

SILEBY PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY

Mike Belson, a member of Sibley Photographic Society and a keen wildlife and natural history photographer, entertained his colleagues at the Zoom meeting held on Monday, 26th April, when he presented digital images under the title '18 Months of Photography Through a Global Pandemic!' With the inability to travel far and wide, his photography was limited to the local area, where images captured on camera recorded his 'lockdown' story.

In the Autumn of 2019, Mike spent an enjoyable family holiday in Rome in the company of people and seeing the sites, visiting Scotland and other parts of the UK towards the end of the year, completely unaware of what was about to affect the whole world, its population and the severe restrictions which would be placed upon everyone within weeks.

However, that is what happened and Mike continued his presentation with an appropriate image taken at his place of work. With the calendar showing the date of 16th March 2020, and a total lockdown about to be announced one week later, Mike cleared his desk in readiness to work from home, and he has not returned to his workplace since.

With the Government's message of 'Stay at Home' apart from local exercise, Mike spent many a happy hour throughout the year capturing the magnificent wildlife which exists at the quiet nature reserve at Cossington Meadows, Heron, honeybees, damselflies, green bottles, red beetles, long-horned beetles, dragonfly, and grasshoppers were all to be found and, with the aid of his Macro lens, close-up photography provided excellent images.

His back garden was a haven for wildlife too with jackdaws collecting nesting material, woodpeckers feeding their young, grey squirrels, and colourful flowers attracting insects which might not otherwise have been noticed.

With lockdown eased during the autumn, Mike was able to visit Norfolk and the Broads to view the wildlife there, and was also able to meet up with parents after six months' absence.

An early-morning October visit to Bradgate Park was well rewarded with a great image of deer supporting a bracken 'helmet', one of 'Old John' and even the inside of a nearly empty crisp packet which photographed well and something to do in lockdown!

The family did not escape Coronavirus, however, with Mike's daughter contracting the disease and having to isolate for fourteen days, with meals and other essentials delivered to her room whilst she did so. She recovered well.

Mike's image of Saturn and Jupiter passing each other in the night sky in December was a good attempt but, with another total lockdown imminent, Christmas 2020 was a very quiet affair despite a bottle of bubbly on the side waiting to be opened.

The arrival of snow and ice in January provided its own photographic opportunities amidst the winter wonderland. Speeding traffic through a partially-flooded

Mountsorrel Lane splashed water into the hedgerows which immediately froze and formed stunning icicle formations. The resultant images were almost spell-binding, stunningly beautiful, and nature at its finest.

Partial easing of lockdown during March coincided with his parents receiving their first jab, an event captured on camera, and one for the record book.

The April heatwave allowed for the return of butterflies on the early spring blackthorn, with some great images recorded too of blue tits and goldfinch filling up on insects daring to cross their path which would sustain them throughout the day.

John Hoogerwerf, President, thanked Mike for an evening of fabulous images revealing time well spent in recording his 'lockdown' life.

The next Zoom meeting will be held on Monday, 10th May, when Patrick Crowhurst, a member of the Society will present 'Exploring Central Europe'. The following week, on Monday, 17th May, the third round of the Quarterly Competition will take place.

Anyone wishing to become a member of Sileby Photography Society, enabling access to the weekly Zoom meetings, should visit the contact page of the SPS website, when further details will be issued. Whilst the weekly Zoom meetings are coming to an end for the current programmed year, Monday evening walks are being arranged to take place throughout the summer months. As such, any prospective new members are always welcome to come along and meet the 'gang' before the new photographic year re-commences in early September 2021.