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# e-news

from the Photographic Alliance of Great Britain

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## VIC ATTFIELD FRPS MPAGB

A personal selection from his archive of monochrome images taken over a period of nearly 70 years



*Dream World. Ohakune, NZ. (1993)*

The progress of photography in the past 150 years has been simply amazing. Who would have visualized in the mid-19th century that, one day, images could be obtained of the smallest particles of known matter and, at the other end of the spectrum, pictures could be captured in colour of gigantic galaxies, millions of light years away in the far reaches of space.

The introduction of 35mm SLR cameras at affordable prices and the general availability of colour film made a big impact in my early days, with many people taking up photography for the first time. Colour prints from transparencies and negatives came on the scene and colour photography was quickly taken on board by many monochrome workers. This caused a drastic reduction in the range of papers available for monochrome prints and led to the introduction of multi-contrast papers. Initially these were resin coated then, more recently, fibre based as well, all with a rather limited selection of surfaces.

Now we are in the digital age. Of all the things that have most changed the face of photography, this is it. Today the production of an image has never been easier, with auto everything high resolution digital cameras with direct transfer into a computer and software that can do almost anything a photographer could possibly want. In spite of all this technology being available at our fingertips, photography

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still requires the creative spark of the individual to produce a meaningful image. As yet the computer cannot see and think for us. My real photographic education began in 1958 when joining the City of London and Cripplegate Photographic Society. In those days it had a membership of over 100, many of whom were distinguished photographers. It was their friendship and constant encouragement, plus endless discussion on all aspects of picture making and art in general, that gave me the grounding for my own style of photography. They also helped me to appreciate the work of others, even if quite different from my own in treatment and interpretation.

Having been involved in photography as a non-professional for many years, there is much to reflect on when viewing my pictures taken over this time. As a keen monochrome print worker my interest has generally been in landscape and "street" photography. The landscape work has often been combined with my enjoyment of walking in mountain areas and hill country. However, in the last 20 years or so, I have realised that photographing people in their own environment and in different situations is what really interests me and, in my opinion, has more lasting value than any other subject. As fellow human beings we can often identify with what is going on in the lives of others which may reflect our own experiences.

We are forever striving to produce that "perfect" single image which can communicate the intention of the photographer and create a sympathetic reaction from the viewer. This is what gives photography its fascination.





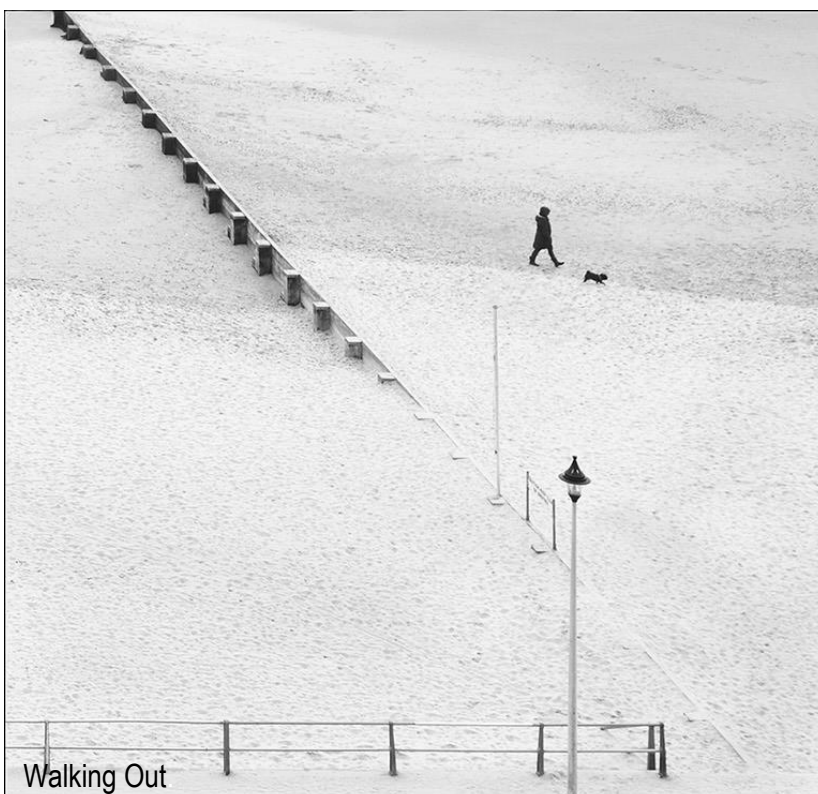
*Vic Attfield's working career was in the petrochemical and petroleum plant industry, starting as a junior draughtsman and rising to Chief Engineer responsible for plant layout and piping design. In the final years he was in charge of computer aided design for drawing production and 3D plant modelling. He retired in 1990.*

*His interest in photography began in 1951 when he joined his local photographic club, Crystal Palace.*

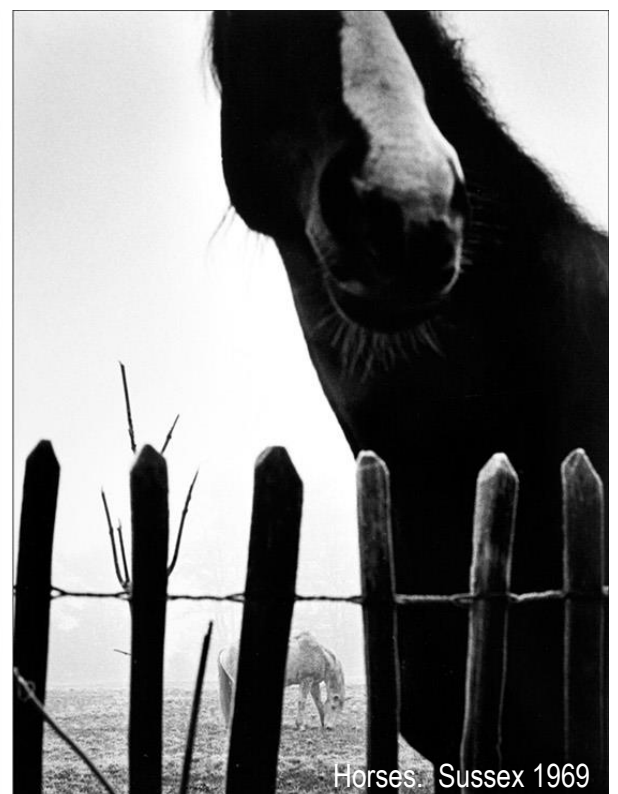
*He is a Fellow of The Royal Photographic Society (FRPS) and was a member of the Pictorial Distinctions Panel for 19 years. He is also a Master of the Photographic Alliance of Great Britain (MPAGB) and a member of The London Salon of Photography.*

*For many years he has been a lecturer and judge throughout the UK and abroad, including New Zealand.*

*He has been a keen exhibitor in many national and international exhibitions and his photographs are included in several UK collections, such as The Tyng Collection of The Royal Photographic Society, and others in Russia and Europe.*



Walking Out



Horses. Sussex 1969

Bernstein in rehearsal. 1966



Fifteen. Irene in 1968



Gypsy children. Co. Kerry 1963



The Supervisor. Milton Keynes 1983



Memories



The Black Chair



The Dog Walker



Boy on Railings



Group of Lads



Corset and Dog



Divided Interests



French Market



Hot Sun

## LOOKING

All our working life pictures flow into our brain, like a continuous film with ever changing aspects, as we focus on whatever takes our interest. During a single day, thousands of images flash before our eyes. Yet very few have real significance, so do not remain for long in our memory.



Supper Time. Cromer 1991



Street scene, Killorglin 1970



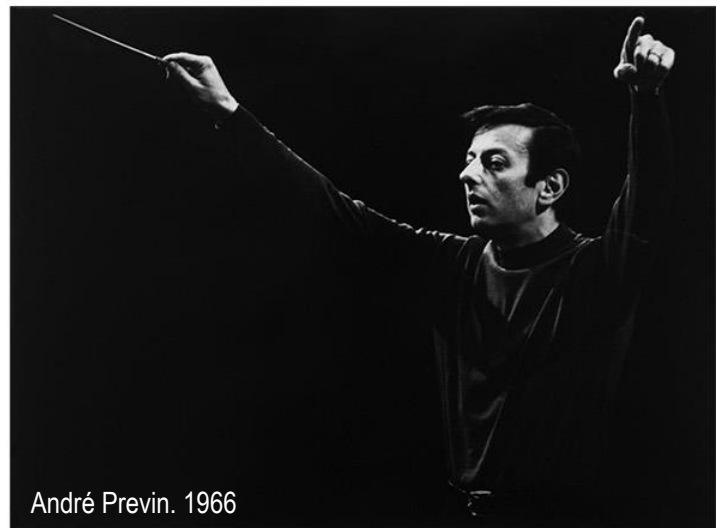
The follower. 1973



A Touch of Sadness. 1972



Don't Want to Go! Sorrento 1989



André Previn. 1966

***Here we all are - millions of tiny specks of humanity inhabiting this insignificant planet of ours - all going about our daily lives in so many different ways.***

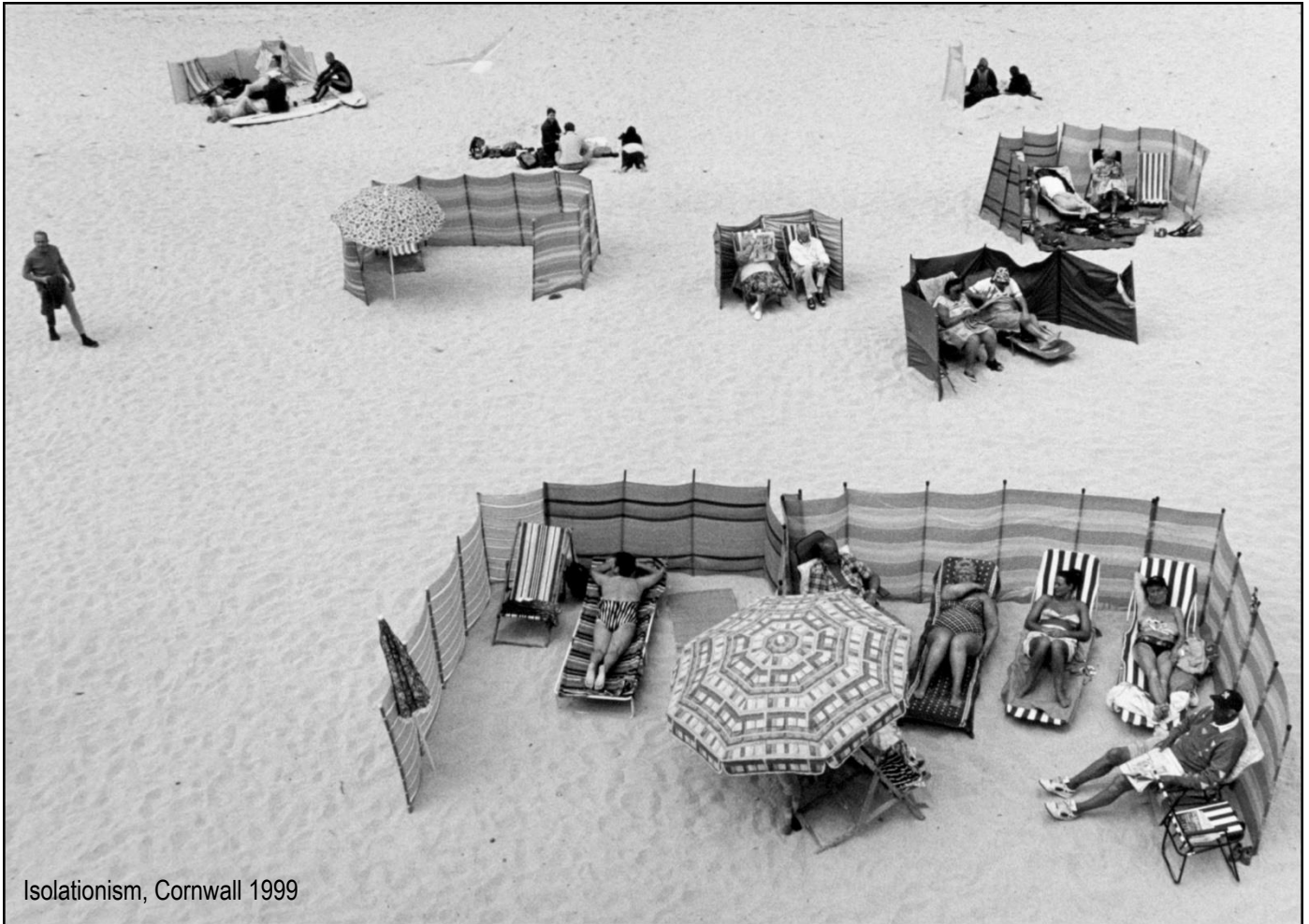
***Figures float across the viewfinder and, in an instant, we capture their image - maybe never to see them again. Where are they now?***



Observer Corps. Co. Kerry 1970

## SEEING

Someone once said, "photography is the art of seeing" and up to a point this is true. Anyone can take a photograph but, to make a good picture, it must contain a satisfactory balance of the constituents that make up the image. It does not matter how many elements are within the frame; everything depends on where they are placed, their related size and scale and their relevance to the picture content. Inspiration and ideas can be obtained from many artists, ranging from the work of LS Lowry whose crowded and busy city landscapes fill nearly every square inch of the canvas, to Edward Hopper's sparse almost minimalistic observations of city life reflecting the loneliness of the individual and perhaps the daily grind of survival.



Isolationism, Cornwall 1999



Curator with Head. 1970

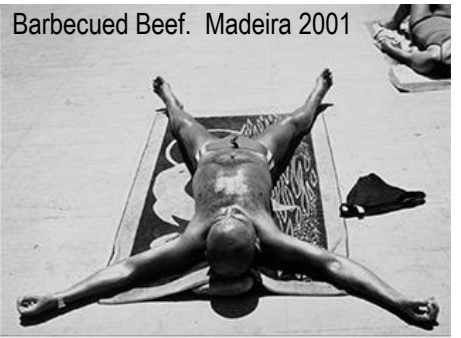


Topless waiter service. Paphos 1991

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Barbecued Beef. Madeira 2001



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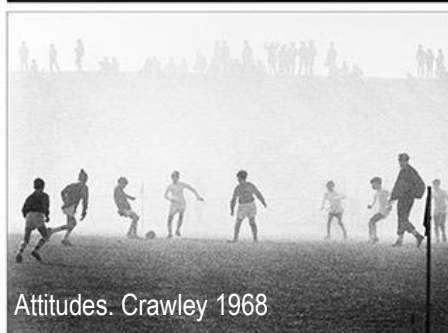
Descendant. Gatwick 1965



Revolving doors - hotel foyer



Alternative Viewing



Attitudes. Crawley 1968



Bexhill People



Gallery in Bexhill



Headphones



What's all the fuss about?



Umbrella with leg





Hold Up. London Bridge 1963



Promenade. Eastbourne 1991

## FEELING

Conveying emotion in pictures can be very subjective. Sadness, joy, humour are emotions that vary greatly in individuals and are mainly dependent on their own experiences of life

Images by Bill Brandt, Don McCullin, Elliott Erwitt and Tony Ray-Jones, whose pictures show great sensitivity and involvement, have had a considerable influence on my own photography. Whether depicting a tranquil landscape, humorous and bizarre situations or horrors of wartime and famine, their pictures capture the true reality of their surroundings and feelings at that moment in time. This is something only the camera can do.

The ability of the camera to record a happening instantly has always been fascinating. This, coupled with its restriction of one's view to just the frame of the viewfinder, gives a great challenge to the photographer to compose and capture (in the words of Henri Cartier-Bresson) "The Decisive Moment". That actual split second in time when the shutter is open can never be repeated - it is gone for ever.

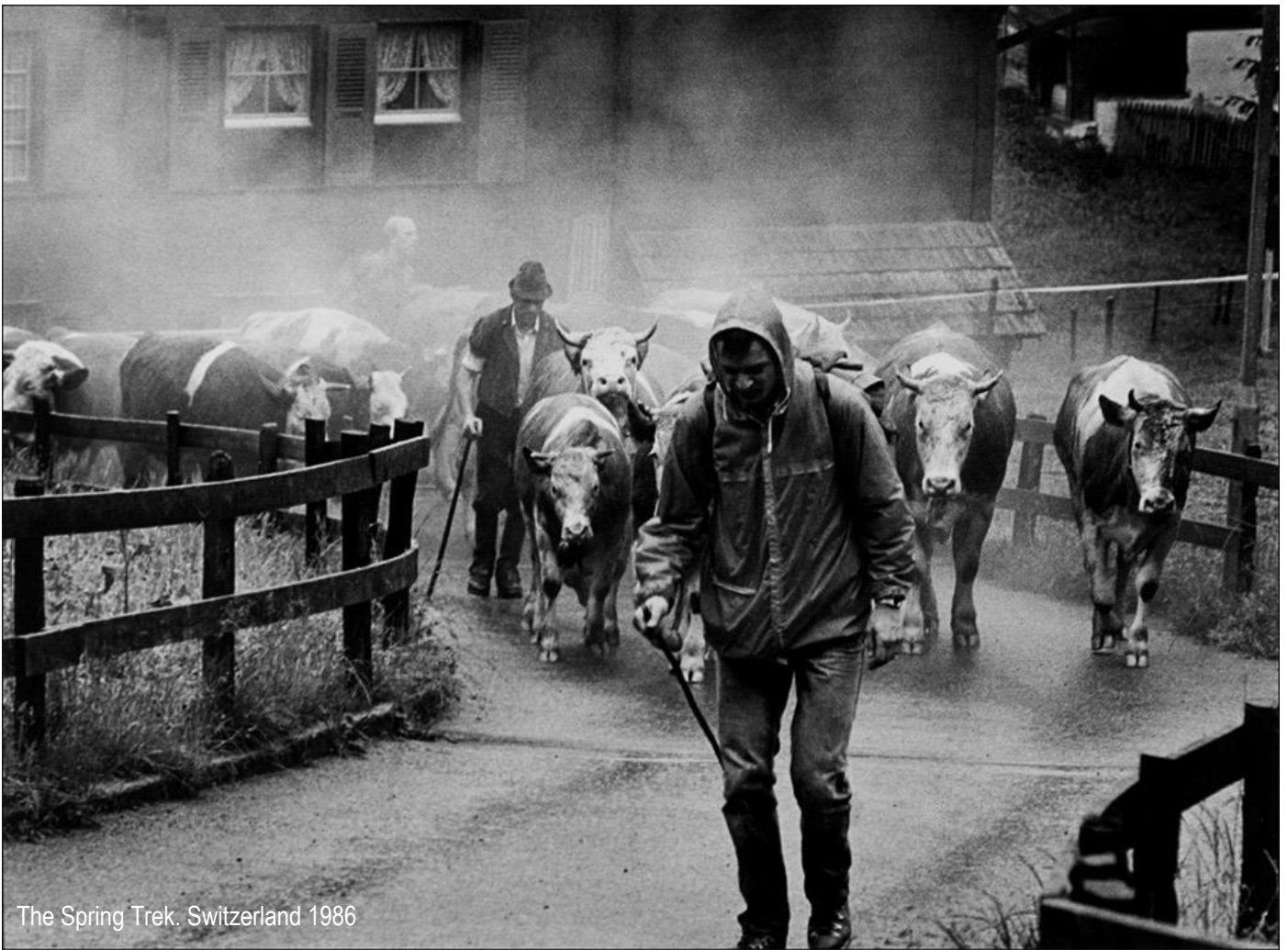


Last Respects. Barbican 1963



The Cross. Tenerife 1995





The Spring Trek. Switzerland 1986



Dales Farmer. Hawes 1988

# Vic Attfield by Leigh Preston

I have a monochrome print called "Policeman's Lot", that somehow evokes my own childhood memories. The "Bobby" is on point duty, in the snow in Moorgate, taken by Vic Attfield. It also shows that moment of clarity, of decision, of chance and astute awareness of that everyday world we all half glimpse, but never really 'see'.



A Policeman's Lot. Moorgate 1964

There's nothing false about Vic's work. Pictures that showcase his acute vision, with harmonic virtue coupled with a sense of oblique pictorial balance. His is distinctive and personal work, unlike anyone else. Although street photography is now a very popular genre, Vic along with fellow "observers" of daily life, such as Roy King and Bill Carden, made us aware of situations built on the character of Britain's streets and seaside towns in the earlier stages of organised club photography. Monochrome is the medium Vic chooses, nothing else allows that simplicity of style, of righteous line and tone that inhabits every image he's taken. His work is about communication, perception and about that fraction of a second when all the components line-up. Although he ventures into landscape and has travelled widely, the pictures involving humanity, with his insight into their persona and sometimes laughable behaviour are perhaps the most potent.

*A presentation by Vic is a marvellous affair, full of wry humour, anecdotes, strong opinions and quirky realism.*

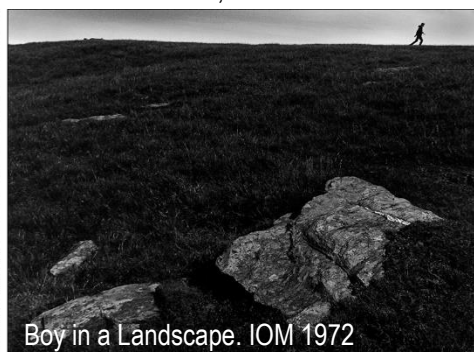
Vic has been a member of a number of clubs - Crystal Palace, Watford and Amersham, to name a few. He is possibly the longest serving member of The London Salon, a Fellow of the Royal, a Master of the Photographic Alliance and, for many years with his wife Mary, (much missed by all of us that knew her), was a member of Arena. They shared their hobby and devotion and complimented each other's work so well.

In the years I've known and swapped opinion, stories and humour with Vic, he's been a sounding board, a mentor, at times mischievous. He now wears the cloak of a dignified elder statesman of our craft, he wears it well.

*Leigh Preston*



Hard country. Co Kerry 1970



Boy in a Landscape. IOM 1972



Sinister Castle



Tate Tea. St Ives 1996



Long Stay Parking. Tenerife 1995



Attack! Sussex 1965



Sadness of Old Age. Brighton 1969



Girl in a Café. Robin Hoods Bay c1994



Shelter.



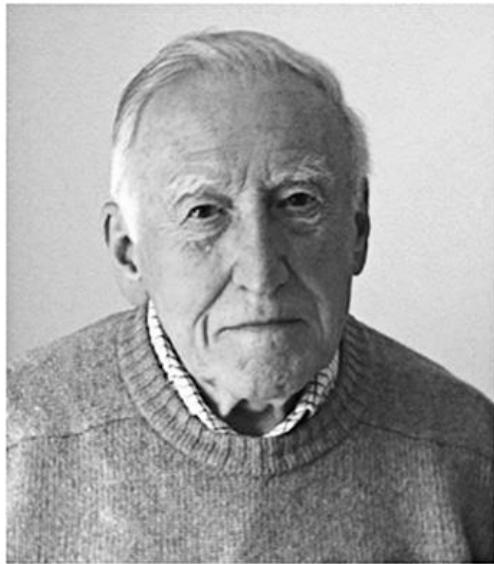
Off the leash. IOM 1972



Children of Sheffield. c1974



Flightpath. 1977



## Vic Attfield FRPS MPAGB

Vic Attfield is a Fellow of the Royal Photographic Society (FRPS) and has been awarded the highest level award for Photographic Merit (MPAGB). His interest in photography started in 1951 and he was on the U.K. lecturing and judging circuit for nearly 50 years, he has also lectured in New Zealand.



Ian, Off to School. 1968

In current amateur circles “superstars” flare quickly and sometimes disappear almost as quickly. When I entered the club and exhibition scene in the late 70s, the hierarchy of excellence was more stable and longer lasting. Although we were enjoying quite a bit of success, Leigh Preston and I agreed that, whilst we were challenging the top of the Championship, we wouldn’t ascend to the Premier League.

Vic Attfield was, and has remained, a renowned stalwart of the Premier League!

I have known and have admired Vic’s photography throughout my entire photographic life. The “decisive moment” is often used to describe the work of Cartier Bresson but, for me, it perfectly describes the photography of Vic Attfield and his wife Mary. Whilst Vic’s images have inspired me, I have never tried to emulate them. His style and observational powers, often combined with quirky compositional excellence, have created a unique and personal body of work. I hope you will enjoy this feature as much as I have enjoyed putting it together.

*Rod Wheelans. Hon. Editor.*