

# Photo Competition 2022

Our 2022 digital photo competition will be launched on 1st June. We will be looking for entries on the topic 'My Hampstead Garden Suburb'. Rules and details will be included in the Summer issue of Suburb News and the winners' photos will be published in the Winter issue.

In the meantime, here is some advice on taking the perfect picture from Michael Jacobs, HGS U3A Photography Group Leader and Suburb News designer, Trevor Hutton.



## Taking a good photo...

MICHAEL JACOBS

Taking a good photo doesn't depend on your equipment. It's all about composition and the story. Why did you want to take the photo? Does the photo convey that message? So, first of all, decide on the message and then on how best to convey it in a pictorial manner. Compose the image in a way that brings out what you see and make sure to leave out the things that do not add to it. While your brain can exclude irrelevant things, they all get included in a photo, so make sure that the image is not confused with extraneous objects.

Below I give lots of suggestions, but bear in mind that sometimes the best photos involve breaking the rules!

Does the photo have impact? Why should your photo stand out from lots of others? Professional photographers take thousands of photos and only use a few. It has to be just right. One of the major factors is lighting. Make sure your subject is well lit and that stray light does not damage the final image. Don't shoot into the sun unless you are seeking to create a backlit effect or a silhouette. Avoid the sun glinting on things. Use 'fill-in flash' if the subject is not well enough lit, especially in

bright sunlight when faces can fall into shadow.

Creating a good composition involves making sure that the subject is clearly in focus and well positioned in the image. Techniques which can help include the 'rule of thirds' so that, for instance, landscapes are equally divided between foreground, centre ground and sky, and portraits are correctly centred. If you can include lines, patterns and shapes that lead the eye to the main subject that also helps as does using perspective. Texture and lines can also help, especially when taking black and white photos.

Colour adds to the impact. Avoid wishy washy photos unless that is the effect you are seeking.

Experienced photographers use the facilities in more expensive cameras to create better photos. For instance, they increase the speed of the photo when taking images of moving subjects, like children running or cars moving fast, to get a clear image; they change the exposure to get more or fewer subjects in focus – subjects surrounded by out of focus objects stand out more – that's good for portraits, for example; they increase ISO to be able to take better photos in low light. But none of these techniques count for much if the image is not

well chosen and composed in the first place.

You can see some of this thinking in the photos to the right. The first is a four-year-old boy in a sunlit garden. The background is out of focus, so his face is isolated, and it is well lit despite strong sunlight. The line of the hat brim and the shape of the hat bring the observer's eye to the face. What's the story? He is curious and asking a question, as little children do. The second is a squirrel in Golders Hill Park, an everyday sight you might think, but I have caught him looking at me. The upright posts gripped by the squirrel's tiny paws help divide the image into thirds vertically. What is he saying? Who knows, but he is clearly very curious too. Is there a parallel with the little boy? Third is a junk sailing across the harbour in Hong Kong at night. Much more difficult to capture clear images at night, but the sails on this ship are brightly lit from behind and the buildings on Central Island are illuminated by both internal and external lights. This illustrates a contrast between the old and new. The horizontal lines of the coast and the deck of the ship and the vertical lines of the buildings emphasise the division into thirds and give the image impact.



Photos: Michael Jacobs

## ... for reproduction in Suburb News

TREVOR HUTTON

There are a few other things that are worth considering when taking a picture for reproduction in a publication like Suburb News.

The most important one is resolution; that is the amount of pixel per inch (ppi) in your digital image. When an image is being professionally printed, the ppi should be at least 300, to obtain a good sharpness – and that's 300ppi at the size of reproduction. A quick way of ascertaining this, is to check the file size. It should be in Mb rather than Kb – ideally between 2-5 Mb. If it's in Kb (ie. 750Kb), it's probably not good enough for quality reproduction.

Most relatively new smart phones and cameras take images at a sufficiently high resolution for this. Older ones, not so.

Another factor that's worth considering is the framing of your photograph. A designer will need to have the ability to crop an image to suit the size and shape that works best for the layout. It is therefore important not to zoom or crop in too close on your subject. This will allow the designer the scope to size and crop the photograph as they require. For example, if you crop an image to, let's say, a very tight landscape proportion but it needs to fill a square or portrait area, it is unlikely to be used, as it won't fit.

Lastly, it is worth mentioning that it is always best to supply your image unedited and in its original size and format. Remember that many applications will reduce an image's ppi to create a smaller file size. So never supply your image embedded in another application, especially Microsoft Word!

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