

# Hird About The Place

The Scene by Hird Newsletter.

Edition #9: February 2005

## Dear Friends,

We're back into the swing of things now after a relaxing Christmas break. Did you miss us? No, I didn't think you would .... probably didn't even notice we weren't here, did you?

Funny things, these holidays – I seem to work harder while I'm away than when I'm home. I'm not complaining, mind you: I managed to make a whole bunch of new shots for the gallery, and that's never a bad thing. Getting great images onto film always invigorates me, so I'm feeling about 20 times fresher than when I left home on Boxing Day.

## Road Trip to Victoria

In our last newsletter I mentioned our gallery would be closed while I underwent a course of Photographic Therapy, where I recharge my brain by draining my credit card on things photogenic.

I'm happy to report the therapy was a success, and I'm mostly sane now. However, there is this maddening twitch in my right index finger, giving me the appearance of Billy Bowden umpiring the Pakistani cricket team against Australia.

We drove out of Kalgoorlie at around lunchtime on Boxing Day, not having done any packing until that morning. Luckily it's almost routine for us to leave it so late, so we didn't leave anything important behind. Camera, kids, trailer, wife – let's go! We reached Cocklebiddy just before sunset, so that's where we camped.

The following day we drove from Cocklebiddy to Streaky Bay, then onto Adelaide on the following day: I won't bore you with the details of that section. (Come to think of it, there aren't any details between Cocklebiddy and Adelaide!)

In Adelaide, we caught up with a close friend from the distant past and reminisced over a Greek meal and a bottle or two. Natalie was the person who inspired me to take up photography in a serious way, so it was really good to see her again after nearly 5 years without much contact.

After saying our farewells to Natalie and Adelaide, we headed for Melbourne, reaching the South Australian border around lunchtime. Feeling refreshed and glad to be on the "home straight" of our drive, we happily crossed into our former home state of Victoria.



Sea Scout Pier, Beaumaris, Melbourne.

However, it turns out we were ill prepared for the new "psychological defence system" those sneaky Vics have erected to keep others out of their fair state: POWERNAPS!!!!

They've consulted hypnotists and discovered the optimal timing for the "power of suggestion" to put you to sleep is 4.75 minutes. So they've placed road signs every 8.77km along the main roads asking if you're "feeling sleepy yet?", "yawning?" or if you have "tired eyes?". They strongly suggest, in soothing blue letters, that you "Take A Powernap Now" Boy, did we get drowsy all of a sudden!???

\* Measured on the official "Hird Index Of Photo Freshness"

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It is my belief that while you are “napping” in the many “convenient” road-side Powernap areas, the Victorian Powernapping Squad comes in and points your car back towards the border so that when you awake, you head off in the wrong direction. Your holidays are half over before you realise “Hey, Victoria can’t be that big and also have a small country town that’s called Adelaide!”

Luckily, we were swapping drivers every 2 hours and drinking Coke like our holidays depended on it. We managed to stay awake all the way into Melbourne, though we did see rather a lot of bewildered drivers with S.A and W.A. number plates in the oncoming traffic .....

Having grown up in Melbourne, it was good to visit some of my old haunts. At one stage during high-school, I lived in Beaumaris and spent many mornings fishing from the local piers and rocks (I should have been studying, but you know what it’s like ....). I decided to revisit some of my childhood memories with my camera, and was pleasantly rewarded with a few wonderful shots. The Sea Scout Pier was one such image.

We travelled up into the high country for a few days to show the kids what mountains look like. While Michelle and I were glad to be immersed in the crisp mountain air and amazing landscapes, I don’t think the kids were very impressed. Things might have been different if Santa hadn’t brought those Gameboys for each of them. You drive 3500km to show them something they’ve never seen before, and they want to stay in the car and beat up an electron!

Of course, the high country of Victoria was full of great photo opportunities and I took full advantage of the time spent there. You’ll need to stay tuned for the photos though – I haven’t had time to make prints yet.

As is common when on holiday, the time to leave came around far too early. Rather than rush back to Kalgoorlie in a mad dash, we took time to “smell the roses”. We planned our trip so that we could stop at Tower Hill (near Warrnambool), Adelaide, Fowlers Bay (near the head of the Bight) and Cocklebiddy (near the middle of nowhere).

One of our friends recommended staying at Fowlers Bay, and I’m glad he did. Although the weather was terrible, I managed to make an image which I absolutely love: I found a sand dune with a plant sprawling over it and wind-carved “eye sockets” on one side. I’ve named the image “Brooding Dune” and it will be in the gallery soon (and a preview is below in the “Latest Photos” section of this newsletter).

### Photography Tip: Basic Composition.

Don’t include too much sky in your photos without good reason. Most landscape photos look best when the horizon is roughly one quarter to one third from the top of the frame. Pictures with the horizon in the middle of the frame often have a “static” appearance.

Of course, as with any rule, there are exceptions: panoramic shots seem to work with the horizon in the middle, as do shots of reflections in water.

One other time to ignore the “third from the top” tip is when the sky is the subject – interesting weather or a great sunset would call for the horizon to be closer to the bottom of the picture.

### Latest Photos

Well, what more can I say? There is a whole new crop of images to choose from in my files, and they’ll appear here and on the web site as I get them ready. They are shots from our trip across the country.

This one is from Fowlers Bay, shot one dark windy morning – just about perfect conditions to brood silently behind a sea cliff.



*Brooding Dune*

### How your camera works – The Shutter.

This is the second in a series of articles on how the mechanisms of a camera operate and how they affect the photographs you take. From the title,

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you've no doubt worked out this one is about the shutter in your camera.

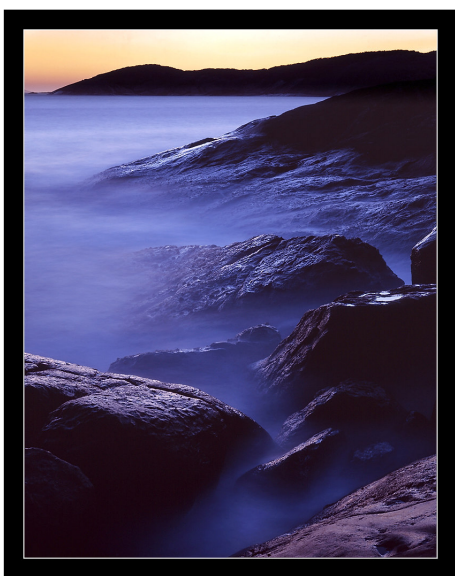
In last month's article, I compared the lens' aperture with the iris of your eye. Both control the amount of light passing through by increasing and decreasing the area of the hole.

To continue with the analogy, the shutter can be considered the "eye-lid" of the camera, the difference being that it is normally closed (I'm hoping that yours are usually open ....)

Another good analogy is filling a bucket: you can fill it slowly by trickling water through a kinked hose or you can fill it quickly by removing the kink. But either way, you need to fill the bucket to complete your goal.

The amount of light hitting your film depends on both the area of the aperture and the length of time light has to get through. By adjusting either the aperture or the shutter speed, the light reaching your film can be precisely restricted.

Now, the tricky part: for any given film or sensor there is an optimal amount of light required to obtain the correct exposure. For light that is constant intensity, there are numerous combinations of aperture and shutter speed that will let the "right" amount of light through. However, when one of these controls is adjusted, the other must be adjusted in the opposite direction to compensate.



*Thistle Cove: A long shutter speed of 45 seconds gives the waves the appearance of mist on the rocks*

If you choose a shorter shutter speed, you need to select a larger hole. If you want a longer shutter speed, you need a smaller hole. If you want a short shutter speed and also a small hole, you need faster film (remember from last month, a smaller hole = a bigger *f* number = more in focus). Adjusting one control and not the other will over- or under-expose the film.

If you own an SLR camera (or better), it's up to you to decide whether you want to freeze the action or have a flowing quality to the image when things move during the exposure. If you have a compact camera (with few available controls of the shutter speed and aperture), the camera makes this choice for you, usually choosing to freeze the action.

### Scene by Hird Quiz Night, Friday 13 May

Q: Which famous event last year raised more than \$5,500 for the Kalgoorlie Sub-branch of St John Ambulance?

A: The Scene by Hird Quiz Night and photo raffle!

And since it was such a success, we're running another one this year. Keep the Friday, 13<sup>th</sup> May free for what promises to be another fun night of trivia and shattered egos.

We've donated a framed 'Nightstalker' lightning print for the raffle, worth \$470. Tickets will be available in the gallery from February 21 for \$2.00 each, and it will be drawn at the quiz night. We've also donated 6 Gift Vouchers from the gallery as one of the prize packets (probably not first prize, but at least second or third place will pick them up as a prize.)

However, we can't supply all the donations needed to make a quiz night successful. If you work for (or own) a company who may be interested in supporting St John Ambulance in their fundraising, please contact the Station Manager (Darren Mudge) on 9021 1101 during office hours. Since we use a Power-Point presentation for the questions, we are able to project your company logo many times during the night. It's great exposure and it will boost the community

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profile of your company. (Oh, and it's a very worthy cause!)

## 25% Off!

Before you all rush into the gallery in search of bargains, you'd better finish reading this article – you probably don't want what I'm giving away .....

Much to Michelle's chagrin, I rushed out and spent \$400 on a brand new mountain bike when we returned from our holiday. You see, next January, if I don't change my habits, I'll be both Fat and Forty! Since I can't do anything about being forty (at least, not without resorting to bribery and plastic surgery) I'm going to need to work on the other side of the equation.

Hence the 25% off - I've vowed to loose 25kg by 05/01/06, making me a trim 79kg when I turn 40. Well, that's the plan anyway. Lots of exercise and no more junk food. No more couch potatoes in the Hird household (nor any other type of potato come to think of it). No more excuses for failing to exercise. No more garlic bread (that one hurts!) In fact, if you catch me eating a pie before this time next year, you officially have my permission to squash it into my face!<sup>†</sup>

Fit and Forty sounds so much more agreeable. With a bit of persistence and a lot of will-power, there will be much less Hird on the Scene from now on.

### Want to learn about Adobe PhotoShop?

I'm hoping to run a workshop at the gallery to teach people how to use Adobe Photoshop. It's a very complex program, however it's extremely powerful and I find it indispensable for finishing the photographic vision I have in mind when I'm in the field shooting film.

The workshop I want to run will be called "Photoshop for Photographers" (because that's what I do with it). There have been a few people at my SLR workshops watching me run Photoshop when I show them what was in their photos. Those people have suggested I run a course about the program.

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<sup>†</sup> I think I'm going to regret committing that to writing!

Photoshop is daunting to many people because there are so many commands available in the menus. I've been using it nearly everyday for about 4 years now, and I still find new ways to do things or better methods to achieve my vision.

Given that experience, I can tell you that there are only a few important techniques you need to learn to dramatically improve your digital photographs, and you can indeed learn those in one night. I'm not saying you'll immediately become one of The Greats in photography, because I can't improve your imagination. However, I can give you the necessary "tools in the kit" to improve your photographs.

Just don't expect to learn how to make montages or fancy digital designs. I use Photoshop as my darkroom, and I'm only interested in teaching Photoshop for photographers, not graphic design.

If you think you could get something from a course about Photoshop, please call us or email. There is no obligation - I'm simply after an indication of interest before I commit to writing up course notes. The likely cost will be \$66, including GST. If there is interest in a CD/DVD showing how I work with Photoshop, I might also put one together (either to include as course notes, or for sale separately).

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That just about wraps it up for another month. As usual, I've had fun writing this and I hope you've enjoyed reading it.

Next month I'll give you some more photo tips, discuss how the meter in your camera works, show some more shots from our travels and give information on up-coming events that you may find interesting.

I'm pretty sure there will be a few laughs hidden in the newsletter too.

Cheers,

Graeme & Michelle Hird

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