

Living with Your Computer

Dealing with Dottiness in the Wychwoods

If you are one of those struggling new digital photographers, this article aims to help you understand the process, and handle and store the results with confidence. In a second article to appear in the December/January issue, we will consider how to improve your pictures and make use of them.

There is definitely more dottiness in our villages these days - not age or even cannabis-induced eccentricity but the product of dozens of new digital cameras, each producing millions of dots or pixels to form a single picture. I receive many such digital photographs for *The Wychwood* and it is clear that, often, the owner of the digital camera is struggling to make these electronically produced dots do what he or she wants.

What Digital Can Do

A traditional slide taken with a 35mm film camera contains roughly 14 megabytes of information. Digital cameras now available for the keen amateur usually take pictures containing about 8 to 10 megabytes of information. They do not yet contain quite the level of information of the older technology but the results will still stand being blown up to A4 size and, here is the big plus, digital cameras cost hardly anything to run (no film or developing costs). Picture manipulations, which would have taken hours in a dark room, can now be achieved in a matter of seconds on your computer.

If you are recording your pictures on a 500 megabyte card then you can expect to store roughly fifty pictures of this size or quality. Digital cameras usually allow you to take photographs in either raw or uncompressed data form or in a compressed form. Uncompressed

photographs usually have a .tif extension (just as Word documents have a .doc extension). Compression saves valuable storage space and produces smaller picture sizes which are easier to work with. Compressed pictures usually have the extension .jpg and are referred to as jpegs. Compressed pictures do not have quite the level of quality of uncompressed pictures but for everyday purposes a 'fine jpg' setting should meet your needs with one proviso - every time you work on a jpg image and resave it, you lose more quality, so always work from a first generation copy.

Getting Them on Your Computer

Once you have taken your pictures, how do you get them into your computer? The easy way is to ignore all the cables and software that came with your camera. Simply invest in a multi card reader (about £10 in your friendly computer store and you will be able to use it for various card formats including those used by your friends). You connect this to your computer via a USB port and then put your photo storage card in the reader. After a few seconds, click on the *My Computer* icon (we are talking Microsoft PCs here and not Macs but the process will be similar) and you will be able to see all the individual photo files on your card. Click on the photographs to select them and simply drag them to the folder you have waiting for them on your

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main computer drive. Do not forget to back them up from time to time on a DVD or a separate hard disk. I get asked to look at friends' computers sometimes and I am often amazed at the way they store things all over their hard disk - even mixed up with programs. It is as though they keep their clothes in the boot of their car in the garage. It can be done but it is not really convenient!

Organising Your Pictures

Within *My Documents* directory or filing cabinet set up as many folders as you need - just like the folders in a real filing cabinet. I have all my latest pictures in a folder called *2007 photos*. Within that I have sub folders for family shots, Wychwood Magazine shots etc. I have a separate folder for 2007

photo manipulations where I put copies of pictures I have worked on. It will be the work of a couple of minutes to set up a folder structure to suit your own needs.

To help you organise the pictures already on your system and to give you some basic tools to manipulate your photographs may I suggest you go to Google and download the excellent and free *picasa* program.

Lastly, if you want to see the photographs themselves in the directory, just switch to the 'thumbnails' setting. This is especially easy to do by making a right mouse click and looking at the view options (right clicks are always recommended when you are stuck on your computer!)

Alan Vickers

SeeSaw

Our name reflects what grief often feels like to children and young people - it is full of ups and downs and the difficulty is finding the balance. We know that children suffer when someone they love dies, they experience a tumult of emotions which can have a significant impact on how they cope with day to day living at home and school. For many bereaved children the world has suddenly become a very frightening and unsafe place to be and their feelings and behaviours reflect this. Support workers from *SeeSaw* visit children in their own homes and strive to reduce the distress of grieving children and their families and enable them to work together through the difficult times following the death of a loved one. Not everyone can do this work! But those who can and who go on to become



volunteer support workers for *SeeSaw* come from a variety of backgrounds with a wide variety of skills to offer. We provide the necessary training to support young people on their bereavement journey. This is challenging but rewarding

work and requires people who are good listeners, able to cope with other people's distress and perhaps most importantly, enjoy the fun of being with children. If you are interested in finding out more about becoming a *SeeSaw* Support Worker then come along to our Taster Evening in Oxford on: **Wednesday 7th November 2007**. Or you can really help in other ways such as fundraising, or volunteering a few hours of time to assist at events. Please phone *SeeSaw* for more details on: 01865 744768; we would love to hear from you.