

Reviews of 'Connect on Thursday' presentations by our own members:

### **Sheila Haycox ARPS MPAGB/AV EFIAP 'The Fox Brothers'. 25<sup>th</sup> June**

<http://www.sheilahaycoxphotography.com/>

We were delighted to welcome Sheila back after her superb presentation on Cuba. Sheila's main hobby is photography which has been an interest of hers since the 1960s. Over the years she has tackled a range of different subjects winning many international photographic awards.

Sheila likes to explore historical themes and we were interested to see her photographs of the Quaker company 'Fox Brothers & Co' of Coldharbour Mill near Uffculme, Devon who became one of the largest textile businesses in Britain in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, employing about 5000 people. We learnt that the company issued their own bank notes. The Fox, Fowler and Company bank eventually had over fifty branches in the West Country, and issued its own bank notes until 1921, when it was taken over by Lloyd's Bank - itself founded by a Quaker, Sampson Lloyd.

As ever Sheila's photos were excellent. We saw lovely close up photos of the bobbins and the combing machine. Sheila had captured great photographs of the different tartans produced by the company such as the 'Devon Green Tartan' and the 'Companion Tartan'.

Then a first on our Connect on Thursday sessions as Sheila showed us a trailer of her photos - 'Asian Travels'. Certainly, a great advertisement for:

### **'A Glimpse of Rural Asia' 23<sup>rd</sup> July**

We were not surprised to see a presentation, full of magnificent interesting photos, so well composed and technically of such high quality.

Sheila has visited 44 countries and covered a few on her trip to Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam in 2011. Along the Mekong Delta we saw the incredible stilt houses resting on tall bamboo poles. Also the floating homes on pontoons or empty oil drums completely independent of land.

Sheila's wonderful atmospheric Audio Visual (AV) of Angkor Wat in Cambodia, the largest religious monument in the world included the 'giant strangler trees' with their huge roots, gripping and strangling the sculptured temples.

Rickety bamboo bridges, children brushing their teeth in a river, a young child carrying a machete, people chewing beetle nuts, motorbikes and bicycles with massive loads and enormous fishing nets we saw it all.

Different methods of rice growing with rice submerged in water in the lower lying areas were shown so well by Sheila with people busy harvesting the crop. Then the stark contrast of the rice terraces in northern Vietnam, created over many generations and forming beautiful patterns across the landscape.

Throughout Sheila had captured amazing photos of the working animals, particularly the water buffalo and beautiful expressive portraits of the people. Altogether another session of excellent photography which captured the 'feel' of the places she visited. Thank you Sheila.

## **Ian Bateman FRPS MPAGB AV-AFIAP APAGB 'Hidden France'. 2<sup>nd</sup> July**

<http://www.ibateman.co.uk/ian/>

A welcome return visit by Ian, an accomplished and award winning photographer and International Judge.

In his presentation Ian took us across France, showing us unusual features and interesting stories. Each one of these stories was fascinating and well-illustrated by Ian's wonderful photographs.

Always on the lookout for something unusual Ian had come across the small French village of Caylar in the Larzac region of south-central France. It has long been a tradition in Larzac villages to plant elms in the village squares for shade and as a symbol of life and longevity, but as elsewhere their elm had succumbed to Dutch elm disease. As Ian told us in his superb Audio Visual (AV) the villagers and town council came up with a unique solution: the tree would be kept and transformed into a monumental sculpture by Michel Chevray. Ian's excellent photographs definitely did justice to the intricate and astounding work of Chevray with shepherds, local animals and plants depicting the rural life and legends of the surrounding area. As ever, it was apparent that Ian sees the details that others might miss. This was just one example from a mesmerising presentation.

The 'chat' function was much used by members to congratulate Ian on his stunning presentation: "Many thanks, much enjoyed."; "Thank you Ian. Thoroughly enjoyed your presentation."; "Excellent presentation today. Great photos, excellent talk with a variety of delivery, interesting topic and just the right timing."; "So enjoyed that presentation. I don't know France, so a real education. Thank you Ian."

## **Nick Ricketts 'Is the Climate of Exmouth Unique?' 16<sup>th</sup> July**

Nick's career had included 20 years as a weather forecaster at the Met Office in Exeter. He is the Organiser of our U3A Weather group. Nick was the first Chair of our U3A and together with a hardworking and committed committee he helped to set strong foundations for our U3A.

With numerous colourful and informative charts Nick set out to show us what influences the weather here in Exmouth. For example a topographical chart showed the surrounding hills; Dartmoor, Exmoor and the Blackdown hills. Interestingly, Nick explained that the high ground of the Welsh hills gives us protection. From Nick's diagrams, it was helpful to see how the windward side of mountains and hills experience more precipitation than the leeward side. We were beginning to see that Exmouth is in a fairly good position.

Whilst we might think that we have plenty of rainfall in the winter we only had to look at Nick's charts to discover that other areas in Devon experience far more rainfall than us, even Exeter given that it is on the leeward side having a slightly higher average than Exmouth.

Amongst the different charts it was great to see that Nick and Marion are keeping detailed weather reports.

Nick's talk generated much conversation with references to the Otter Valley Weather station <http://ottervalleyweather.me.uk/liveweather/liveweather.htm> and Exmouth Coastwatch <http://www.exmouthcoastwatch.co.uk/2-uncategorised/440-weather-station> Well worth a look!

Thank you Nick.

Reviews by Christine Chittock, Speakers' Organiser