

# PICTURE THIS

Five years after its launch, Shaftesbury Camera Club is thriving, reports Sue Weekes

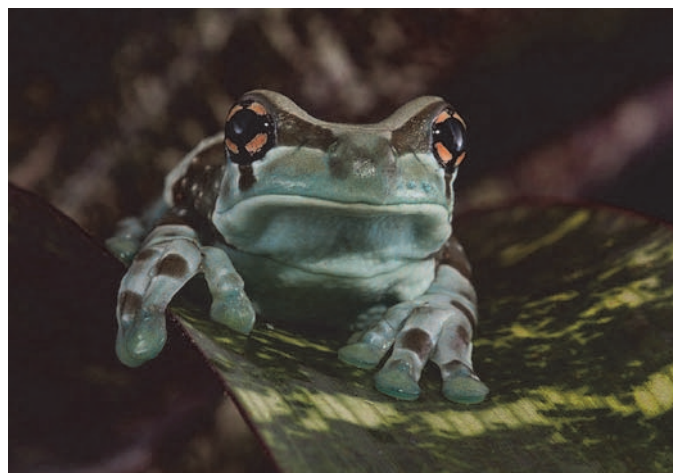
When reflecting on some of the battles that have taken place against New Zealand, thoughts immediately turn to those that have taken place on the rugby field or cricket pitch. Photography isn't front of mind but in a new venture last year, Shaftesbury Camera Club took on the might of the Waikato Photographic Society based in Hamilton on New Zealand's North Island.

It was described as an international 'friendly' battle, which is in keeping with the club's ethos. Chairman and treasurer David Lampard explains that both sides sent each other photographs in advance and then independent judges at either end, unaware of their country of origin, scored each image. The marks of the two judges were then combined and Shaftesbury came out the winners. 'It's the sort of thing you can't do with prints because of the logistics but it works well with digital,' says David. 'It was a real success. It was a great fun evening and gave us an opportunity to see some of the work being produced in another country.'

Shaftesbury Camera Club will celebrate its five-year anniversary next year. It was founded by a handful of people with few resources or funds to fulfil the need for an open photographic club to serve Shaftesbury and the surrounding villages and towns. It quickly grew though from a few committed people to a membership of 44 in just four years. 'We're a friendly club and like to encourage a social side but at the same time we do serious photography,' says David, who has been a member of camera clubs for the past 25 years.

The club's season runs from autumn to spring with the next meeting on 25th September at the Royal British Legion Hall in Coppice Street. The programme includes guest speakers, in-house and inter-club competitions as well as practical sessions and workshops aimed at improving camera skills and post-processing. This includes an Annual Star Night when a leading photographer is invited to provide an insight into their photographic life. On the programme for March 2015 is the acclaimed Dorset-based landscape, wildlife and travel photographer Guy Edwardes.

The various competitions held throughout the season are also keenly awaited. They include the Shuffell Trophy, named after a club member, in which there are two categories: print and projected digital image or PDI. The latter is the modern day equivalent of the slide and David explains that the increased quality of digital projectors means this category attracts a lot of attention. 'There are also no further costs once you've taken the image,' he says. Also on the calendar is a one-night knock-out competition



Amazon Milk Frog, Val Saxby

plus a ladies versus men event. The club's membership is weighted marginally in favour of men and David is forced to report that for the last two years the women have been the victors.

While it's always nice to win, competitions also encourage people to improve and what participants learn can then be applied in their everyday photography, says David. Technical sessions also help members improve in different areas and more experienced members are always willing to pass on their expertise and knowledge to others. 'A lot of the terminology in photography goes back to the days of film and it doesn't always make sense these days,' says David. 'Some people will bring their cameras in because they don't really know what to do with them. We'll try to help them and will often say, "just put the camera on automatic, take some photos and enjoy it",' he says. 'They can start to take photographs and go from there.'

On the whole David believes the move to digital, albeit after a slow start, has been good for photography and says that it 're-energised' his own interest in his hobby when he made the move 10 years ago. 'We find that it's made far more people take an interest in wanting to take a good photograph,' he says. 'We've also had enquiries from people about whether they can enter their smartphone pictures into competitions and we say "of course". It's a photograph and some of them are very good indeed.' He admits though that there is a question mark over the enhancement and manipulation that can take place after the image has been taken. 'You have to look at when image stops being a photograph and becomes a work of digital art.'

The 2014-15 season looks like being an interesting one for Shaftesbury Camera Club. As well as a packed programme, it has more inter-club events to look forward to, appearances at local shows and it also has the little matter of a re-match with Waikato Photographic Society. 'In the longer term there are one or two other countries we could do a similar thing with,' says David. 'But the Kiwis have said they'd like to do it again this year, so we will.'

<http://shaftesburycameraclub.org.uk/>



Kaffir Lily, David Townley