

Thoughts on Photography



Your Most Important Pictures

During my photographic career I have taken thousands upon thousands of pictures; trials of army weaponry, photographs of heads of state, and top ranking Army officers. I have taken photographs for holiday brochures.

I have had hundreds of pictures published. So, what do you think I regard as the most important pictures I have taken?

My answer will always be "pictures of the family". Why? Well, all the other pictures have been useful for, at the very most, a month: family pictures can connect generations. My



Two of my early cameras

parents, using a Brownie Box camera, took pictures of my brother, my sister, and I as we grew up. I had my first camera when I was 9 years old and I still have some of the pictures I took with it. These are now treasured possessions.

I now live in a different part of the



country to my brother and sister. Two or three years ago I took a scanner and notebook computer with me on one of my visits to them. I scanned all the family snapshots they had each accumulated. Rarely are there any duplicates. There were a few pleasant surprises. After I had broken up with my first girlfriend I got rid of her photographs. When I got married all pictures of former girlfriends had no place in the new family home. My sister and brother still had some of the pictures. Not duplicates but prints from the

My first serious girlfriend and me.



extra shots that had been taken. I had recaptured some of my own history.

When my mum died in the 1970s my brother had inherited all her family snapshots including one of mum taken around 1916 when she was 12 years old. There were pictures of the grandmothers whom I didn't remember because they had died when I was very young.

Computer technology has left both my sister and brother behind, but they do have DVD players. So, I captioned those pictures I could and numbered the others. It took almost a year and frequent letters and telephone calls to caption all the images, but we finally got there and new disks were sent out. But this no longer involved just the three of us. Disks went to my daughters and my sister's daughters too.



My maternal grandmother who died before my second birthday

This project which had started out as help for my younger daughter who was tracing the family tree had now taken a whole new dimension. I started to learn from my siblings more and more of the family's story. Another trip to my home town was called for.

I spent much of the second trip in the archives of local libraries discovering where my mother had lived during her life and either photographing the houses or the sites where they had been. (My father's origins were in London so that would have to wait until later.) I took pictures of the local area, pictures of the streets which would have been the same when mum had lived there. I wrote short pieces based around all that I knew and sent them to brother and sister to see if they agreed. Gradually, between us, we have been able to piece together much of our mum's history.

During the winter months this year, I can create a slideshow with narration of my mum's life and distribute that throughout the family. Other family members will be further projects. And, I had better get on with it, because none of us are getting any younger.



My maternal grandfather

NB. If you are told by one of the older female members of the family that they don't want their photograph taken then I have a standard reply. "Do you not want your grandchildren to remember you in 50 years time?" We all do.