to the Prince Phillip Memorial Hall for a beer. Opportunities for a pub crawl are limited; the other beer option is the Cafe Cunha attached to the Post Office. I purchased some postcards (35p to the UK), but missed the 1200 collection. Items posted before could be taken on our ship, I was told those after had to wait for the next ship to St Helena. It took two months for the cards to arrive.

After enjoying the local brew, Albatross Ale, on a bench in the sunshine, I felt I had to try to get to see the potato patches. These are about 3km from the settlement, with a surprising amount of land between the two, mostly given over to pasture. Walking in the heat was tiring. About 1km from the patches the local bus (the remotest bus service in the world) hove into view returning to the settlement. As it was the last bus of the day, I took it, missing the 'famous' potato patches. These are the pride and joy of the islanders and sustained them through years of isolation. At about 4.00pm a siren went off, a call for the womenfolk to go to the freezer factory as the fishing fleet was returning. Tristan rock lobster is sought after, frozen upon arrival, then shipped out as and when a suitable ship arrives...we were not suitable. As a last fling on Tristan I cadged a zodiac ride to get a close view of the edge of the lava field from the 1961 eruption, a big bonus.

The next day the plan was to visit Nightingale Island, about 20 miles from Tristan da Cunha, which the locals use as their holiday isle. There are huts on it for the Tristan Da Cunhans to overnight, but outsiders are only allowed to visit when escorted. The weather was considered too windy: not so much for landing on the island, but for the guides getting home. If our guides were not able to return to Tristan they would have to accompany us to St Helena, then wait for a ship to bring



Tristan Da Cunha - View from the ship around dawn



Tristan Da Cunha - The 1961 eruption fumaroles

them home (no facilities for aircraft landing, too far for a helicopter), still with the risk they would not be able to land. Excessive swell meant we were unable to take a zodiac ride for a look.

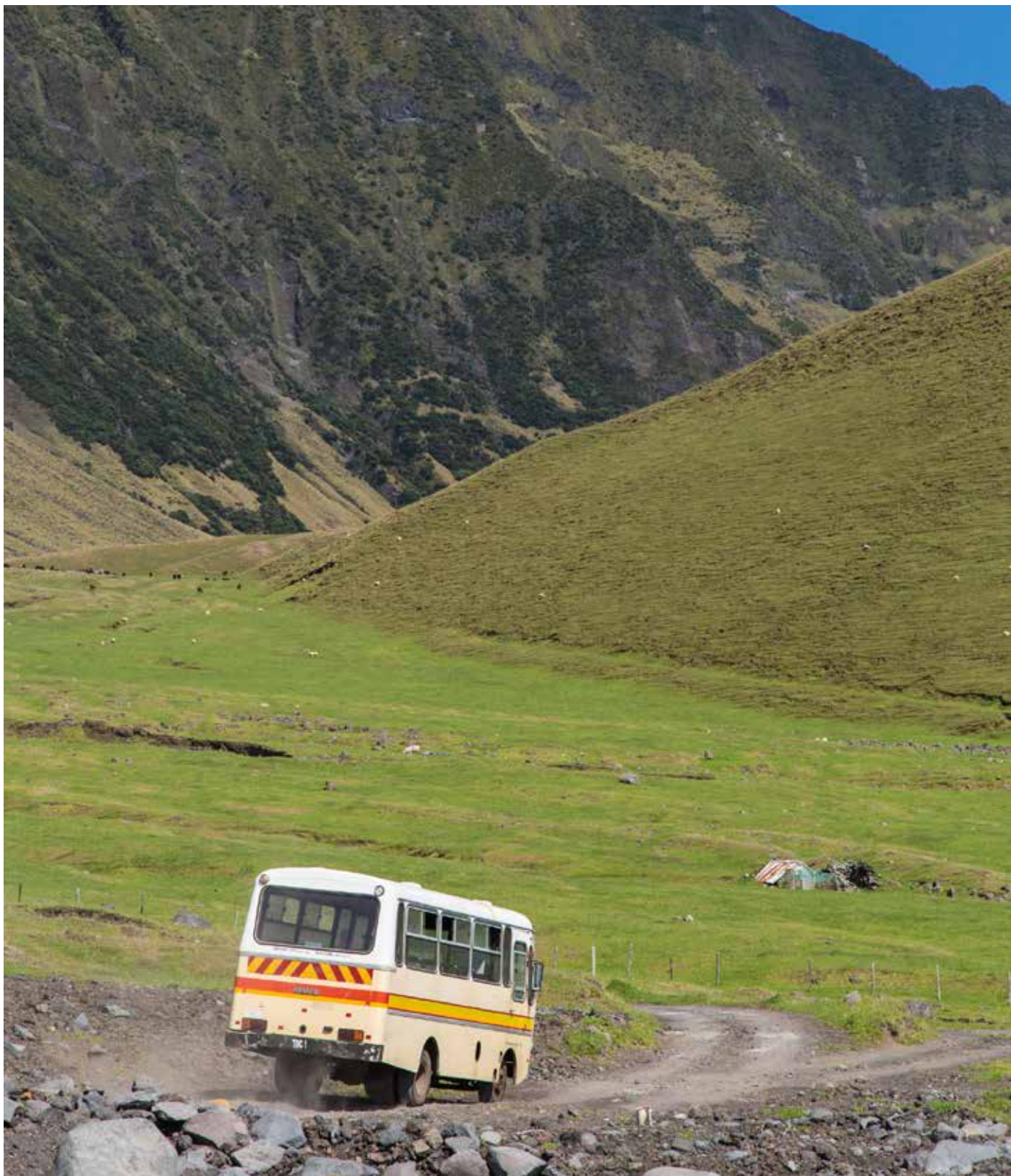
We arrived at Inaccessible Island, about 20 miles southwest of Tristan da Cunha, during lunch. This was another Jurassic Park-style vista. Fortunately, the swell allowed us to go on a 90-minute zodiac cruise. The steep cliffs covered in tussock grass emphasised the appropriateness of the island's name. There were long thin waterfalls, similar to Gough Island, very rocky beaches and much-eroded volcanic rocks. We caught a glimpse of the Inaccessible bunting and a number of sightings of the Tristan thrush. The best view was of brown noddies nesting on a well-eroded curved volcanic rock above the sea. We also got a glimpse of Atlantic yellow nosed albatrosses on their nests high up amongst the tussock grass. It can be challenging taking

pictures with a telephoto lens from a rocking zodiac, image stabilisation has its limits. In the evening we left, Tristan slowly disappearing into the distance.

Next stop St Helena, five days away.

St Helena appears as a giant rock in the ocean, geology in the raw. After we arrived, we spent three hours slowly edging around the island until just before dusk we arrived outside Jamestown, the only real town on the island. Landing would have wait for the morrow, but the golden hour light cast its rays across the deep valley containing the town, a lovely sight.

St Helena has no harbour, although one is in the offing but, thanks to good weather we could zodiac to the island after breakfast the next day. Jamestown is largely one street thanks to the topography. Apart from a small



Tristan Da Cunha - The remotest bus in the World

park, and government buildings close to the shoreline, it consists of the odd bar or hotel, shops, and houses, these stray a little off the main street. A must for tourists is Jacob's Ladder; the 699 steps are steep, a challenge to those of limited fitness. Built in 1829 to carry cargo between Jamestown and the fort above, it was originally a two-car inclined railway.

A tour around the island was organised, visiting various sights, the most eagerly anticipated being Longwood House. Most know that Napoleon was exiled here after losing the Battle of Waterloo. He died in Longwood House in 1821 and was buried in a tomb nearby. His body was returned to France in 1840, but the tomb remains. Could we visit it? 'Non'. Bizarrely the tomb and

Longwood House are part of France, a present from Queen Victoria to the French Government in 1858. The French Consul refused us. However, permission was given to visit Longwood House. St Helena is now part of the UK, although not all of it. If someone has never been to France, but has visited either of these two sites, can they say they have visited France?

The other highlight was Plantation House, home to the Governor. Giant tortoises live in the grounds including Jonathan, believed at 186 years old (in 2018) to be the oldest animal alive. Not too old for sex though, as we witnessed...unfortunately the 'girl' was discovered to be a boy after it was given to the Governor as a potential mate. Maybe Jonathan needs glasses. St Helena was the site of a prison camp during the Boer War, housing over 6,000 Boer prisoners. About 200 graves serve as a reminder.

I really enjoyed visiting St Helena, but whether it is worth a flight to Windhoek followed by a turboprop flight to the island is questionable. The airport was built at a cost of c.£450 million to UK taxpayers. Once finished the winds, causing a rotor effect as a result of cliffs close to the end of the runway, were discovered to be too dangerous after test flights started. These winds have shortened the effective runway length so jets cannot land, only turboprops. The intended direct flights from the UK are on hold. I am a retired meteorologist: just one look at the location plus the knowledge that the trade winds in this region are predictable was enough to question the location. I am amazed that the potential problem was not spotted before construction.



St Helena - Jamestown

We now had five days at sea. Little happens in the Atlantic between St Helena and Ascension Island; lectures, food and bonhomie filled the days.

There is no harbour in Ascension Island, though generally benign seas means getting onshore is almost guaranteed - but not for some nationalities, the Chinese and Russians for instance. Mount Pleasant RAF base is shared with the US Air Force, and the island also has

sensitive 'listening' equipment, with 'golf ball' housings on installations visible from the ship. Those allowed onshore had to take a controlled tour of the island in 4x4s. Whilst transiting the RAF base we were not allowed to get out, but we paused for photographs. The main goal of the trip was to ascend Green Mountain, the peak at the centre of this now dormant volcanic island. First stop was a colony of sooty terns. These nest amongst rocks and are quite aggressive towards visitors.

Tristan Da Cunha - The fishing fleet





St Helena - Inland view

St Helena - Longwood House





St Helena - Tortoise sex

Ascension Island - Georgetown church





Ascension Island - Green Mountain vegetation

Green Mountain has an interesting history. When Darwin visited on his Beagle circumnavigation the island was barren; shipwrecked mariners had difficulty surviving. When he returned to the UK Darwin suggested to John Hooker, the famous botanist, that an experiment be set up to see if the climate and vegetation could be changed. His idea was to import very hardy plants from South Africa, then plant them near the summit as it is often shrouded in cloud, this perhaps providing enough moisture to enable them to survive.

How successful the plan was can be gauged by the mass of vegetation on and near the summit, even wild banana plants. A walk near the summit of Green Mountain now takes you through a small forest. There is a small experimental horticultural unit, set up to propagate rare plants from the island, some of which have suffered from the greening. Unfortunately, we saw no land crabs, Ascension's most famous inhabitants, although road signs warned of their existence.

Georgetown, the only conurbation on the island outside the RAF base, has more than one club (alcohol is served, thankfully), a small church with a sign pleading with visitors to shut the door as donkeys can wander in and cause damage, and cricket nets. It's very British. That evening we went ashore again to watch turtles laying eggs on Clarence Bay beach, the island provides a safe haven for the turtle nests. Our final destination was Praia in the Cape Verde Islands, another five-day journey to the north.



Neil Harris ARPS

Neil worked as a Weather forecaster in the Met Office where he won first prize in the early retirement lottery in 2006 (He jokes that he has a face for radio...).

Retirement provided him with the opportunity to explore the world and develop his photography skills. In 2011 Neil gained his ARPS in Travel with a panel from Myanmar.

His favourite travel photography subject is 'street' especially tribal festivals. SE Asia and SW China along with the Himalayas are his favourite areas.

His most memorable event from all his travels was the incredible experience in 2007 in Zimbabwe. **'On a Lion Walk'**



William's Birthday

I don't think lockdown has impacted on my life as much as it has others. I resolved to go out every day, as much as possible, for exercise and to walk the dog. The dog has never been walked so much as my husband takes him out again in the evening. Travel has been local, but still travel.

It was a glorious Spring. Walking round the estate to the buttercup field at the bottom of the hill, there was so much to see. I joined a Facebook group to which members were submitting haiku. I started posting photos to go with mine, which motivated the others. Ultimately, I collected enough photos and haiku to put a book together which I published in August. I'm waiting for Amazon to confirm that it's up for sale.

Other than the housing estate, my first venture out was to a bluebell wood in Loughborough, 3 miles distant, at the end of April. I used the soft focus setting on my Fuji camera which is probably anathema to purists.

Children of key workers resumed classes at the neighbouring school in May, when we went a little further afield to woodland near Leicester. The Spring flowers were enchanting. A favourite haunt, Nanpantan Reservoir, on the outskirts of Loughborough bordering the National Forest, opened again at the end of May, where I found that a pair of great-crested grebes had built their nest and laid four eggs. I have been following the progress of the grebes and their two young since then.

On 11th June, our grandson's birthday, we met him and his Mum and Dad for a woodland walk ending up at their house for tea and birthday cake. Possibly not really permitted but we stayed out in the garden even though it felt rather cold.

By the end of June we were venturing further afield and I was taken out for lunch on my birthday in mid-July. The venue was Staunton Harold which also lies in the National Forest. There were hay fields and myriads of butterflies. I look forward to the Autumn when the maple woods will turn red.

At the beginning of September, we drove out to Surprise View and Higger Tor in the Peak District just in time to catch the heather in bloom.

I have been extremely grateful to the RPS for all the talks and courses it has provided during lockdown. I was especially excited by the book-making courses. I have ideas for several books. The downside is that I have developed a deep vein thrombosis because of sitting through so many RPS Zoom talks.

Now we hear that neither the pandemic nor the restrictions are likely to be lifted by Christmas. Hopes for a vaccine are waning. I feel that my photography has been a great help to me, even if I haven't managed to travel very far.

Sus Hutton ARPS



Basil at Staunton Harold



Lola wants to
join in



Burroughs
Wood, Spring
Flowers



Up Periscope





Silver Birch and
Heather



Bluebell Wood



Buttercup Field



Cotswolds town 'like an abandoned film set'





By John Clare



Winchcombe is a pretty and ancient market town in the heart of The Cotswolds. Timbered buildings, local traders and friendly pubs make it a magnet for walkers, cyclists and day trippers. On a usual May Bank Holiday weekend, you have to fight your way through the crowds, especially when the weather is fine. 2020, though, was starkly different, as these pictures show.

The country was still under lockdown, but the news headlines were all about the lockdown breakdown as people got fed up with the restrictions and headed out to parks and beaches. Not in Winchcombe. I live about two miles away and went into the town for my weekly shop. I was astonished at what I saw. Saturday afternoon and there was literally not a soul to be seen.

The scene was quite eerie. It was quite uncomfortable walking around the streets and seeing nobody. It felt like the day after some disaster which had killed all the people. Then it dawned on me. Winchcombe looked like an abandoned film set. Equipped with only my iPhone, I started taking pictures.

I moved to The Cotswolds last year, partly so that I could do more photography. I thought the landscapes, the county shows and the historical places would offer a great visual contrast to my usual haunts. Never did I imagine I would capture images like this.





Winchcombe





In the Heart of The Cotswolds



The purpose and nature of our Blog is to allow interested members of the travel group to actively participate in constructive consideration and critiques of our images, and to recommend three to be forwarded to the editor for inclusion in Travel Log.

Anyone in the travel group can ask to join, actively submitting an image once every 3 months giving fresh eye appreciations of each other's images and getting genuine helpful comments from fellow Blog members. As such we get and give a personal and impartial appreciation which I trust is also a useful source of images for publication.

Travel Group members can email me to request membership of the Blog group.

davidportwainjan4@gmail.com



David Portwain ARPS



Dawn on the Caramel Lake

Rob Morgan ARPS



On Inle Lake in Myanmar at dawn we were treated to the wonderful combination of a cloud-speckled sky and a slightly dappled surface to the water. The result was this ever-changing caramel whip effect on the lake. As we rounded this fisherman's boat from the left I could see this silhouette and reflection about to appear, with the sun behind his head (It was not a set up - he was one of the fishermen out there actually fishing).

Canon EOS 60D with Tokina 12-28 mm lens @ 24 mm, 1/100 s (shutter priority), f10 (-1 stop exposure), ISO 100.



While going down the escalator to enter the Pyongyang Metro, DPRK, I saw him coming up.

f/3.9 1/25sec 15mm ISO1600

Abandoned

Graham Vulliamy LRPS



A derelict abandoned house in the medieval hilltop town of Navelli in the Italian region of Abruzzo. The whole town had a really ghostly feel to it - beautiful old buildings but almost all of them (in 2018) completely abandoned, although there were some renovations taking place to some of the exteriors.

Canon 80D with a Tamron 16-300 mm lens at 16mm; f8; iso 100. Three exposures (3.2 secs, 0.4 sec and 1/20th) merged with Lightroom's HDR Merge facility.



The Essence of Travel Photography : A Personal View

I think of my photography as being in 'the documentary tradition'; in RPS Distinction terms, it falls either side of the travel/documentary divide and I've used the contrast normally drawn between the two to highlight the essence of travel photography. In the wider context, these labels don't really matter; my photography all flows from one sentiment which has been called the documentary impulse, *'the passion to record the moments we experience and wish to preserve, the things we witness and might want to reform, or simply the people, places or things we find remarkable'* (Stuart Franklin). However, in any certification process it is necessary to have boundaries to establish consistency in assessment, appropriate expertise in judgement and the setting of clear expectations and criteria for success.

Photography is a language of communication - images can 'freeze' time, 'reveal realities hidden from the passing eye' by framing these moments cut from a larger context, reducing the chaos of our experience, heightening our awareness. All images are the product of selection and creative decisions of their makers and part of the culture from which they emerge. *'Photography is about communicating ideas as well as information. The camera ...makes a superb tool for exploring, observing and representing both the external world and internal reactions to it. There are two areas of consciousness - the world of the imagination and the real world - and photography has the ability to combine the two'* (Paul Hill).

The concept of narrative is at the centre of photographic communication. It is not a complicated idea - it implies that the photographer has 'something to say', a theme, there is a purpose, a context, a focus, a story, a subject. In the execution, it requires research, planning, and familiarity over time with the context on the part of the photographer explorer-investigator. It often requires considerable social skills and a sensitivity towards the values, customs and norms of a community and, in many of the circumstances in which I photograph, an awareness of both the principles of responsible travel and the ethics embodied in various codes of practice for photojournalists.





Text and images by Ian Wright ARPS with images from Kitty Wright ARPS

Travel photography was one of the first genres of photography to emerge in the 1850s. The context is now very different, in an image-saturated, globalised world, but its 'core' identity remains the same - communicating an understanding and interpretation of place. This commonly includes what a journey, location and community looks like and feels like, perhaps something of its history, aspects of the social and political culture, rituals, events, ceremonies, details of the 'everyday'. The variety of points of focus is immense, the possible list of subject matter too well known to need repetition and the styles of visual presentation employed by photographers, extraordinarily varied.

One way of explaining narrative is the difference between subject matter and subject. For example, my photo-essay on boy monks in Ladakh portrays them in various settings and activities – the subject matter. The narrative asks why there are so many boy monks – and a large part of the answer rests in the social and physical environment – as well as more spiritual considerations – the gruelling physical landscape and climate, the difficulty farming families have surviving, the prevalence of large families and the drift of young men to the capital to work in tourism or the employment offered by the presence of substantial garrisons given the tensions with China and Pakistan. This focus would put the essay on the documentary side of the divide in a Distinctions context. A sense of place is an essential ingredient of this portrayal, but the focus of the narrative is on a social issue, not the place.

The photographic vehicle for the narrative is the photo-essay ('panel' in Distinctions version) defined as 'a grouping of photographs usually published with text, that, like its written equivalent, attempts to get to the essence of a person, place or event'. It sequences images to 'take the viewer to the scene', using photographic skills to re-create mood, atmosphere, characterisation and message – helped by subordinate text (the statement of intent in Distinctions) which helps signpost the central theme(s) and content. The photo-essay commonly takes book form, and the emergence of many self-publishing book outlets has made this option widely available.





In this perspective, content is uppermost – Ansel Adams disparaged a fine image of a fuzzy concept and the American photojournalist Gordon Park pointedly remarked that, 'If you have nothing to say, your photography will not say much'. The role of 'form' – the composition and design of images, much now performed in post-production – is to communicate information and interpretation. Technical and artistic matters are important, and crucial to an individual's visual style and impact on viewers, but they are the supporting walls not the foundations of effective travel and documentary photography. This is a persistent theme underlying the RPS approach to Distinctions

Sebastiao Salgado powerfully makes this point, *'What I want is the world to remember the problems and the people I photograph. What I want is to create a discussion about what is happening around the world and to provoke some debate with these pictures. Nothing more than this. I don't want people to look at them and appreciate the light and the palate of tones. I want them to look inside and see what the pictures represent, and the kind of people I photograph.'*

Time – the passing of time - is an important part of any context. Change - its nature and reasons for it - was the key concept for me as a historian and political scientist and it is for my photography too. The contemporary photographer is acutely conscious of the increased pace of social, and global change, and of the complexities of social life, the complex historical heritage we inherit. This offers many opportunities for travel narratives.

What distinguishes 'travel' is that the purpose is to portray a sense of place at a specific point in time. This perhaps needs clarification by example – and this too is uncomplicated. My wife Kitty's ARPS travel panel statement (2012) is a simple, unexceptional, but clear and effective example of a narrative foundation for a collection of images – some of which are presented here:





'My aim is to capture the essentially communal nature of everyday life in the small towns and villages of Nepal. Much in this society remains pre-industrial. Work, leisure, commerce, even the rituals connected to death – all take place in public view on the streets. Traditional handmade brick and timber architecture, painted walls and doorways, combine with people's clothing to create an amazing rich palette of colour. This is an impressive society which has a strong sense of spirituality, and where communities co-operate to survive and celebrate together in times of plenty.'

On the RPS website there are currently 5 examples of successful 'A' panels, each with their statement of intent and these give valuable insight into the establishment of a narrative foundation. The narrative in all these examples have elements of description, explanation and evaluation. Kitty's statement describes some visual elements – handmade brick, colourful clothes; it explains the nature of society – it is pre-industrial, communal, life is lived on the streets; it evaluates – there is a strong sense of spirituality, it is impressive. This pattern is repeated in the on-line examples.

The emphasis is clearly on 'place' – one statement explicitly talks of his images 'capturing the environment'; another one 'strives to 'showcase the various facets of life'; the focus of a third panel is clearly identified, it's the people who make the location such an attractive and unique encounter and the intention is to show the people in their daily lives and to capture the spirit of their community young and old, ancient and modern.

If you look at the Documentary Panels on the website, the emphasis is on an issue. All three of the elements mentioned above are usually present plus a focus on an issue, social or political or concerned with the preservation of important buildings. One example explores the 'tortured landscapes of East Jerusalem and the surrounding West Bank' and portrays the deep scars that conflict has brought – without hope of resolution. The sense of place is striking – but it's not the central theme of the statement of intent.





My own photography flits seamlessly across this distinction between travel and documentary – between what is primarily descriptive and evocative of place itself and one which is predominantly analytical but firmly planted in context and place. All window-on-the-world' photography is simplifying and 'framing' a small selected element, holding it up and saying, 'I find this interesting, uplifting, beautiful, important, amusing, shocking. The 'spin' we give it depends on our personal viewpoint. Images from my photo-essay on rural life in India could very easily be given a travel or a documentary narrative. All images can be interpreted in different ways.

I don't think it's unfair to say that travel photography (I include much of my own) has had a tendency to 'beautify' and to concentrate on largely descriptive and 'good news', 'feel good' stories, leaving deeper analysis and issues of concern to the documentarists. For example, there is a prominent style of landscape photography which some critics regard as inherently 'unreal', using saturated colours and, they say, reflecting a romanticised and nostalgic pre-industrial view of the countryside. I'm not sure that this is of great concern – I recognise that many of my own travel images are rather sentimental, influenced greatly by humanitarian photographers like Willy Ronis and Henri Cartier-Bresson. There is plenty of scope for alternative viewpoints – embracing the mundane, the realities of the destruction of nature, the ugliness human presence often imposes, of unethical farming methods and rural poverty. There are many such academic and theoretical debates – reflecting a healthy menu of alternative approaches and viewpoints, typical of all the arts.

Inherent to this perspective I am putting forward is that our photography is essentially autobiographical – it reveals why we photograph, what interests us, what creates a sense of excitement and wonder; it displays our tastes, what ideas we hold, who and what have influenced us in our photography and our 'filters' on our lives themselves. Images are personalised interpretations *'The most compelling images are more than a record of 'I was here and saw this'. Instead, they become 'I feel this way about this'. 'I was in this place and saw it like this'. They are not acts of representation as much as they are acts of interpretation'* (David DuChemin).



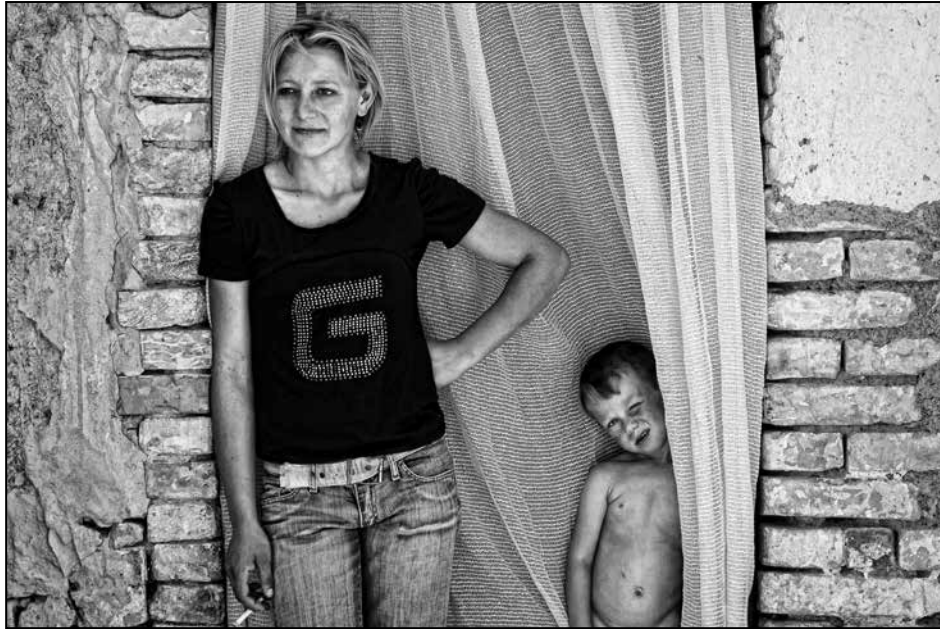


We understand that an 'accurate' image does not necessarily convey *the* truth but rather a selective truth. All images are the product of multiple choices made by individual photographers who themselves are influenced by a myriad of factors, including elements as varied as their life experience, cultural values in their society and fashionable styles of post-production.

In trying to keep a strong connection between accuracy and my narratives, I've taken on board the ethical principles expressed, for example, by the American National Press Photographer's Association Code of Ethics. This code includes important guidelines: Be accurate and comprehensive in the representation of subjects; be complete and provide context when photographing or recording subjects; avoid stereotyping individuals and groups; recognize and work to avoid presenting one's own biases in the work; treat all subjects with respect and dignity; give special consideration to vulnerable subjects and compassion to victims of crime or tragedy; intrude on private moments of grief only when the public has an overriding and justifiable need to see; while photographing subjects, do not intentionally contribute to, alter, or seek to alter or influence events; editing should maintain the integrity of the photographic images' content and context; do not manipulate images in any way that can mislead viewers or misrepresent subjects; strive to be unobtrusive and humble in dealing with subjects; visual journalists should continuously study their craft and the ethics that guide it.

Over time, and through the practical experience of making images and learning the 'field craft' of photographing in communities or landscapes, the committed photographer can develop a personal style running through the whole process of image making. A characteristic range of subject matter emerges, a visual signature, like an author, the narratives have some foundation principles, there is a core of interests and concerns. As members of an RPS special interest group you will understand this in your own work. We also bring this same baggage as audience too – for images are always relative to the response of a viewer. The elements which condition the creation of our own images will also condition our response to those of others.

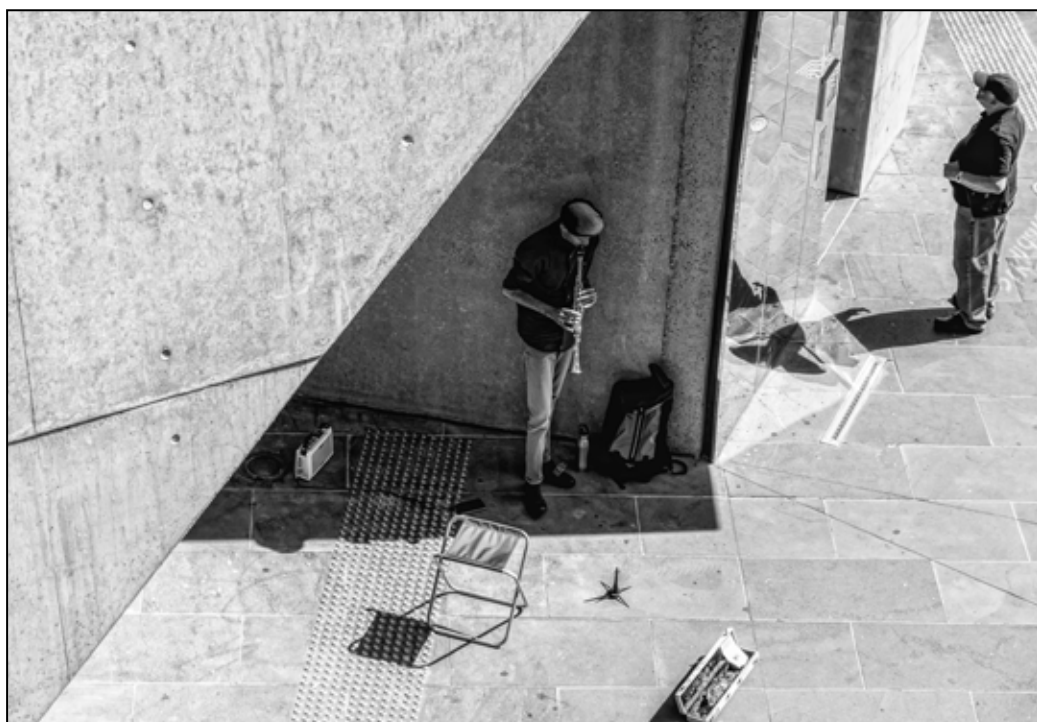




The term 'vision' may be overworked but it reflects the potential uniqueness of each of our perspectives. 'A photographers' works are given shape and style by their personal vision. It is not simply technique, but the way they look at life and the world around them.' (Pete Turner)

What are we trying to achieve as photographers? Sam Abell's answer cannot be bettered, 'We are seeking to present images that arouse the curiosity of the viewer or that, best of all, provoke the viewer to think - to ask a question or simply to gaze in thoughtful wonder. We know that photographs inform people. We also know that photographs move people. The photograph that does both is the one we want to see and make.' Today when so many images are made and disseminated it is a tough ask to make images with impact but I'm continually amazed at the quality and variety of photographic work produced today by the photographic community.

None of what I have said is original – it is well-understood and common practice. Most of us who photograph aspects of the world – attempting to produce both authentic and credible evidence of 'reality' and our own interpretations of it – draw on many short-hand 'genre' labels - social documentary, landscape, wildlife, cityscape/urban, seascape, photojournalism, street, environmental portraiture, portraiture, night photography, architecture as well as travel. We are also likely to work in different styles appropriate to the subject – monochrome and colour, hyper-real and border-line fine art, abstract and 'straight'. Whether I am photographing village life in India, or the rural community in North Lincolnshire or the architecture of Dubai airport – at root, I'm fundamentally doing the same thing: recording what I find important. Some of my photography has a wider audience but primarily I am doing it for what it does to enhance my understanding of the world.





Definitions and categories in all the arts have soft, blurred boundaries, there's a great deal of overlap and cross-over between them which may cause some confusion, and continued debate and difference of opinion – but to me, it's a great strength – rather than weakness - of travel photography that its methods and potential subject matter, as well as the tales it tells, are promiscuous in nature. It has a willingness to draw upon many strands of photography in terms of genres, subject matter, styles, techniques, narrative content, the photographers (and others, artists or writers) who provide influence and inspiration and an acceptance that there are many ways to go about producing a visual narrative.

The experience of image-making is especially important for many of us; it contributes significantly to our perspective on life, to our attempts at making sense of the world and times we live in. Image-making is integral to our observations, our physical, intellectual and emotional explorations. We interpret, try to understand (failing often) the society we live in and societies we visit. Exploring other worlds helps us understand our own.

My photography is bound up with the desire for first-hand experience. So much of our information today comes 'mediated' for us – terrific documentaries and expertise on TV, News bulletins, newspapers and magazines, the web. Exploring - simply 'being there', is quite different. Being 'present' engages all the senses; we can interpret for ourselves. My curious nature and wanderlust tendencies has led me to adopt a simple way of working – the three R's; to *reveal* through planning and pursuing photographic projects; to *reflect* on the experiences; to *relate* what I have learned.





In an article on the Changpa Nomads of Ladakh, in the Travel Log in September 2019, I said that images matter because, to their maker, they can become part of a visual diary - a vivid memory bank; some become iconic, you remember everything about the time and place where you were. Narratives evolve; images hang on your wall and inside your mind. Engagements and encounters with communities and individuals humanise experience, give it depth and texture. An open mind is enriched by experiencing a different world and how we explore is crucial in creating the type of experiences we have.

So, I think we can clearly distinguish travel photography on the basis of the character of the narrative underpinning it. The RPS Distinctions structure, advice and support network, is an impressive, admirable and clear framework to assist individuals in the development of their own photographic personalities. Not least, it shifts emphasis from the single-image to creating an inter-related sequence of images with a message. However, to get to the essence, we also have to consider broader matters about the nature of window-on-the-world photography itself and our hopes and aspirations as photographers. We began to make interesting images when our photography makes a leap in approach - from images which are 'of' something, to those that are 'about' something.





The images accompanying the article are designed simply to give a flavour of the range of projects we have engaged with - Cuban tenements in Trinidad du Cuba; Lincolnshire rural life and village life in Rajasthan; humanitarian projects with the Roma in Serbia; the Pushkar Mela; Kitty's images of Camber Sands in Sussex and a couple from her ARPS panel; a religious festival in Ladakh; Street life; and architecture in Surfers Paradise NSW. Some of these episodes were matters of hours; others months - many have potential travel narratives; many have potential documentary narratives; several have both.



Ian Wright ARPS



Kitty Wright ARPS



Travel Image of the Month Competition

In November 2019, The Travel Group competition pages underwent a fundamental redesign to encourage our members to present their work to a wider audience.

The format of the competition was basically quite simple. Ask group members to identify a single shot that could be submitted to the competition pages, request a title, to a suggested size, and see where we went. The response was beyond what we expected it to be, with over 70 shots being submitted in November and December alone from around the globe.

With the basic principle in place, the next step was to design a section on the new RPS website to display entries and winners for each month. The new web tools enabled us to present the winning shot in a larger format with the judge's critique for the winner and those highly commended.

The competition has proved to be extremely popular, with winners and monthly galleries being viewed hundreds of times, making it a strong feature of the Travel Group website.

The following are four of our monthly winning photographs, along with a commentary written by those winners as to how they got their winning shot.

Steve Day - Travel Competitions Coordinator. travelcompetitions@rps.org



Travel Group - January 2020 TlotM

Offering on Rail Street, Hanoi



Alistair Cowan



It was my final afternoon in Vietnam and having spent several days in Hanoi, I decided to explore

Rail Street and its surrounds. Hanoi is a vibrant and bustling city, thronging with markets, streets and alleyways filled with stalls and people going about their daily lives amidst the tourists. So it was quite surprising to find Rail Street almost empty. The street is narrow - just wide enough for the rail tracks with a few feet to spare on each side. The buildings provide housing, small bars and cafes all fighting for space in this densely packed part of the city.

Having spent some time exploring, I was about to leave, when I came across this lady crouched on the tracks making her offerings. She was focused on what she was doing and seemed unaware of my presence. I stayed well back and was able to get flat on the ground in the middle of the tracks. I managed to get a number of shots without disturbing her.

This one is my favourite as she looks up, engrossed in her devotions. Post production in Lightroom and Photoshop to crop the image and adjust tones and contrast.

Sony A7R camera, Sony FE4.5 - 5.6/70-300 G OSS lens at ISO 1250, f/8 at 1/320th sec.



Ian Silvester ARPS

I visited Myanmar, otherwise known as Burma, in December 2019. This was my 4th visit to the country. I spent 1 week photographing wildlife, 1 week railways and the last week general tourism.

During most of the second week we were based in Bago which is about 2 hrs north of Rangoon, the capital.

On the 11th December we left our hotel by coach and travelled a short distance outside of Bago to a small station on the line to Mokpalin where we found a YD class locomotive number 967 with a stone train.

We walked down the line beyond the old semaphore signals to wait for the train to depart. This is one of the few places in the world with these old signals. On the right-hand side were a few houses with people watching us. While we were waiting and mostly chatting amongst ourselves, the train departed from the station and as it approached this bullock cart suddenly appeared in the gap between the house and charged up the slope, over the rails and disappeared over the other side, not to be seen again.

I was using a 24 -70 lens and just fired off a couple of shots as it passed us which only lasted for no more than 10 seconds. This is the only shot that worked with the bullock about to go over the track with the train and signals in the background. I did not notice the lady on the right watching until later. A lucky shot showing Burmese rural life in the countryside in 2019 !

To see more pictures visit my web site or flickr site.

<http://www.dorneyphoto.com/>



This shot was taken on an RPS Travel Group trip to India. Travelling with other photographers was inspirational; It's great to see how others approach the same subject and compare work at the end of the day. I learnt a lot and picked up some great tips.

This was not my first visit to India. I had been before about 25 years previously and been so impressed with the Taj Mahal. I remember running about with my camera and taking lots of photographs but being disappointed with the resulting prints when they arrived through my letterbox a week or so after later.

I was concerned that the Taj Mahal might have changed, as things do over time and with the influx of so many more tourists, and that my experience of this iconic site might not be as good second time round. I found instead that this iconic site was the same but I had changed. No more running round with my camera... Instead I adopted a more considered approach, trying to capture the spirit of this wonderful place in a way that was unique to me.

Visitors are an integral part of this site and each has their own perspective on what they see here. Second time around this was very much front of mind as I considered my shots. Looking up at the Taj from one of the lowest points on the site gave me a pleasing and more unique angle, there were lots of folk walking past on the terrace above me and I took several shots of adults walking by but I felt I had what I wanted when this young boy came and sat on the wall waiting for his parents to catch up. It gave me time to compose my shot carefully and include the small group being guided round the top terrace. Shooting from below allowed me to capture the contrasting textures in the stone and marble and to place the boy's head against the sky to make him really stand out within the image.



Lynda Golightly



Covid Days in Hong Kong



Dr Kai Kong Wong ARPS

I walked into this area in front of a shopping mall on a Saturday morning on my way to work. The beautiful morning sunlight, with its reflection off the high rise glass wall, created a very interesting array of light and shadow. So I returned the next morning with my camera, to try to capture this. The weather is the same as yesterday with great light and I spent almost an hour there.

Trying out all the different positions and a slight left to right approach was the best, with the reflection and dark background nicely on the right side. Then I waited patiently for a suitable subject to appear,

The key point in this capture is to chase the light, be patient and find a good balance in your composition.

Soon this cleaning lady walked into the frame nicely and I luckily caught her at the perfect moment.

Leica SL1 camera, 16 - 35mm lens, ISO 100, 1/640 sec at 16mm

Travel Group

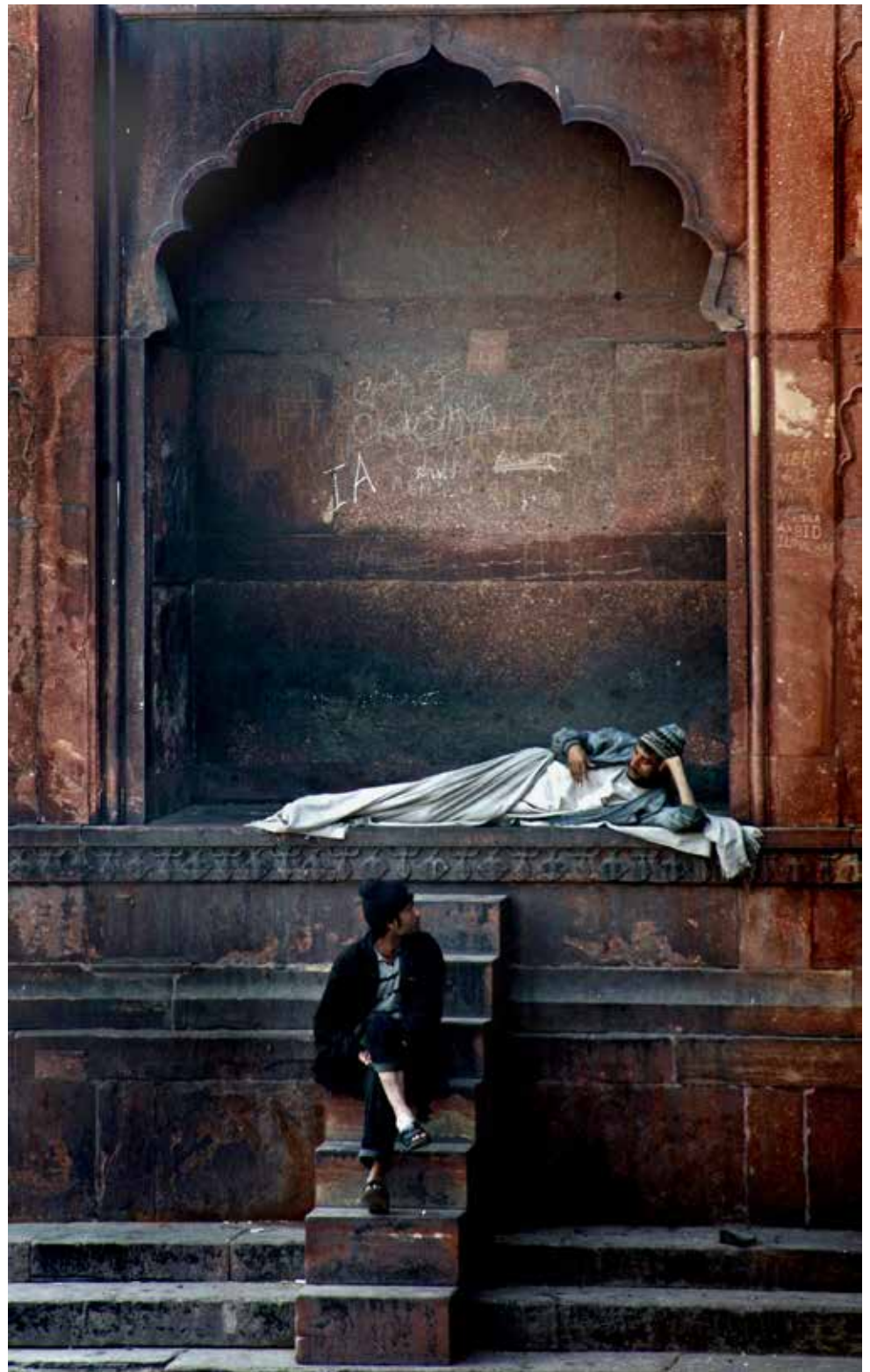
August 2020 TlotM

"Time to chat"
Jama Masjid of Delhi



Tony Beane LRPC

There are three aspects of travel photography for me that are vital. Namely, Past; Present and Future. The last two are a somewhat mental process i.e. the dreaming and the planning. During the past six months I have found the past to be the most rewarding and have spent many hours revisiting the many images I have taken over the past years. My winning image is the result of one such foray. My wife and I were at the start of a three-week trip to India back in 2008 visiting the "Golden Triangle".



We visited the Mosque on the Sunday to find it busy with tourists, pilgrims, families pick-nicking and devotees going about their business. The mosque is some 370 years old of red sandstone and at the time was the largest in India housing some 25,000 worshippers. I will say at the outset that photography in India is challenging in that it can be somewhat overwhelming.

I observed this scene that looked almost like a biblical painting. Two guys passing the time of day, one who had clearly made his home there and his friend who had popped in to have a chat. Everything about the scene felt right. The framing with the arch, the position of the participants, their interaction and of course the glorious colour. In amongst the chaos that is modern Delhi it was such a calm scene – the world around them just did not exist. I guess my way of attempting to capture travel images with that sense of place is to look for scenes that reflect your own emotions about a location and do not get carried away with the obvious.

Canon 5D MK1 ISO 320 1/200 f7.1 Jpeg

Members Gallery



A week staycation in the Yorkshire Dales. Just arrived and noticed the rain drops on the outside of the window, which resembled tears, as if the world was crying outside. The sun is however, just starting to shine on the tiers of cottages further afield.

Andy Pinch LRPS



Quiz Time – Street Photography Sheep Street, Bicester 2020 - Spot the odd one out – Answers on a Postcard

Call for Contributions

Your photos and the stories behind them make 'Travel Log' your Journal. Please send contributions from a single image with a line of text through to a full article that shares your experiences with others.

Send your text as a simple text document. Save as *.doc / *.docx / *.rtf / *.txt / *.odt

The following format would be extremely helpful: Name_Distinction_Article Title.doc

The same for images. I prefer that you send jpegs but of a reasonable size. Min 2200 pixels wide but they must be 300DPI (Dots per Inch). Also include a photo of yourself – this can be smaller. Min 350 X 350 @ 300dpi.

When saving an image please use Name_Distinction _Image Number_Image Title.jpg
The Number is the order that it appears in the story.

Most important is not to embed your photos in an email. They often change the file type which makes them unusable. If you have several to send the best way is via Drop Box or a file transfer such as wetransfer.com.

Looking forward to working with you. I will send you a copy to proof before publication.

Take care - John Riley, Editor

editortravel@rps.org

Create Away Photographic Workshops

Ultimate Camargue Experience

4 October 2021



Do not miss out on the second of our Camargue trips, this time, during the exhilarating Annual October Festival. Capture the imposing Camargue Black Bulls as they gallop through the streets of the mediaeval walled town of Aigues-Mortes herded by the Guardians on Horseback or as they thunder through the marshlands of the Camargue. We also have 5 different horse shoots in the marsh, on the beach and with sparring stallions as well as a Birdlife, Flamingo shooting day, at a nature reserve with exclusive access before it opens to the public.

The tour is a private trip, designed for photographers of all levels and the itinerary is a mixture of festival photography and organised photoshoots of the Camargue wildlife.

The tour cost is £2880.00 for this weeklong (6 nights) photo experience. Return flights to Montpellier (where you will be picked up) are extra, easyJet flies from Gatwick daily.



Keith Pointon ARPS

Temple Cottage
Whitcott Keysett
Craven Arms
Shropshire SY7 8QE

bagpoint@aol.com



Travel Group ONLINE TALKS



SHOOTING CITIES

with Matt Parry



Saturday 28th November 14.30 (UK)

Award-winning travel photographer, Matt Parry, shares his approach to making the most of a city break - whether in a bustling capital city or a quaint historic town, photographing striking architecture and skylines or environmental



The Kingdom of the Ice Bear

Bob Johnson ARPS



January 10th 2021 14.30 (UK)

Bob tells us the story of his trip photographing polar bears from the Havel an old seal hunting boat. We will hear all about this famous old boat and her equally well known captain Bjorn Kvernmo and of course we will see the many bears that they found on the polar ice cap.



THE DRAGON'S PEOPLE



Saturday, 13th February 14.30 (UK)

Margaret Salisbury FRPS, MFIAP, FIPF, FSITTP shares her stories of the fun she has photographing the peoples of the world on her travels and describes ways in which she has used images successfully in creating Distinctions panels on her return.