

CROYDON LIFE

including CROYDON PROPERTY PLUS

MARCH 2008

Picture This

Photography legend Frazer Ashford gives us a glimpse of his collection

Emerald ISLE

Celebrate St Patrick's Day in style

Cinematic GENIUS

We take a look at the life of David Lean inside

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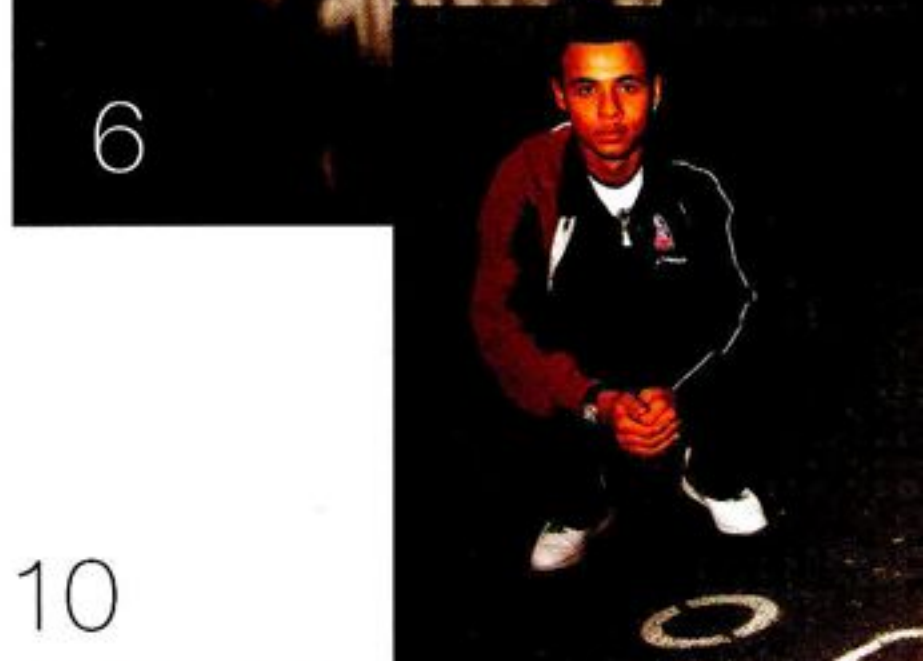
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editor's letter

March is going to be a rather frantic month this year isn't it? It starts with Mother's Day and ends with Easter, with St. Patrick's Day thrown in the middle. However, fear not all of those who enjoy celebrations, whatever the reason, we've plenty of ideas on how to spend your favourite days and evenings out, so a quick flick through "Croydon Life" and all will be sorted.

I can personally recommend a trip across the Irish Sea to get you in the mood for St Patrick's Day, not that they need any excuse for a party over there, as you can read in the magazine travel pages. The people and the hospitality cannot be beaten – we had a grand old time.

We also have plenty to celebrate in home-grown talent this March. It is the centenary of the birth of Sir David Lean, one of the greatest film directors of all time, whose name is

given to our local cinema in the Clocktower. Angela Hennessy takes a look at his early life growing up in Croydon and lists his phenomenal achievements.

Another home-grown talent is the renowned local photographer, Frazer Ashford, who has been taking pictures of the borough for more than twenty years. He tells us about the changes he has seen over the years and shares some of his remarkable photographs.

Of course, we also have words of wisdom from our usual quirky columnists, and reviews of all that is happening in the area, from fine food to funky music, sports to theatres, so it just remains for me to wish you all a Happy Easter and a Happy St Patrick's Day. Enjoy all that Croydon has on offer this March.

email: editor@kayve.co.uk

Croydon Life is distributed free to 40,000 selected homes in Croydon (East, South & West) Shirley, Purley, Coulsdon, Selsdon, Kenley, Sanderstead, Wallington, Waringham, New Addington, Addiscombe, Caterham

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PRINTED BY PRECISION COLOUR PRINTING,
DISTRIBUTED BY LETTERBOX DISTRIBUTION.COM
PUBLISHED BY KAYVE PUBLISHING LTD ©2007



Front cover features a picture of Elton John taken by photographer Frazer Ashford
www.frazerashford.com

CROYDON LIFE

Published by Kayve Publishing LTD
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History images provided by the Clocktower Local Studies Library & Archives Service

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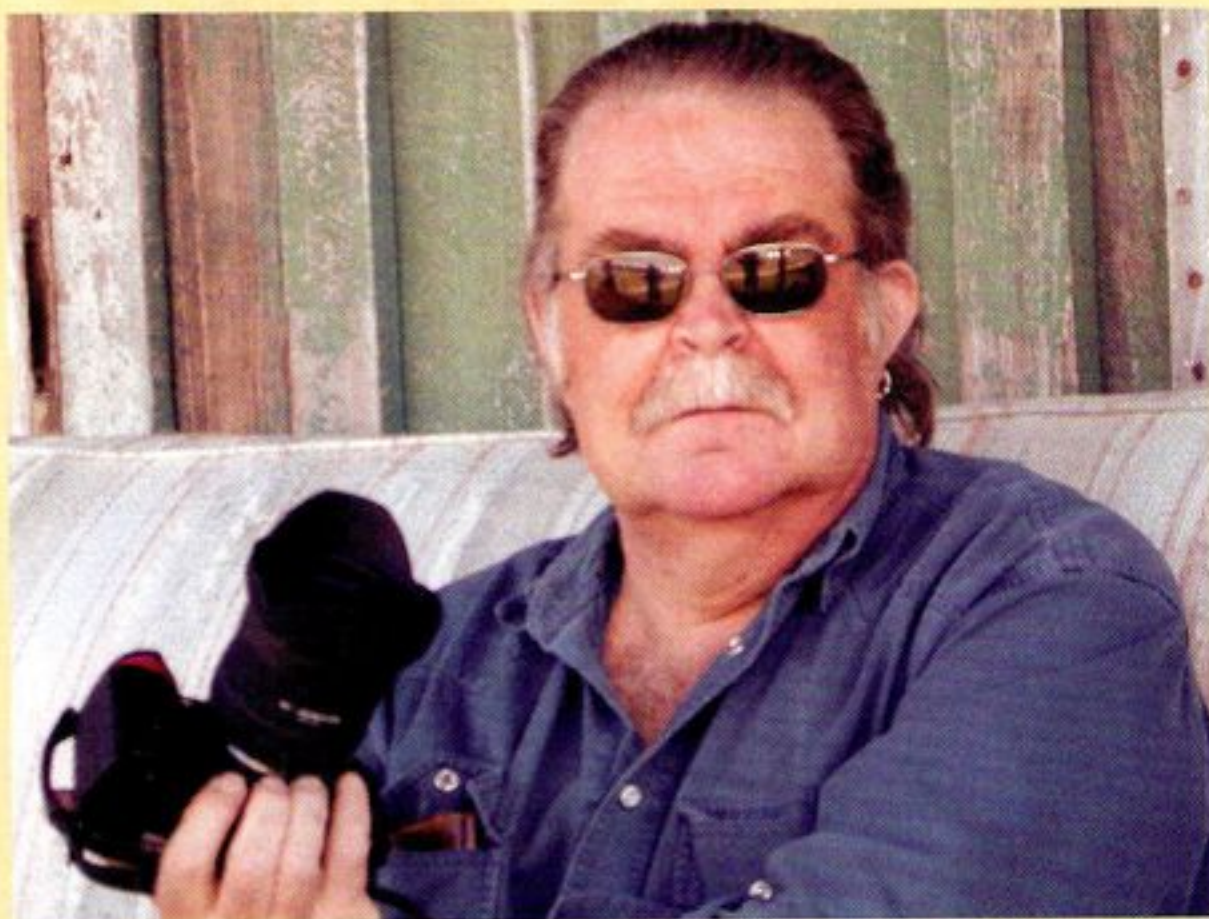
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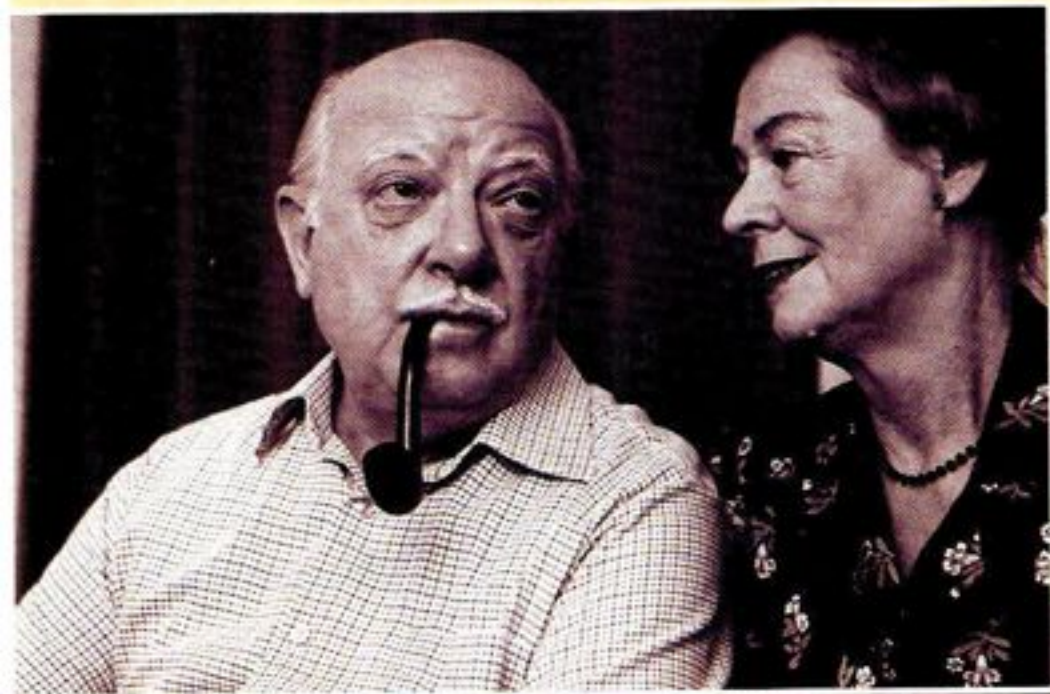
Nick Jones chats to Coulsdon resident Frazer Ashford, who has captured some iconic images of the world's most famous performing artists right here in Croydon



LIFE BEHIND A LENS

Have you ever stopped and noticed how many interesting people there are living around our way? Take Frazer Ashford for example, erstwhile TV producer and photographer to the stars. He made a reputation for himself in the 1970s and 1980s for his eclectic mix of rock and theatre photography, before abandoning his camera for a career in TV.

We've featured Frazer's work in the pages of this magazine before. He has produced some of the most striking images of live performances in Croydon, featuring some of the most famous faces in the world. Everyone from Elton John to Charlie Chaplin has been captured in time, and he now boasts an archive comprising of some 100,000 images which are available on his website.



When I popped down to meet Frazer last month in his leafy suburban home, I was amazed at some of the shots in his vast collection and captivated by his array of stories from a life in showbiz.

Frazer had always hoped to be a film director rather than a photographer. In fact, as I discovered, he almost stumbled sideways

into photography.

"When I was at school I was mad on films," he recalls, stroking his bushy moustache and munching on a biscuit. "I wrote a script when I was fifteen which won an award on ITV and was made into a film. It was about a guy going out and taking pictures, which is a strange coincidence."

When he finished school his parents were concerned that he get a job, and after seeing an advert for a position as an assistant photographer for the government in the civil servant, they thought he'd be perfect for it.

"They suggested I applied and I got the job," he explains. "Before I know it I'm taking pictures of high ranking officials. I met the then PM Ted Heath in Downing Street by the age of 21 and I had been promoted to senior photographer by the age of 22."

Then around the age of 26, Frazer decided to leave and set up on his own. "The problem was that I didn't know what sort of photography to go into," he explains. "My wife was mad into Soul music and she kept dragging me along to concerts. We went along to the Orchid Ballroom one night and a guy called Rufus Thomas was playing and it was great.

"I wanted to go back and see it again, but I didn't want pay for the privilege, so I asked the people at the concert hall if I could take some pictures for them and they invited me to come down for free. It was great because I was right at the front. I took hundreds of pictures that night and they were all mediocre apart from one. That one was so good I sold it to Melody Maker and got a cheque for £35 (which was a fair chunk of money in those days) and it went on



the front page. So I thought; 'this is clearly the way to go'... and off I went."

Frazer quickly got to know everyone in the local scene – "most of the business was done in the bar" – and ended up becoming a feature at all the major venues around town. This led to some more exciting opportunities and a bucket load of noteworthy images.

"I worked for The Four Tops for a bit, I was their official photographer in the UK. Then I started to pick up more and more commissions. I did a series for The Times and worked at the big theatres for several years."

It was here that he got the chance to photograph some noteworthy thespians including Patrick Stewart and the late Arthur Lowe – of whom Frazer got the last ever shot before he died. This association with theatre eventually led to him getting involved with the Warehouse theatre here in Croydon.

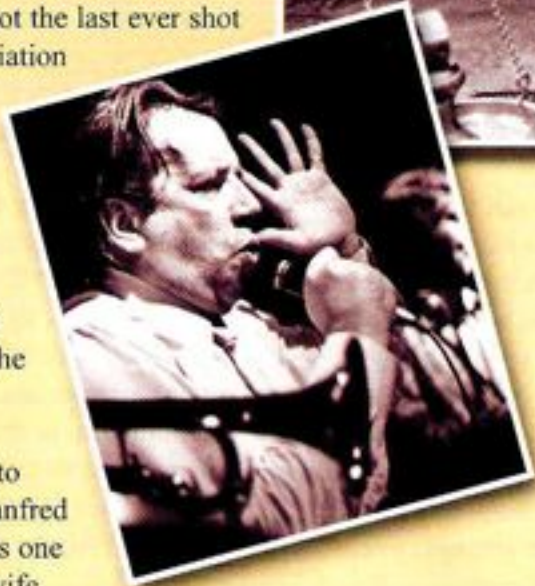
He was, by this time, very busy indeed, and this led to some problems on the home front from time to time.

"I remember I was due to shoot some pictures of Manfred Mann at the Fairfield Halls one night when my pregnant wife went into labour," he recalls with a wry grin. "We headed down to the Mayday where we were told that the contractions would go on for a while, and that I had enough time to go down and take these pictures of Manfred Mann and get back for the birth.

"So I was at the shoot some time later and a security guard from the Fairfield Halls tapped me on the shoulder and said that there was an irate woman asking for me at the door, insisting that I come out immediately. As it turns out, it was my mother-in-law!

"My wife had decided to give birth a lot quicker than was initially thought, so my mother in law had rushed down to find me – remember this was before the days of mobile phones. The security guy had refused to let her in to the concert because he thought she was just some lady who was trying to get in for free by using my name!"

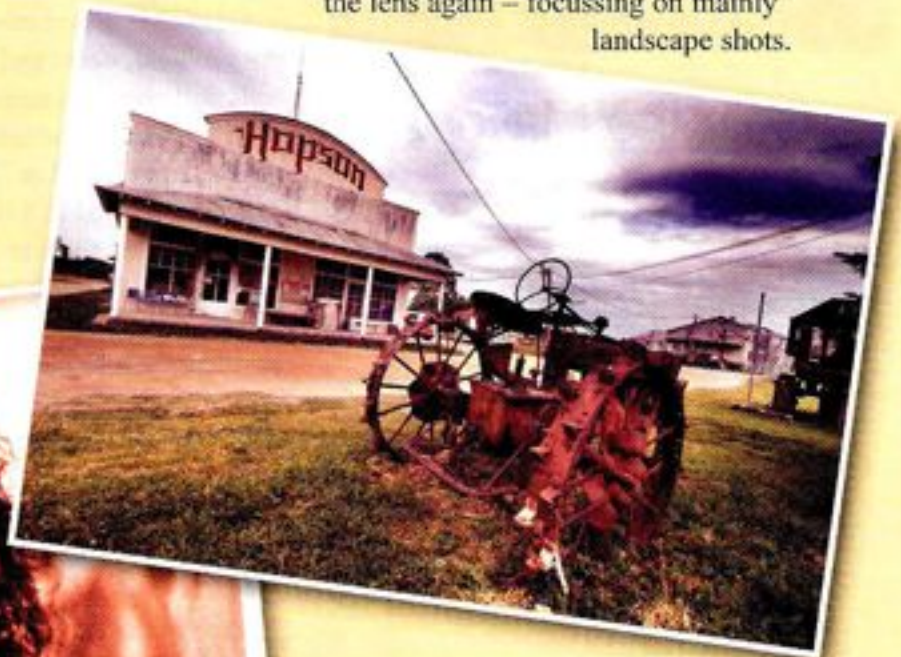
I suppose these are the problems that you have when you are trying to make a living. However, most people's 'nearly missed the birth of my child' stories don't



tend to include such glamorous working commitments.

Frazer carried on snapping the stars until an opportunity came up to try his hand at TV production and he hung up his camera in 1983. Amongst other things, he was a central figure in the launch of the cable channel Bravo – the UK's first ever 24 hour film channel in 1985.

A successful stint in TV followed, and many months were spent travelling around America making television programmes. But now, twenty five years after he stopped taking pictures, he's back behind the lens again – focussing on mainly landscape shots.



Today, the majority of his time is spent organising his enormous online library of images which people from around the world regularly bid for on EBay.

"It's been great to get to grips with this huge archive," he explains as we say our goodbyes. "We get a great response from the people who buy them – it's very rewarding."

It only goes to show that these wonderful images have stood the test of time. We're delighted to be able to re-print just a few of them here, but there many thousands more to choose from Frazer Ashford's fabulous collection.

To view the entire collection visit www.frazerashford.com