

OSPS newsletter

The newsletter of the Ordnance Survey Photographic Society
In its 66th year.
autumn / winter 2019



Tales from the archives
What's in your hard drive?
Our exhibition at Ordnance Survey

Editor's thoughts

In January we had a print exhibition running for a week at Explorer House. There should have been a digital sequence running on the balcony monitors but there was a strange technical issue outside the control of OS and OSPS. With the online image platforms like Flickr or Instagram, is such an 'old fashion' idea of a print exhibition still relevant? I looked around for some statistics on Instagram and they're quite astonishing. At least 100 million photos and videos uploaded each day by more than 500 million active users! There aren't any statistics that I can find for the number of print exhibitions held each year, but they're not showing any signs of going away. I've lost count of the number I've been to. The best has been the Microsculpture images by Levon Biss at the Oxford Natural History Museum. Jaw-dropping prints.

Mike Stacey

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Vice President	<i>Position vacant</i>	Int Competition Sec	Roger Beauchamp
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Programme Sec	Barbara Beauchamp		Heso Jima-Otero

Cover image: 'Minions' © Mike Stacey

Our exhibition at Ordnance Survey

It's something that OSPS has done before, but it was still nice to receive an invitation from OS to hold a photographic exhibition at Explorer House at the beginning of the new year. And so, on the morning of Saturday 11 January, myself, Barbara and Roger Beauchamp, Andrew Mills, Roy Fisher, Dennis and Jane Wilby, Brian Jones, Heso Jima-Otero and Kevin Ramsell arrived at Explorer House to mount the selected prints on the 8 display boards OS had supplied. It took a couple of hours of head scratching, pin removal, shuffling around and tweaking, but we had everything in place.

The exhibition ran for the week of 13–17 January. Later, on 28 January, OSPS attended the fresher faire, which is a lunchtime event promoting the various clubs within OS. During that time a good number of people stopped to talk and we received a lot of positive and complimentary comments about the exhibition.

In addition to the prints, we had selected 70 digital images to run in a sequence on the balcony monitors. Unfortunately, due to a technical fault outside our control, the digital images were never displayed.



Mike Stacey

What's in your hard drive?

While a lot of computers are now fitted with solid state drives (SSDs), the large capacity versions are still very expensive. That leaves conventional hard drives with an important storage task, but have you ever wondered what's in your hard drive?

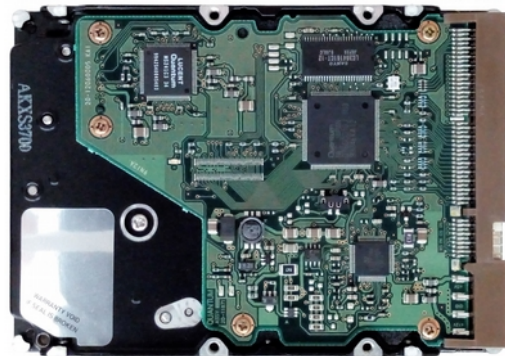
If you're anything like me there will be jpegs, tifs, multi-layered psds, various raw files, no HEIC files yet. But have you ever wondered what's 'in' your hard drive? Recently I had reason to dismantle an old one and the photos here show what I found. NOTE: this process will destroy a hard drive so don't do this to one of yours.

The first picture is what you usually see, the outer case. The second is the control circuitry under the top plate.

I don't know what all the components are, but in the third picture the circular mirror is a platter and is where the data is stored. The arm over the platter is the part that does the reading and writing of data. The fourth picture is a close-up of the platter and arm, which bears a strange resemblance to a record deck, but the storage capacity is millions of times greater.

A word of warning though. The shiny silver object in the bottom right of the case in the third picture is an extremely powerful magnet, so don't let anything like a credit card anywhere near it!

Mike Stacey



Tales from the archive

The Ordnance Survey Photographic Society was founded in 1953, and we're quite fortunate in having records going back to 1966. This means it's possible to look back at what was happening in some detail and every now and then that's what I do, so what was happening 50 years ago in the winter of 1969? Here are three items that caught my eye from the committee meeting minutes of November 11 1969.

Matters arising:

A vote of thanks was given to G Barfoot, G Behr, J Mackenzie and R Cooper for all their work for the club during The Queen's visit to Ordnance Survey. All the negs have not yet been returned as there was still work to be finished. A vote of thanks goes to all the photographers who worked remarkably well.

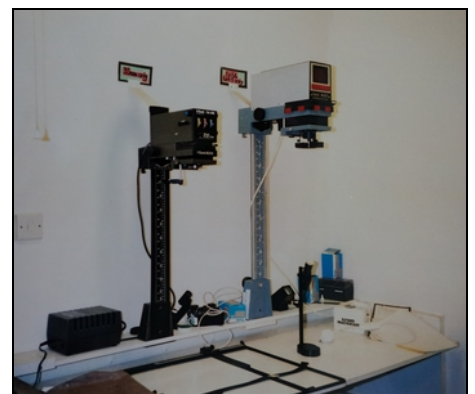
This was about the official opening of the new Maybush head office in 1969 by HM Queen Elizabeth. OSPS members had provided valuable photographic views in addition to the official coverage. I don't know how many images were contributed, but when the club storage was being cleared out prior to the closing of Crabwood House, a small box of prints was found. These were images of the official opening. It was a mystery as to how they had been lost in the corner of a cupboard, but I gave them to the corporate archivist for storage by OS.

An interesting observation came about when OS moved to the latest head office at Adanac Park, where the photographic coverage of the royal opening by Prince Philip was very different. There were only two photographers permitted to record the day, a contractor, Mikael Buck, and one of the OS staff photographers, Ian Nicolls.

Secretary:

Crabwood House will be available in the near future. We were promised a part for our darkroom etc, but it appears others are also after it. It is not yet known to whom rooms are available.

We did indeed get a dedicated darkroom, towards the back of the building on the ground floor if I remember correctly. Not only that, some years later we got a studio too.



Any other business:

R Cooper wanted to know if it was possible to hold a print and slide competition with a photographic club in Sweden to encourage an international connection. It would only incur the cost of postage etc. G Behr was very dubious about letting slides and prints

out of the country without making duplicates and this would involve considerable cost. Miss Sleep proposed and M White seconded that R Cooper should find out all he can about the proposal when he goes to Sweden in a few months time.

So far I haven't been able to find any record of whether or not this competition ever happened.

Mike Stacey

The little app that wouldn't

In early February 2020 I gave a talk to OSPS on smartphone photography. I hoped it didn't come across as too technical, but I wanted to get across that while smartphone cameras are certainly a tool of the masses, (or should that be online masses?), they can be of use to photographers. I covered the various snags and pitfalls to be aware of, and one of those was unexpected glitches with apps. Here's a weird one.

Securet ProCam isn't a straightforward photography app. It's a motion-sensing security camera app that detects specified changes within its field of view and captures a still image when it does. For about the past 2 years it's been installed on an old Sony tablet and has been working well. It has yet to catch the person who has tried to break into my mother's house on more than one occasion, but there have been many images of jackdaws, pigeons, rabbits and the local cat strolling along the patio.

Unfortunately the Sony tablet is suffering from the near constant use and needs replacement, and that has thrown up a bizarre problem. The tablet is running Android 4.0 and Securet ProCam works just fine. I tried installing the demo version of the app on an old Samsung Galaxy S2 running Android 4.1.1, as that's provided as a check for compatibility. The demo installed and worked as expected. However, when I tried the full version, that failed. There was an install button on the app store page but nothing happened when clicked on. The app details said nothing about incompatibility with any versions of Android. Indeed, I experimented with installs on different devices with Android 4.4.2, 7.1.1 and 10 and they were all fine. Was it an issue with screen size, the S2 having a comparatively small 5 inch screen? No. I was able to try a 7 inch tablet running 4.1.1 and the install failed. There seems to be some form of incompatibility with the full version of Securet ProCam and Android 4.1.1. Searching online failed to suggest why that might be, but while anyone else is unlikely to have an issue with such an outdated version of Android, it does illustrate the strange quirks that can occasionally arise.

Mike Stacey