



# SPS Newsletter

## Welcome

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Well I don't know about you but I am tired now of this constant rain we keep getting, I feel I have webbed feet growing! It's just not on that the golf course is saturated and seems to be closed more than it is open at the moment, unprecedented weather they say ... I just wish it would set a new precedent and buck up a bit. However, I have read a news article today that said February was the warmest on record we have had – I must have missed it I think as I have been going around as usual in my woolly hat, gloves and scarf! But the best bit about being in March is that the **CLOCKS GO FORWARD at 1am on 31<sup>st</sup> March**, so roll on those light nights and warmer (and hopefully drier) weather.

So what awareness days in March have caught my eye this year? Well we have National Bed Month, celebrating all that's good about getting a good night's rest. Whether you like your mattress firm or soft, sprung or slatted, single, double or King sized, celebrate and enjoy your bed – I have always considered the invention of the modern day bed as the 8<sup>th</sup> Wonder of the World! British Pie week is celebrated, are you a steak and kidney, chicken and leek or something more exotic, or apple pie person? I have to confess I myself am not a great pie lover but if I had to have one it would be a vegetarian one. We have International Women's Day, are celebrating British Tourism Week and on 16<sup>th</sup> March raising the profile of disabled people, accessible venues and events with Disabled Awareness Day. On 22<sup>nd</sup> March it's 'The Great British Spring Clean' when everyone is encouraged to become a 'litter hero' and get out into their communities and clean up all the litter and other fly tipped discarded items. It really saddens me that we see in our countryside so much litter and I often wonder who it is that throws it there and why they think it is an acceptable thing to do. And on 23<sup>rd</sup> March (from 8:30 pm to 9:30 pm), people are encouraged to turn their lights and non-essential appliances off to raise awareness about climate change.

March also sees World Book Day which got me thinking about what character I would be. There were so many possibilities to choose from but this year I opted for being 'Miss Marple'. I have read every Agatha Christie book and loved her mysteries and thought as I am getting older and more grey I would suit the character look without too much effort ...! So I wonder which literary character you would choose to be and why. If you fancy sharing your choice with us drop me a line and I will add it to the Newsletter.

And in March what happened in the past ...?

1969 - Concorde, the Anglo-French supersonic airline, roared into the skies on its maiden flight, where it reached speeds of twice the speed of sound.

1904 - Britain's first mainline electric train ran from Liverpool to Southport.

1936 - The *Spitfire* fighter made its first test flight from Eastleigh, Southampton, powered by a Rolls-Royce Merlin engine.

44 BC - "Beware the Ides of March" – Julius Caesar is stabbed by Marcus Brutus.

1603 - The crowns of England and Scotland were united when King James VI of Scotland succeeded to the English throne.

1871 - England and Scotland played their first rugby international, in Edinburgh. Scotland won.

1912 - Both the Oxford and the Cambridge boats sank in the annual Varsity boat race.

When I was younger I always remember listening to the radio and regularly hearing the 'pips' and still do today. I never really twigged what they were about until I was reading a newspaper article recently about the BBC's hourly radio 'pips' that are 100 years old in 2024. The 'pips' are unique. Also known as the Greenwich Time Signal the six short tones mark the start of each hour. Designed by John Reith and Frank Watson Dyson (the then Astronomer Royal) they were first heard on 5<sup>th</sup> February 1924 on BBC radio. The 'pips' begin five seconds before the hour with the sixth and final pip on the hour itself and are generated from an automatic clock and the sound of them has never changed. So when you are next listening to the radio and hear the BBC 'pips' say "Happy 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday" to them.

I hope you enjoy the Newsletter, and please continue to send material into me at my email address: [172elizabeth@gmail.com](mailto:172elizabeth@gmail.com).

Have a Happy Easter and don't eat too many eggs!

With my very best wishes

Liz xx



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02

## Through the Lens

### 'Chocaholism'

I couldn't let this Newsletter go out without a tribute to our wonderful 'Brummie' creation of Cadbury chocolate. March sees the 200<sup>th</sup> Birthday of Cadbury and we should celebrate this staple of British culture and life and I would wager a bet that every one of you has at some time had Cadbury chocolate. And I wonder which one is your favourite ...?

The Cadbury story started in 1824 when John Cadbury opened a grocer's shop in Bull Street, Birmingham. Amongst groceries he sold cocoa and drinking chocolate which he prepared himself using a pestle and mortar. In 1831 he bought a warehouse nearby and started manufacturing with help from his sons George and Richard. And in 1847 they moved to a larger factory in Bridge Street, John then retiring in 1861 and his two sons taking over the business. The sons then invested in a new way of processing cocoa, an innovative cocoa press by the Dutch manufacturer Van Houten. The press squeezed out so much cocoa butter from the cocoa bean that there wasn't a need to add any starches, and the cocoa could be 100% pure. In 1886 Cadbury launched their 100% pure Cocoa Essence, advertised as 'Absolutely Pure, Therefore Best'.

In 1878 they found a site of 14.5 hectares to build their new factory on. It had a meadow, cottage and stream called the Bourn. By adding 'ville' (the French for town) they named the site 'Bournville'. The Cadbury brothers wanted to build a factory site that had plenty of green spaces for the workforce to enjoy and have a better quality of life than city life had traditionally given. The architect George H Gadd designed the factory with building starting in 1879, along with 16 houses for employees. Over time the site became known as the factory in a garden with workers living, working and playing on-site. There were playgrounds, outings and camps and the men played football, hockey and cricket. In 1902 30% of Cadbury's capital expenditure was spent on workers' welfare. Tennis and squash courts were built along with a bowling green, and a swimming pool with heated changing rooms. Cadbury also became the first company to introduce half day working on a Saturday. During the First World War Cadbury worked to support the war effort with its milk supply being diverted to the people of Birmingham and the factory producing dried veg and fruit pulp. In the Second World War the Bournville factory turned to producing gun doors for Spitfires, cases for aeroplane flares, aircraft parts, gas masks and jerry cans.



What is an astronaut's favourite chocolate?

A Mars Bar!

Post-war saw a rise in on-the-go food and chocolate was very popular. Products were also advertised more with the advent of tv advertising. In 1955 on the first night of tv adverts being shown on ITV Cadbury was one of 24 ads shown. Cadbury developed more and more chocolate products and in 2010 was bought by Kraft Foods, in 2012 coming under its 'Mondalez International' division. And have you ever wondered why Cadbury use the colour purple, Pantone 2865c to be precise? They have used it since 1914 when it was introduced as a tribute to Queen Victoria. The company was given a royal warrant in 1854, making it the official cocoa and chocolate makers for the British monarch.

Here's some facts about Cadbury that you might not know:

- 350 million bars of Dairy Milk chocolate are sold each year.
- Cadbury's created the first heart-shaped chocolate box in 1861 for St Valentine's Day.
- People love Crunchies, so much so that 1,200 Crunchies are produced per minute, that's 1 million Crunchies per day!
- Cadbury is a fair trade product being certified in 2008.
- Cadbury is the second largest sweet and chocolate company in the world employing c.70,000 people in 50 countries.



When a chocolate bar goes to the desert it becomes Hot Chocolate!

And to mark their 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary Cadbury's are bringing back some of their classic Dairy Milk in limited edition packaging. So keep your eyes open for them in the shops. And when you are next partaking of a Cadbury product, savour the taste and say 'Thank You' to the Cadbury family for inventing their product and Happy 200<sup>th</sup> Birthday'. And if you want some photographic material why not take a trip out to Bournville and take some photographs of the estate, there are some lovely images that can be captured. Or you could do a still life of Cadbury products. Or better still thinking of John Leighton's recent image of the life of an orange you could do some images of the life of a chocolate bar and empty wrappers ...! Anyway some food for thought for you. And what's the best ever book written about chocolate and one of my favourite reads, why it's 'Charlie and the Chocolate Factory'. As a child I always wanted to be Charlie and meet Willie Wonka!



Why did the M&M go to University?

Because it wanted to become a Smartie!

## 03

### On the Towpath

In February's Newsletter I included an article about canals, which I particularly enjoy seeing and walking along, perhaps because they are less strenuous being mostly flat! If you are interested in learning more about our country's canal heritage there are many canal museums around the country but one worth visiting is the London Canal Museum. Overlooking the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century Battlebridge Basin on the Regent's Canal the Museum tells the history of London's canals and rivers. The Museum is housed in a former ice cream warehouse built c.1863 for the ice cream maker Carlo Gatti whose imported natural ice from Norway was delivered to this building by canal barges via the docks at Limehouses. Gatti's rags-to-riches story is told in the Museum and you can see the ice wells used to store the ice, measuring 34ft wide by 40ft deep. There are also numerous cargo narrowboats on view telling the history of products the canals moved around the country. And learn about canal art and the famous Roses and Castles design found on narrowboats. You can take a peak into an old toll office and enjoy the displays of Measham pottery and lace and ribbon plates, the latter of which was particularly popular with boating families for adding colour and light to cabin walls. There is also an exhibition of horses and their use on the canals. If you want to find out more about the Museum have a look at their website [www.canalmuseum.org.uk](http://www.canalmuseum.org.uk)

If you want to visit somewhere a little closer to home why not try Foxton Locks near Market Harborough. I went there a couple of weeks ago and it was very interesting. It's a Grade II listed site and home to the longest, steepest staircase flight of locks in Britain. It also includes the remains of the unique inclined Boat Lift which is listed as a Scheduled Ancient Monument. The Locks sit in 34 acres of natural green spaces so it is good for nature spotting too. And if you are in need of sustenance whilst there you will find two pubs, two cafes, a museum and the chance to hire a day boat.

Foxton Locks is holding a Canal Festival Day on 1<sup>st</sup> April which might give some good opportunities for photography. So if you are interested in visiting the Locks check out the Canal and Riverside Trust website for more details. The address of the Locks is Gumley Road, Foxton, Leicestershire, LE16 7RA.



## 04

## White Horses

Our recent Landscape competition made me reflect on the wonderful landscapes we have here in Britain and how history has shaped, created and impacted on them and how we view them. Have you ever seen any of the 'White Horses' we have in the UK decorating our landscape such as the Uffington White Horse on the Ridgeway (Britain's oldest road) in Oxfordshire? At over 100 metres long the chalk horse is estimated to be c.3,000 years old. And during World War II it had to be covered in turf so the German Luftwaffe pilots couldn't use it for navigation. I have been lucky enough to see a number of the White Horses we have in this country and whenever I see them either from afar or close-up I marvel at how they were created and why.



The debate continues today as to why communities of Bronze Age Britons went to the trouble of creating chalk designs in our landscape and why of all the prehistoric imagery horses are the most popular seen. We know that our ancient ancestors venerated horses and Anglo-Saxons used at least 16 Old English words for horses, each distinguishing between those used for carts, luggage, riding, breeding, royalty and war. The earliest known ancestors of the modern horse were small, dog-sized creatures that lived in North America c.55 million years ago. They first arrived in Europe by crossing the Beringia Land Bridge, a grassland steppe between Russia and Alaska that was exposed during the last Ice Age, enabling plants, animals and humans to migrate back and forth across the two continents. But it was not until the last 150,000 years that a relationship formed between humans and horses. In Europe they were one of the most hunted species almost driven to extinction before they were domesticated in the Bronze Age when evidence suggests they were farmed for milk, meat and transport. By the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Centuries the Islamic conquest of Spain and the English Crusades helped introduce Arabian stock to Europe and the horse-breeding industry was born. Horses used in agricultural pursuits have shaped the British landscapes, their constant grazing on land that was deforested during the Neolithic period onwards and their use in hauling logs from cleared woods and pulling ploughs ensuring pastures were kept from returning to woodlands.



I put a bet on a horse to come in at 10:1 – and it did!

Unfortunately all the others came in at 12.30!

Signs of the importance of the horse in our rural history crop up everywhere. How many pubs have you seen called 'The White Horse', 'The Nag's Head' or 'The Coach and Horses'? Horses were used to pull stagecoaches around the UK for more than 200 years and their legacy can be seen on the old coaching routes where old coaching inns and pubs exist complete with stabling. Did you know, if you are interested in seeing a complete old English coaching inn, then you need to head to London and The George Inn, just south of the River Thames in Southwark. In the care of the National Trust it is the last remaining galleried inn and retains original features from the stagecoach era, even containing a rare tavern clock whose large dials helped travellers and coach drivers set their watches. I bet it would be a good place to visit to get some photography for competitions!



And closer to home on our local canals you can see the legacy of the horses that were used to draw canal boats from the towpath. In Birmingham, a purpose-built stable called the Roundhouse built in 1874 was designed for passing canal traffic, and is open for visitors to view – again maybe another good location for some photography? And have you ever walked along the canal towpath at Shrewley and gone through the Shrewley tunnel which the horses used to walk through, if you haven't been do go and see it, I think it's very impressive and really conjures up in the mind how the canals used to be a working, vibrant place.

And here's an interesting fact for you: there are c.850,000 horses in the UK shared across 347,000 households. We have c.25,000 miles of old bridleways weaving through our countryside. And according to the British Equestrian Trade Association the horse industry contributes £4.7 billion to the economy.



What illness are horses most worried about getting?

Hay fever!

## 05

### The Colour Ultramarine

Often referred to as 'true blue', the brilliant deep-blue Ultramarine pigment's name derives from the combination of Latin for 'ultra', meaning beyond, and 'mare', meaning sea, referring to Europeans having imported the stone over the seas from Asia. Because it was so costly to produce, Ultramarine was once worth more than gold.

Known as 'The Blue Stone' Ultramarine is extracted from the earth, made from a semi-precious stone, lapis lazuli, ('the Blue Stone' in Latin) from Afghanistan. It is one of the oldest blue pigments, and early evidence of Ultramarine as a decorative stone has been found in the cave temples of Bamiyan dating back to the 6th and 7th centuries AD.



Lapis lazuli is made up of the minerals lazurite, silicate and pyrite. The mined stone was used in Ancient Egypt and Sumer, to decorate items such as jewellery, headdresses and even, reportedly, make-up in the form of Cleopatra's eyeshadow. But the blue pigment was not extracted until much later. There is evidence of it having been used in Chinese paintings from the 10th and 11th centuries, in Indian mural paintings from the 11th, 12th and 17th centuries, and Anglo-Saxon and Norman illuminated manuscripts from c.1100. In the 15th Century, the artist Cennino Cennini described Ultramarine in his *Il Libro dell'Arte* as a 'glorious, lovely and absolutely perfect pigment beyond all the pigments'. Lapis lazuli was later traded on the Silk Road. It was loaded onto ships in Syria sailing to Venice, from where it was traded throughout other parts of Europe.



Why was the belt arrested?

Because it was holding up a pair of Blue Jeans!



The time-consuming process of extracting Ultramarine from lapis lazuli, combined with the distances it had to travel from its source, made natural Ultramarine a supremely expensive pigment. So much so that it was once considered more precious than gold when weighed gram by gram. To produce genuine Ultramarine pigment from lapis lazuli was a complex, lengthy process. The mineral mined was ground and mixed with resin, linseed oil or wax, and then heated to form a dough-like mixture. This was kneaded like bread and placed in a lye solution, allowing blue flakes to separate, sink and dry, with the result being a fine blue powder pigment. The process would then be repeated to produce a finer grade of pigment each time, meaning that a comparatively small amount of Ultramarine pigment could be extracted from the stone. Nonetheless, it created a high-quality blue pigment free from the invisible impurities which lay in the rock and damaged the paint colour. The preciousness of the pigment dictated how it was used in painting. Artists employed it sparingly and had to account for the hefty cost, which was sold at the best quality and price in Venice. Michelangelo purportedly couldn't afford to use Ultramarine for his works but Vermeer was so taken by the pigment he refused to paint without it, his frequent use eventually resulting in his family falling into debt. From c.1400, Ultramarine was often used to paint the robes of the Virgin Mary, to illustrate her divinity. However, artists were still financially conflicted when using the pigment, so it was reserved for significant works of art, such as Sassoferrato's Praying Madonna (c.1660), and it remained a privilege to use the colour until a synthetic version came onto the scene.



Johannes Vermeer, Girl with a Pearl Earring



Giovanni Battista Salvi da Sassoferrato

In 1817, the London Royal College of Art offered a prize to anyone who could produce a synthetic version of Ultramarine. The French Government's Société d'Encouragement pour l'Industrie Nationale followed this by offering a larger reward of 6,000 francs for the invention. Just over a decade later in 1828, French chemist Jean-Baptiste Guimet was successful. His pigment, French Ultramarine, was made from a mix of clay, soda, charcoal, quartz and sulphur, heated to produce a green Ultramarine substance which was then ground, washed and re-heated to convert it to a blue pigment. Chemically speaking, French Ultramarine was identical to the prohibitively expensive original, and this changed everything. It quickly became an essential addition to the artist's palette. JMW Turner being the first accredited artist to use synthetic Ultramarine in 1834. Turner turned to oil colours in his early twenties to gain more professional standing and recognition, exhibiting his first oil painting, 'Fishermen at Sea', at the Royal Academy when he was 21. By the 1870s French Ultramarine had become the standard pigment for Ultramarine. Monet used a mix of French Ultramarine and Cobalt Blue in his 1906 'Water Lilies' painting. In 1957, Yves Klein developed a version of Ultramarine called IKB (International Klein Blue) which he registered as a trademark colour and used to make 200 monochrome paintings.



JMW Turner



Yves Klein



## 06

## Out and About

I always like to visit new places and with Spring and Summer on the horizon thought it would be good to highlight some ideas of places to go that are interesting and can also offer potential photography locations – always thinking ahead to next season's competitions and the need for new material ...!

I enjoy visiting places of worship, not because I am particularly religious but I admire the architecture, locations and history behind these common features of our landscape and culture and the stories they tell. I marvel at how these structures have stood the test of time so well (much better than our modern buildings have) and try to imagine what it would have been like when they had been built and who the people were who built them, not just the architects and patrons, but the normal people such as the stonemasons, tilers etc. I expect when they were constructing these buildings they didn't imagine that over a 1,000 years later many of them would still be standing and in use, take St Alphege's Church in Solihull that dates back to Medieval times. I just think it's a pity that we don't know the names and stories of all those that helped to create these places.

And when I visit a Cathedral I marvel at the sheer scale of these buildings and their beauty and heritage, they are inspiring. We are lucky that in our region we have many of these and if you haven't yet had a chance to visit some here are a few suggestions for you.



Quasimodo is suing Notre Dame Cathedral for the damage to his back from all the bell ringing?

I think he might be getting a big lump sum!

**Tewkesbury** – Has an Abbey which although not of cathedral status is one of the most beautiful parish churches in England with a history dating back over 900 years. Its notable features include the nave within which 14 gigantic Norman columns support elaborate 14<sup>th</sup> Century vaulting, the ceiling of the quire (which incorporates an image of the sun, the emblem of the Yorkists who in 1471 won a significant victory over the Lancastrians at the Battle of Tewkesbury). It also has a magnificent 17<sup>th</sup> Century organ and two modern stained glass windows marking the 900<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the arrival of the Benedictine monks at the Abbey.

**Gloucester** – At Gloucester Cathedral in 1216 the 9 year old Henry III was crowned King. Henry's grandson Edward II was buried here in 1327 after his likely murder at nearby Berkeley Castle. The Cathedral presents a magnificent blend of the architectural styles of Norman (Romanesque), early English Gothic and Gothic Revival (Victorian), including work carried out by the greatest of 19<sup>th</sup> Century restorers Sir George Gilbert Scott. The Cathedral's stained glass windows tell the stories of Henry's coronation and Edward's murder. Gloucester also has as places of interest its docks and the National Waterways Museum.



Did you hear about the new modern cathedral with no bells whose towers won an architectural award ?

It won the No-bell Prize!



**Worcester** – Work on the present Norman Cathedral began in 1084 but there has been a place of worship on the site since the 680s. It houses two very important tombs that of King John who was buried in 1216 and whose tomb is graced by what is believed to be the oldest effigy of an English King. The other tomb is that of Arthur Tudor, Henry VIII's older brother and Catherine of Aragon's first husband. There is also a memorial to local composer Edward Elgar (1857-1934) and a stained glass window telling the story of The Dream of Gerontius, a religious poem set to music by Elgar and often regarded as one of his greatest works.

**Hereford** – Built from local red sandstone with grounds that run down to the River Wye Hereford Cathedral is most famous for its Medieval Mappa Mundi, a fantastic map of the world, and its chained library, early manuscripts and printed books.

And we also have Lichfield Cathedral and Birmingham Cathedral but if I am honest the latter doesn't do much for me. I don't particularly warm to its architecture and size and for a city of Birmingham's heritage I don't think it does justice, but that's just my personal opinion.

## 07

### Competition Corner

Thank you to all of you who submitted entries for the February Competition. And the first correct entry submitted was from Jane Roby, very well done. The answer is given below:

I am white when I am dirty, and black when I am clean - What am I?

**The Answer: A Blackboard**

And here's another little teaser for you this month:

### March Competition

What goes out but never comes in?

The first correct answer emailed to me will win. So send your answers in by email to [172elizabeth@gmail.com](mailto:172elizabeth@gmail.com). **Closing Date for Entries: 8<sup>th</sup> April 2024.**

## 08

### 'MOUSE GATE' UPDATE

Good news, I am delighted to report that since the last Newsletter not one of the little creatures has returned to my car. So I am now a very happy motorist! And thank you to Jane Roby who studied my photographs and thinks that my little visitors were most likely House Mice but could possibly be Wood Mice.

And here's a little mouse joke to make you squeal with laughter ...!



What did the mouse say when his cheese was stolen?

Rats!



## 09

## Photography Podium

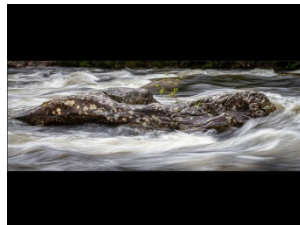
Annual Digital Projected Image Competition

Another popular competition this year with members entering a plethora of images on a wide variety of subjects. What talent we have as a Club. And I was particularly pleased as my two entries did very well with a Highly Commended and Second Place. What a lovely judge we had. So keep putting your entries into the competitions as it's only by sharing and seeing each other's work that we can fully enjoy our hobby and grow as photographers. Many congratulations to all of you who got a placing.

	Group 1		Group 2		Group 3	
<i>First</i>	<i>Holding On</i>	Myles Ensor	<i>Korean Couple Admiring The View</i>	Chris Lee	<i>Innocence</i>	Sue Pearmain
<i>Second</i>	<i>Room to Sit</i>	Elizabeth Smith	<i>Bullfighter</i>	Tony Dyson	<i>Six-spotted Burnet Moths</i>	Jolanta B. Axon
<i>Third</i>	<i>A Red Deer Tussle</i>	Michael Prince	<i>A Perfect Evening</i>	Jeannette Strange	<i>The Spoils of War</i>	Jenny Ladbrooke

## Digitals

## Group 1



Holding On

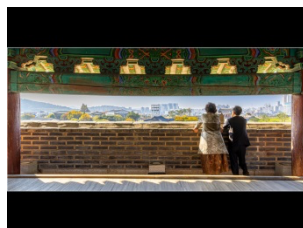


Room to Sit



A Red Deer Tussle

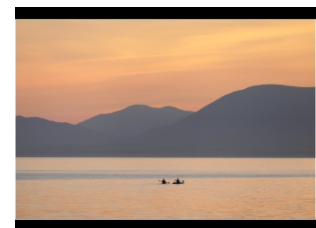
## Group 2



Korean Couple Admiring the View



Bullfighter

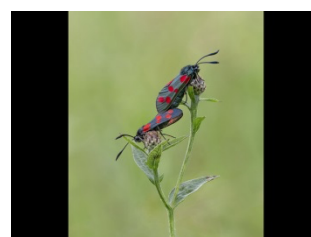


A Perfect Evening

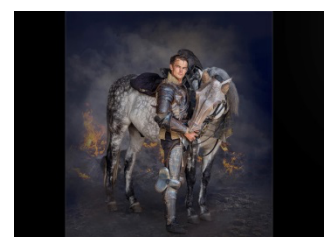
## Group 3



Innocence



Six-Spotted Burnet Moths



The Spoils of War

# 10

## External Recognition

*If any of you enter any competitions and get any external recognitions then please drop me a line so that I can add it into the Newsletter. It's great to see what everyone is up to and the accolades they receive.*



***See you next in April 2024!***