

Hird About The Place

The Scene by Hird Newsletter.
Edition #3: August 2004

Dear Friends,

I simply can't believe that July is over! The kids are back at school (huge sigh of relief from the dog!) and my parents have been and gone. Poor Graeme didn't know what hit him! He had a lot of work to catch up on, and all those Canada shots were piling up, waiting for him to print. Overall, we had a great July, lots of people came into the gallery and lots signed up to receive our newsletter. If you have any ideas or interests that you would like included please let us know. We want to ensure that we are not just wasting all this paper!

The **Scene By Hird Class Two** was won by True Loot, owned by Louise and Peter Van Duren (a couple of true beauts! ha ha, ... groan) and trained by Pat Bermingham. It was fantastic have a local owner win our trophy and we hope True Loot continues to do well. It's also great to see some of the horses who were winning earlier in the season back in time for the Coolgardie Cup (21 August).



"The winners!"

Raffle

Thank-you to all who supported the raffle to raise funds for the Goldfields Camera Club. The lucky winner was J. Regan of Manning, Perth, who purchased his ticket whilst visiting the Gallery.

This month we have donated a photo of the Exchange Hotel, Kalgoorlie to St John Ambulance. Tickets are available for \$2 in the Gallery until 13 August.



The St John Ambulance Raffle Prize.

Scene By Hird Quiz Night

When: Friday 13 August 2004
Where: KB Racing Club – Blue Spec Room
Time: 7 for a 7.30 start
Cost: Tables of 6 , \$10 a head.

There are heaps of prizes and great stuff up for auction. Tickets are available from St John Ambulance depot and Scene By Hird.

This will be the first of many fund raising nights organised by us, so please come along, have fun and help us help St John Ambulance. If you or your business would like to donate prizes/goods for auction please contact Darren Mudge on 9021 1101. All proceeds from the night (and raffle) going to St John Ambulance (Kalgoorlie Sub-Centre), who need funds to upgrade the Ambulance Support Vehicle.

My Camera

As you might expect, I'm often asked what camera I'm using to take the photos in the gallery. Since there is some interest in my equipment, I'll tell you about it¹.

My preferred camera for capturing landscape photographs is a 7 year old, large format field camera made in Japan by Tachihara. Don't worry if you've never heard of it – most people

¹ What is not often realised is that it doesn't matter what camera I use: it's the light that's important.

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never have, even if they are keen photographers. Like all cameras, it's just a box that holds the dark in and keeps the lens away from the film². Unlike most other cameras though, there is no light meter in it, nor is there a motor drive (or indeed any way to wind the film on – but more on that later). There is no “Aperture Priority” or “Program” mode and there's nowhere to put any batteries – it's a totally manual camera which would not have looked out of place in a studio from the 1920's.

It does have a couple of special features though, the most important of which is the size of the piece of film which records the scene. The size of the negative from this camera is 5x4 inches, or roughly the size of the prints you get from the minilab when you put your own film in for processing. The negative has about 14 times the surface area of a 35mm negative, or about 60 times the area of a sensor from a typical “consumer level” digital camera. To put it another way, if Canon made a digital camera with the similar sensor size, it would be sold as a 154 megapixel camera! So there's a lot of information on my film from which to make enlargements, and that allows me to make big, clear prints.



My camera: normal and with extreme movements applied.

The film in my camera comes as individual sheets in boxes of 10 or 50 sheets. Each one is loaded into a film holder in the darkroom before I leave home. The film holder is something like a rigid wallet with slots that hold a sheet in place and a sliding cover to keep the light away from the film. A sheet of film is loaded into each side of the holder, and I usually carry about 7 holders on an outing, so I've got fourteen shots to nail the image. Each shot costs me \$14, so I try to get the shot in two attempts only (one for

“insurance”). There's nothing like a bit of pressure on the hip pocket to hone the skills! I compose each shot as if it's the only shot I'm going to make of a scene, which is often the case. That fiscally-imposed discipline has been one of my secrets to my improvement in photography.

A big surface area of film requires a longer lens to show the same scene as a 35mm camera. For instance, a 24mm lens for my Nikon is a wide angle lens. On the Tachihara, a 75mm lens is needed to show as much of the scene from edge to edge. On my Nikon, 150mm is considered a telephoto lens, slightly enlarging the view in the print like a pair of binoculars would for the eyes. On the Tachihara, a 150mm lens is considered slightly “wide-angle”. These longer lenses have inherent properties that influence how much of the scene is in focus (known as depth of field.)

One of the special features of this camera may seem a little strange – it can be bent out of alignment. Bending the camera allows me to change how much of the scene is in focus in some weird ways. I no longer need to have everything in focus at a set distance from the camera, but rather, I am able to choose a plane of focus that can lead from the ground at my feet through to distant mountains.

Another change in the geometry of the camera can allow me to aim the camera upwards without vertical lines converging – allowing me to keep the side walls of buildings parallel, for instance.

My camera does not have a view-finder to look through. Instead, the lens focuses the image on a piece of frosted glass while I compose my photo. The glass occupies the same position as the film until it is moved out of the way by inserting the film holder into the camera. The image on the glass is dim, so I need to put my head under a blanket while I compose the shot. Michelle thinks I should leave it there all the time – she says the view is always better when my head is hidden by a blanket.

While there are differences between my camera and most others, there is nothing so special

² Or sensor if you're shooting digital.

about my camera that makes my photos better than anybody else's. The camera is still just a way to expose a piece of film to light in a bigger film – 95% of the shots in the gallery would have been **much** easier to make with a \$200 35mm SLR camera. I choose to use big film so that I can make bigger prints than I could before.

So you're probably still asking "Then why don't my pictures come out like yours?" The secret is the light! Get out there when the light is at its best, and it won't matter what camera you are using.

Photo of the Month

This month our photo shows a boiler at Rowles Lagoon exposed when the water level dropped during the last year. I hope you like the sample print, and please do come in to see the full sized one.

For those of you who've been receiving the 3 month complimentary subscription, this one is your last sample print – we hope you enjoyed receiving these in the mail. If you discover next month that you miss the prints, come in and subscribe for a year – it only costs \$29.50. You can also subscribe by mailing the form back to us with your details filled in.

Anybody who has subscribed to the Photo of the Month or has bought a picture from us, relax – you're going to keep receiving these samples until at least June next year.

Photo Tip

If you're one of those dinosaurs still using film in your camera (like me), one of the best ways to improve your photography skills is to shoot with slide film.

When you use slide film, your finished result is the actual film that went through your camera: the print lab has no chance to "correct" your mistakes and hide any errors you make. Sound scary? It is! Imagine being shown every little blunder you make in magnificent, vibrant colour

– there's nowhere to hide when there's no-one to blame!

Provided you take notes immediately after each exposure, recording the settings you used and where the camera was pointing when you decided on those settings, you will learn from your mistakes. Your slides will be your positive feedback, especially when you get everything right!

Oh, and don't worry if you only get a few good shots on a roll of film – I rarely keep more than two shots from any one roll. I just don't show anyone the bad shots.

*That's a second tip there at no extra charge! Only show your **best** photos and people will think you have suddenly become a great photographer! (oops – my secret's out now. I'll lose any hint of respect I was gaining)*

A Hint Of Canada



Maple Leaves
(what else did you expect????)

That's it for August's newsletter. As usual, we've had fun writing it, and hope you had fun reading it. Next month, there should be a few more pics from Canada, more photo tips and lots of other things we haven't thought of yet.

Cheers,
Graeme and Michelle Hird.

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