

Northern *news*

BRINGING YOU THE LATEST NEWS
FROM OUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS
AROUND THE WORLD

SEPTEMBER 2009



Editorial Ramblings

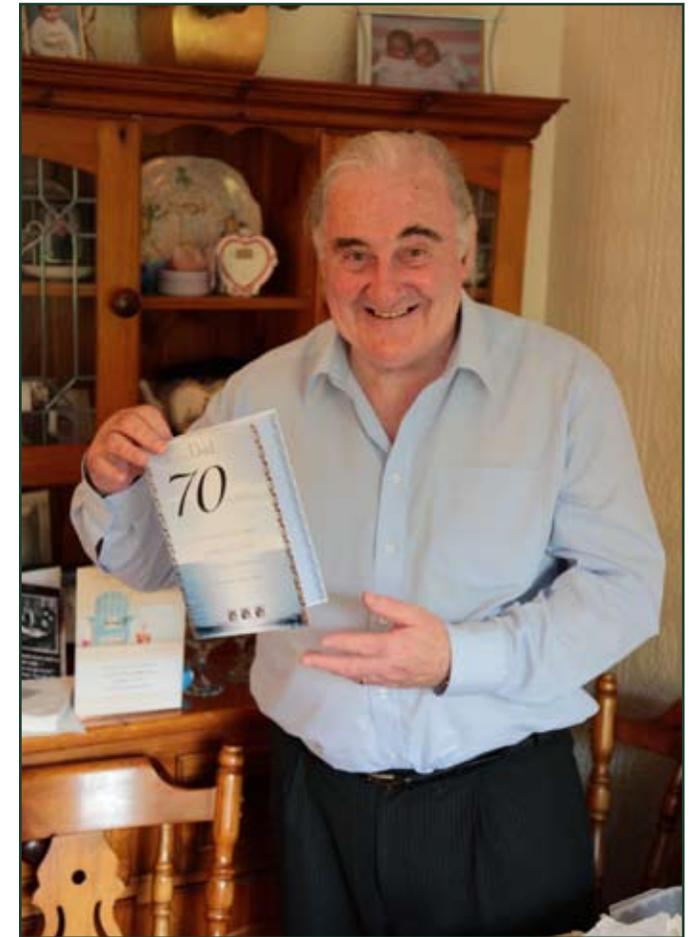


Just for a change, We thought we'd experiment with presenting our little magazine in landscape format. One reason is because we know that you will probably be reading this on a screen rather than printing it - and most screens are in landscape - or even letterbox format if you have a widescreen monitor. We hope you like it. It certainly takes some getting used to - especially from a page layout point of view. Please let us know what you think.

This month seems a very quiet month for news compared to last. That said, we've been incredibly busy - especially Grace, who now has about 4-5 hours per day travelling on 8 buses to get Little Lad to school and back.

As I write these final few words on 1 October 2009, I'm pleased to say we're all back on the right track in recovering from a *bug* which has been extremely unpleasant. On the 26th September (a Saturday), Little Lad started with a lot of vomiting and stomach pains. However, being both young and strong he threw it off almost immediately and was back to his usual form by the next day. I guess my spending a lot of time cleaning up after him meant that I inhaled the *bug* as I went down with it on the following Tuesday. I got up for work at 0540 hrs and after starting the routine of getting ready for work I realised that was a non-starter. I returned to bed! I'll spare you the gory details, but suffice it to say that I won't be going back to work until next week as it is only today (Thursday) that I've started to eat properly again - and it's the first time since Monday that I've had enough strength to type a few words on the computer. My illness has been followed by a dose of Conjunctivitis - isn't that great? Grace too, has also felt unwell but her remarkable resistance to illness has spared her the worst.

Please spare a thought and your prayers for the people who have been devastated by the recent natural disasters in various parts of Asia and the South Pacific. As you will be aware, the Philippines has suffered very badly with torrential rain that brought about widespread flooding. Grace's family have lost their entire crop of rice, but that is nothing compared to those who have lost family and homes. At least our family is safe and their house stayed intact this time. 0330 hrs Saturday 3 Oct. We are very concerned about yet another typhoon - Typhoon Parm which has just crossed the north-east coast of the Philippines. I'm delaying sending this out until we hear definite news from our family. Having just looked at the 0216 hrs satellite map and predicted course, the worst of this typhoon should pass just to the north of our family home. Although the wind speed has dropped, it is still about 105 mph! (from 150 mph). However we will have to wait and see - more later, going to bed now. Later - 1000 hrs Saturday (all times are UK). Gace has just telephoned the family and all is well at present. We pray that will continue.



On 5 September, Grace and I were delighted to attend the birthday party of our neighbour, John (*above*) who was celebrating his 70th birthday - most of which have been spent with his wife Shirley. Amongst his presents was a digital camera, so we're looking forward to seeing some of his photographs in this little magazine in future.

Front cover photograph: Not one of my better photographs, but it reminds me of my favourite place. Taken in the Lake District whilst Nadia was with us last month.

Back cover photograph: Summer has departed (not that we had much of one) and Autumn signals its arrival by the leaves changing colour before they fall.

A new school....



Little Lad - looking not so little, started *proper* school - new to him, on 8 September. His school is St. Michael's Church of England school which is highly regarded in this area of the country. We wish him a great deal of happiness and success. *photographs by Grace*. The last few weeks has seen him settling in well. The reports we are receiving from his teacher are very encouraging. Let's hope this continues.

Right: In his *Spiderman* suit, John in the park near our home. I took these using the camera built into my mobile telephone. This was the last time he rode his bicycle with stabilisers attached - he's now a fully fledged cyclist!

and in the park....



These two photographs of Grace and Little Lad, were taken on 30 August 2008 at Paul and Julie's wedding. They weren't published at the time but I thought you'd like to see them anyway - even though they are a little historic.



A reminder of my childhood days. The River Ribble on the outskirts of Preston, Lancashire - a place where I spent many happy hours as a child when staying with my grandparents in their home (inset) within walking distance of this delightful pastoral scene.





Dover F

by Antho

We were delighted to receive these super photographs from our friends Tony and Anne. Their gorgeous German Shepherd dog (*left*) is Tetra. The small photograph on the next page (taken at night) shows a Badger in Tony and Anne's garden.



Harbour

ny Jacklin



The Stourbridge Canal near Wordsely





Inside and out of the Red House Glass Cone.



The *Shower*. This was the end of the glass production line and, for 100 years, there was a tax on every piece of glass. The tax man would sit in the little booth on the right, counting and weighing every piece so that the correct tax could be levied.



We went for a walk..... and this is what we saw

Unlike last month, we hadn't been out and about this month until, on the 28th, we decided to go for a walk by the canal. There are plenty of canals near our home and we opted for the Stourbridge canal, just a few miles away. We'd never visited this area and just parked near the canal and off we went. It turned out to be one of the most interesting walks we've had.

There are a couple of photographs of the canal scenes a few pages back, but we stumbled across the strange building on the previous page and wondered what on Earth it was - so we went to investigate.

It is the *Red House Glass Cone*. It was built between 1788 and 1794 and was used in glass making. Inside this magnificent, brick-built construction (*see inset*) there was a furnace with outlets for the glass makers to extract the glass they then wielded into the most exquisite pieces to such a high standard that they were used in huge numbers on many of the great ocean liners - including the *Titanic*. For example, The *RMS Queen Mary* used 134 000 pieces of British glass, china and pottery from Stonier & Co. Ltd. the owners of this glass cone. Much of the glass and crystal ware would have been made in this cone. The cone acts as a chimney for the furnace inside and the heat, smoke and noise must have made it like a devil's cauldron to work in when it was in full swing. Nowadays, it is a museum with craft workshops that specialise in making attractive individual pieces for sale, such as those in the photograph (*right*). *Stuart Crystal* was made here until the factory closed in November 2001.



The British police forget what they are for

Daily Mail, 28 September 2009

by Melanie Phillips

Ten days ago, I happened to be on a panel of ‘talking heads’ at the annual conference of the Police Superintendents’ Association of England and Wales.

Against a backdrop of concern about the impact of looming public expenditure cuts, the panel were asked to name one thing they thought the police might usefully stop doing.

I suggested they should drop their obsession with ‘diversity’ and, rather than pursuing people under ‘hate crime’ laws for giving offence to others, should concentrate on tackling the yobbery on housing estates where besieged residents felt the police had abandoned them.

It is fair to say my remarks were not greeted with widespread acclaim. Officers seemed stunned that I could challenge the sacred cow of ‘diversity’.

As for abandoning the poor, they bridled and claimed that all the terrific things the police were doing in such places weren’t being appreciated — mainly due to the wicked media, which was instead spreading false despondency about how useless the police were.

Indeed, other panel members, such as the Chief Inspector of Constabulary, Denis O’Connor, and the Government’s ‘yobbery czar’ Louise Casey, seemed principally concerned about how the police could better ‘get their message across’ to the public about all the whizzy initiatives they were offering them.

I thought about this discussion when I read of the appalling case of Fiona Pilkington, who was driven to

set fire to herself and her 18 year-old daughter Francecca in her car as a result of a decade of harassment they had suffered at the hands of local yobs.

The details of this awful case make you weep. For more than ten years, the Pilkingtons lived under siege in Barwell, Leicestershire, from a gang of thugs who pelted the house with stones, set fences on fire, pushed fireworks through the front door, taunted Francecca, who had a mental age of four, and threatened and assaulted Mrs Pilkington’s son, Anthony, now 19.

The inquest has yet to reach its verdict. But the coroner has said the tragedy could have been prevented if the police and council authorities had taken the family’s complaints seriously.

And the evidence produced at the inquest was sufficiently horrifying for the Home Secretary to be reportedly planning to highlight the case in his speech to this week’s Labour conference.

For although Mrs Pilkington called the police no fewer than 33 times, none of the criminals who were making her life so unbearable was ever charged with a criminal offence.

When asked to explain this failure, the police response was astounding. Superintendent Steve Harrod told the inquest that ‘low-level anti-social behaviour is mainly the responsibility of the council’.

Come again, Superintendent? So what are the police for? Whatever happened to the first duty of the police to ‘preserve public tranquillity’? No wonder the Home Secretary is spitting tacks.

Certainly, the local councils in this case can also be faulted in failing to share information about this family’s situation. But at one point Anthony was marched at knife-point into a shed and threatened with an iron bar. If this

isn’t a police responsibility, what is?

Many, many other unfortunate people are being forced to live in a similar state of siege from local yobs, with the police unable or unwilling to end the attacks. Other police forces, accused of ignoring the plight of terrorised residents, have claimed that the hurdles erected by prosecutors mean they can’t get criminals to court.

There may be something in that. But to Superintendent Harrod it appears that the police can only prevent crime if the criminal justice system is avoided altogether. The police, he said, had to avoid youngsters being ‘criminalised’ because if they went to jail they were more likely to re-offend.

But, of course, by not going to jail these thugs were free to carry on offending. This is surely obvious — but not to those ideologues for whom imprisonment, rather than crime, has become the evil to be avoided.

So as a result of the kind of half-baked propaganda from trendy criminologists with which today’s police officers are indoctrinated on their training courses, young thugs are left free to terrorise a vulnerable mother to the point where she is in such despair she kills herself and her daughter.

But now look at what the police are investigating with unalloyed zeal. Two Christian hoteliers, Ben and Sharon Vogelenzang, were charged with using ‘threatening, abusive or insulting words’ which were ‘religiously aggravated’ after having a heated conversation about religion with a Muslim guest at their hotel.

We don’t know what was said. Maybe it was no more than a heated argument; maybe the Vogelenzangs were indeed offensive and unpleasant. But however horrible they may have been, how on earth can this be a proper matter for the police?

Similarly, last week a senior diplomat, Rowan Laxton, was found guilty of racially aggravated harassment after he shouted 'F*****g Israelis' and 'F*****g Jews' and that Israeli soldiers should be 'wiped off the face of the earth' while watching television reports of the Israeli attack on Gaza as he exercised in a gym.

Laxton was guilty of bigotry, to be sure, and should lose his job — and his membership of the gym. But prosecuting him was surely oppressive. If bigotry is to be treated as a criminal offence, it's not just young thugs on housing estates who would be criminalised but vast swathes of the population.

Certainly, the police should step in where hateful speech is likely to incite people to commit criminal acts. But, as often as not, such incitement doesn't lead to prosecution, while what is no more than an insult can bring down the heavy hand of the law.

Criminal offence has been redefined in such cases as the giving of offence. Bad ideas are thus considered worse than bad deeds.

Worse than that, those who try to stop bad things from happening — such as public-spirited individuals who try to stop acts of vandalism — find as often as not that they are the ones who end up in the dock.

Although it did not involve the police, this kind of grotesque injustice is what happened to Carol Hill, the dinner lady at Great Tey primary school, near Colchester in Essex. After she revealed to a pupil's parents that their daughter had been tied up and whipped by four boys — an assault from which Mrs Hill had rescued the child — the school sacked her for 'breach of confidentiality'.

Why are bullies being let off and innocent people being bullied in this way? It is surely the outcome of a culture distorted by the warped values of our intelligentsia and political class.

Obsessed by the impossible aim of eradicating all forms of prejudice or discrimination, it is also gripped by the belief that all punishment or retribution is a form of vengeance and must be avoided at all costs.

The combination of these two beliefs has meant that jobs who terrorise people to death must never be jailed, while those who cause offence to groups that tick the right boxes must be prosecuted.

It is also a means for the incompetent to avoid being held accountable for the failings on their watch. Right and wrong, victim and bully are being turned upside-down — and the police, who hold the line for a society's values, are now in the very front of the charge

Courtesy of URL: <http://www.melaniephillips.com/articles-new/?p=683>

Dereliction of duty!

The area around our home used to be the heart of industrial Britain with many thousands employed in engineering alone. The canals brought materials in and took products out. Now, many former industrial buildings, like this, are left derelict and provide a destructive outlet for vandals to hone their skills. Our walk along the canal bank was spoiled by graffiti. What do the police do about all these jobs and vandals who cause destruction and spoil our countryside and buildings? Nothing! They are too busy persecuting Christian hoteliers, motorists, photographers and other easy targets! Not that it's entirely their fault - the law itself is largely at fault and gives everyone in a minority position the freedom to express their *human rights* - but what about the rights of everyone else - the vast majority?



Alan's Reflections

Alan's Reflections

It's 0330 hrs on Friday and I've been spending some time thinking about my photography and about the various things that have happened in the development of photography over the last (almost) half-century that I've been interested in this subject that is as much science and engineering as it is art.

In many ways photography is still the same as it was more than a century ago, in as much as a well composed photograph will always be a well composed photograph. A beautiful picture will always remain that way. The monochrome landscapes of Ansel Adams will always be highly regarded, so, in that respect, photography hasn't changed as perfection (or as near as we mere humans can ever hope to achieve) will always be just that. However, there are areas where significant improvements have been made.

When I first started serious photography over 40 years ago, the late Eric Hosking OBE, Hon. FRPS, FBIPP was *the* name in nature (particularly bird) photography. He'd started his photographic career in 1929 - 80 years ago - and was really serious about his passion. He took some tremendous photographs even though he lost one of his eyes (to an owl) in the process. Most of his photographs were in monochrome. Some decades later, in the 1970's, Stephen Dalton came along and really took everyone's breath away with his high speed flash photographs, in colour, of birds (and insects) in flight. Both of these guys were pioneers in their field and worked to the limits of their equipment and materials and when those limits were reached they invented/designed something that would further push the boundaries out and allow them to take photographs of what had, up until then, been impossible. Of course, seeing birds frozen in flight - such as a kingfisher actually scooping up a fish from the river or

pond (in full colour) made Eric's black and white images look a bit tame - even though he had also managed to build some fairly high speed flash units and captured some great photographs with it. Now we could see the birds in their true colours (or as near as film and processing would permit). What a difference. In those days, even basic photography was something of a challenge. People would always mutter something like *I hope it comes out ok.* or, if being asked to supply a photograph to someone else, they'd usually reply *yes, of course, if it comes out.* there was always doubt as to the outcome of ones picture taking.

Photography was a real *adventure*. It also had to be something of a *passion*. The time, money and effort required to learn how to take photographs and actually produce something beyond a family snap was considerable. This was especially the case for working class folks such as myself as photography was always considered to be a hobby only for the wealthy or seriously affluent. This may seem strange nowadays, but it was a different world then. Apart from a toy cameras and a plastic box camera of my father's that I used whenever I could, I remember the first camera that I bought cost 14/6d (72.5p) and it was a Kodak Brownie Vectra and took size 127 film. My first adjustable camera was a second-hand Halina 35x Super. It had a 45 mm f3.5 lens of very dubious quality and I bought it for (I believe) £9 and I needed a hire-purchase deal of 4/6d (22.5p) a week in order to pay for it! My first roll of film was a reversal film (for slides) and was Agfa CT18 and cost 29/6d (£1.47.5p) including processing and mounting. These costs were seriously expensive to me, a young teenaged apprentice in the 1960's.

With this first adjustable camera I read everything I could lay my hands on about photography and started attending evening classes under the tutelage of well known portrait photographer and author, Mary Allen. Talk about being the poor relation! One of my fellow students had a Hassleblad 500C! (The cheapest Hassleblad now costs £10,000 + VAT!). Luckily, in those days it was so far into the stratosphere that I hadn't even heard of it! Mary

was great. Despite her getting on a bit in years and having spent all her life taking monochrome portraits, she was no equipment snob and, most importantly, she was *enthusiastic* and *passionate* about photography. The picture was all she cared about, not the equipment. She realised, of course, that my mediocre lens would never produce a sharp picture whatever I did with it, but if the composition of my photograph was pleasing to her critical eye she would heap praise on me. If my composition didn't meet with her approval, she guided me through the photograph making kindly suggestion as to where I could improve. She was with me when I first processed a roll of (monochrome) film, guiding me through the loading of the developing tank and pouring in the developer, then rinses and then the fixer, in the darkroom and, later, printing some of the pictures. And her excitement when she saw that I'd got it right and the photographs had *come out ok* was sheer joy and very genuine. What a joy it was to attend her classes - as much a social event as a teaching experience.

Of course, even getting a photograph to *come out* was something of an achievement as I had no exposure meter, only the sheet of paper that came with the film that gave guidelines for camera shutter speed and lens aperture settings according to the amount of sunshine. I also had a Johnson's Exposure Calculator, that was like a notched rotary slide rule that wasn't a lot more sophisticated than the piece of paper. But most of pictures *came out* not too badly exposed. I must have been good at guessing in those days! But what a challenge - and what excitement there was, in those primitive times.

The things I used to do for the sake of photography would be lost on me now, sad to say. I guess the enthusiasm of being young and single (even though poor) carried me through. I wish I had that energy, drive and passion now - even though things are now much easier than they were. I have equipment undreamed of then and can take photographs unlimited in number (I was always restricted by budgetary constraints until a few years ago when I

changed to a digital camera), but even though I love my photography, a lot of the *spark*, the *energy*, has gone from within me. Isn't that sad?

In those days the camera didn't lie and, generally, neither did the photographer. Nowadays, the camera still doesn't lie but the photographer almost always does - at least in the commercial world where the art now is *compositing*. That is manipulating the image to what you want it to be rather than what it really is - easily done with modern computers and imaging software. The pretty girl you see standing by the columns of an ancient Greek temple has probably never been there - she was placed there by the *compositor*. Within a few minutes the same girl, in the same clothes and the same pose - i.e. the same photograph, could be placed into a scene anywhere else in the world - and it would still look REAL! And that is the point.

With most art forms there is always the known quantity of the scene being what the artist wanted to show rather than what was actually *real*. However, with photography, there has been, until recent times, always the belief that what was shown in a photograph should depict reality - the *real* thing. I well remember, many years ago, attending a photographic society that had invited a guest speaker to display, and talk about some of his photographs. The photographer had recently been awarded a distinction (probably a *fellowship*) by the Royal Photographic Society and, as such, was highly regarded as this accolade was something that many photographers strove to achieve. As he displayed the monochrome prints he'd brought with him, he explained how he'd taken them and what methods he'd used in developing and printing them. One photograph showed a church on top of a hill, taken as a silhouette. He mentioned that he'd put the church on top of the hill (in the darkroom) because he thought the photograph looked better than it did without the church. The audience was knocked sideways by this admission. *How unethical could a photographer be? How low could he stoop?* This certainly wasn't the conduct expected of any photographer, let alone one with a distinction from

such a highly respected body such as the RPS. Now, photographers are almost **expected** to manipulate their photographs and lessons in compositing are published in most of the photographic periodicals as a matter of course. Naturally, photographers are always trying to improve the quality of their photographs, but to push this beyond the *truth* is always questionable and is usually considered unethical. But what is acceptable and what isn't?

I've no objection to a photographer doing some cleaning-up of a photograph but to move things around so that the scene depicted is far from what the camera actually recorded is outside the *spirit* of photography in my opinion. As an example of what I mean by something acceptable, I would find it acceptable to remove the tree branch that looked like it was growing through the head of Little Lad if I'd taken such a photograph as it failed to contribute anything to the photograph and was a total distraction to what the Little Lad really looked like because of the selective vision our eyes have compared to the all encompassing vision of a camera lens. Doing this wouldn't change the appearance of the Little Lad and would not change the *spirit* of the photograph. I'd even remove the huge boil from the end of his nose (if he had one!) as that is something no one would want to see, and, again, wouldn't destroy the *spirit* of the photograph.

Digital manipulation can be a great tool if used ethically and is certainly a great tool when it comes to restoring photographs. As an example, after my mother had passed away I found a photograph of her taken when she was a young girl. The photograph (a print) had been badly damaged and one of her eyes was completely missing because of a large scratch running across the photograph. I scanned the print and, using digital manipulation, took a copy of the one remaining eye and used it to make a replacement for the missing eye. I restored the rest of the photograph and re-printed it and the image looks almost as good as it did originally all those years before. Isn't that better than just leaving a badly damaged photograph in an old shoe box somewhere as no one wants to look

at my one-eyed mother? On another occasion, I noticed that there was a badly damaged painting of Grace's mum hanging in their farmhouse. It was in a real mess, but it was the only image of her when she was a beauty queen many decades before. Again, I copied the painting, then spent many hours restoring the digital image on the computer before printing it and framing it so it could hang in pride of place in the family home once more - almost as good as new! Grace's dad was SO pleased that I had brought his sweetheart to life again! He could hardly believe that it was possible.

In many ways the greatest improvements in photographic technology are most apparent in making movies. When I first started making movies in about 1970/71 it used to cost £1.00 per minute in film and processing costs when using Super 8 format film - a small reel of which lasted about 4 minutes. Only the very wealthy could afford to use 16 mm and the professionals would usually use 35 mm film for cinema use. Sound was recorded on tape and added later - try to get the synchronisation between the sound of speech and the movement of the lips right if you really want a challenge. Film editing involved literally cutting the film into pieces and gluing those pieces required together using a splicer - and, unless you were very affluent or a professional with a sound-man and his recording equipment, NO sound. Nowadays, anyone can make brilliant colour movies using digital video in high definition with stereo sound for very little cost - and very little effort.

About 35 years ago, an acquaintance looked at one of my photographs and remarked *You must have a much better camera than I do*. Needless to say, I was both insulted and furious. However, it's also been very interesting to observe that despite taking advantage of the wonderful advances in photographic technology, my very limited ability in photography has shown little, if any, improvement. You either have the talent or you don't (and I don't).

The equipment is still secondary. Long may it continue.

