

How to Survive and Thrive in the worst High Street in Britain

Creative marketing brings success and local prestige to a photographer in Leatherhead, Surrey

Andy Newbold's studio is tucked away above a shop. He has no window onto the street in which to display his work. To make matters worse, he is located in the High Street in the Surrey town of Leatherhead.

Now that might sound like the ideal location, in the middle of a wealthy area, to the south west of London.

The problem is that Leatherhead High Street was voted one of the worst High Streets in Britain in a BBC poll a few years ago.

"The High Street is now a desolate wasteland hardly helped by badly designed interventions like the latest dodgy water feature," said one local. "An example of cheap and thoughtless pedestrianisation taking the heart out of a whole town," was another's view.

The problem seemed to be that the local council simply shut the main arterial road in the Surrey market town. The result was that people then drove to the nearest out-of-town shopping centre, forcing numerous businesses and the once thriving Thorndike Theatre to close down.

Of course Andy could have moved, or he could have just sat back, blaming poor business on his location location location. But that's not in his nature.

He also needed to get his own name and reputation out and about more.

Invisibility also means anonymity.

Andy realised that something needed to be done to change the perception of the whole area. He felt that the negative tag was now unfair – big changes having been made in the locality recently.

Leatherhead High Street needed to be re-invented. It needed to have the heart and soul put back into it. But how? By whom? And how long would it take to change the town's image?

Wait a minute. 'Image'? Isn't that what photography's all about?

So Andy hit upon an ambitious plan to capture images of the area at its best – full of action, vibrancy and heart – and all during one long sunny summer day. The images would form



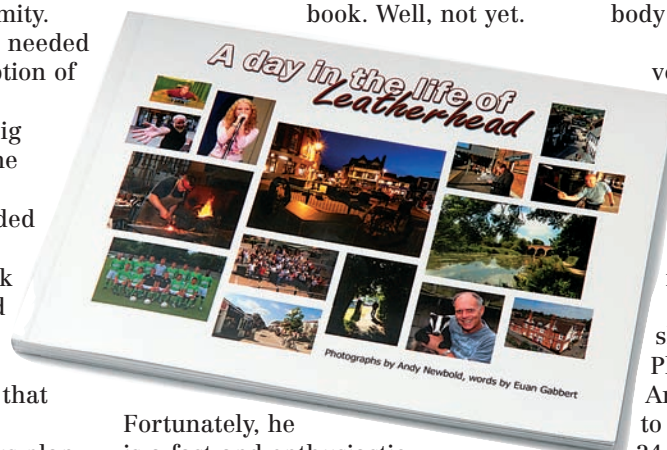
Andy Newbold LBIPP

the basis of an exhibition. No problems there, that's what photographers know all about.

But the idea didn't end there. Andy also wanted to publish a book, *A Day in the Life of Leatherhead*, which would form a lasting record that everyone could own.

For Andy the book would also act as a portfolio – the 'shop window' he so desperately needed for his work.

The problem was that Andy didn't know anything about publishing a book. Well, not yet.



Fortunately, he is a fast and enthusiastic learner.

Realising that there's no substitute for experience, Andy enlisted the help of Euan Gabbert who produces *The*

Magazine, a local property and lifestyle publication. Euan would write the text and captions.

The shoot was planned in meticulous detail. The proposal was to shoot everything, from dawn until after dusk, in just one day. Two Thursdays in August 2005 were chosen – the second in case of bad weather. Thursday because that is market day.

Five minute slots were allocated between 7am and 11pm, with fifteen minutes for wildlife and other more complex items. The pace was hectic.

Local enthusiasm for the project was essential. The Town Centre and Swan (shopping) Centre Managers were taken on board and every local business and organisation was written to. £5,500 of sponsorship rolled in.

On the first chosen day of the shoot, 11 August 2005, the weather was perfect. Andy's photography started before 7am, with shots of market traders setting up their stalls and commuters on their journeys up to the metropolis.

By the time the shooting day ended, in the vibrant clubs, pubs and restaurants at 11.30pm, his trusty Fujifilm FinePix S2 Pro DSLR had captured 1300 images without a single hiccup. The S2 is the best photographic investment Andy has ever made. It has had so much use that matte parts of its body are now polished smooth.

A shoot of this intensity needs a very reliable back-up team. As

Andy moved on to each next part of the shoot, Euan stayed behind to write the caption. The filled CF cards were copied, indexed and archived by Tony Eatough, before being re-formatted and returned to Andy for further use.

Editing the images after the shoot took two weeks. Using Adobe Photoshop's Contact Sheet facility, Andy made up seven composites, to produce prints 72 inches wide by 24 inches high using 230 of his images. They were printed on a wide-format printer and arranged all in a line – like a book – for the exhibition in the Leatherhead Theatre.



The project team, Lucy Hanson, Euan Gabbert, Tony Eatough and Andy Newbold.

Leatherhead through a lens

YOU have to get up early to catch the best shots and that is exactly what photographer Andy Newbold did to capture the brighter side of Leatherhead.

Together with Leatherhead town centre manager Lucy Hanson and assisted by Euan Gabbert and Tony Eatough, Andy from Acorn Images in the town set off at 7am on a bright August morning to capture the town on film.

The result was 1,300 images portraying people, places and events in Leatherhead on that day. The team started in the High Street, snapping the set

up of the market and the opening of shops, before moving onto businesses, the leisure centre, Fire & Iron, Wildlife Aid, Rockets Farm and many other places.

Included in the portfolio were pictures of children having their faces painted, a performance by local musician Tamar Broadbent, general views of the town and aerial shots of people.

In the evening they concentrated on the atmosphere around the pubs and restaurants and finished with some dramatic night shots.

"Lots of people got involved

and helped out with the project," said Andy.

"The timings were very tight in order to cover so much but thanks to the organisation of the local townsfolk and in particular Lucy and Jack of the Highways department who kindly provided us with a cherry picker, it all went smoothly."

From 1,300 images taken, 240 have been selected for an exhibition, which will be held in the Leatherhead Theatre throughout September and a book is planned in time for Christmas which will be available locally. For more information contact 01372 383018.

What the local papers said about Andy Newbold's project...

'Worst' town attempts to restore dignity

Photographers are planning to repair the public image of Leatherhead with an exhibition and book capturing the vibrancy of the historic market town.

The home of Michael Caine has struggled to regain outside approval after being named Britain's worst high street in a poll two years ago.

There was further embarrassment in April this year when the ramp at the crossroads of the town centre was nominated for demolition as Britain's worst architectural eyesore.

But local people are keen to emphasise the splendour of the Victorian and Georgian buildings and an 18th century, 14-arch bridge over the River Mole.

Now Acorn Images, based in the high street, is preparing to launch an offensive by taking around 1,000 photographs of local people and events.

The images are being taken next month for an exhibition at the Leatherhead Theatre, a dedicated website and a book to be published before Christmas.

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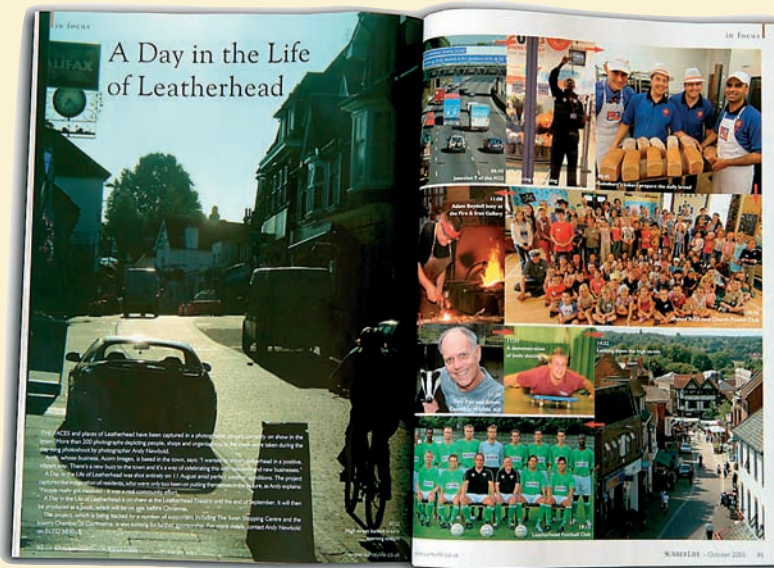
Andy Newbold, the director, said: "For a whole day our team will be out and about in Leatherhead photographing just about anything to show the best of the town."

"The images used in the theatre exhibition will be offered to Leatherhead museum as a permanent archive. The end result should be a fascinating insight into our town, which will be caught in time for ever."

Leatherhead was named recently as the fifth most expensive place in Britain to buy a home as Londoners are increasingly attracted to the gateway to the Surrey Hills.

Playgroups and businesses are invited to take part in the project on Thursday, August 11. Opportunists can visit the Swan shopping centre between 12.30pm and 1.30pm.

Further information from Acorn Images on 01372 383018.



For the love of Leatherhead
TWO MONTHS ago Leatherhead was started by the sight of a young man spending a whole day dashing around, photographing the town from every conceivable angle.

Andy Newbold of Acorn Images in Leatherhead was the young man in question and as you recently reported he is producing a book which celebrates the new found vigour in the heart of the town, portraying the friendly and busy atmosphere of what was once described as "The Worst High Street in England".

A Day in the Life of Leatherhead, available from the first week in November, shows us all just how vibrant Leatherhead really is and proves that it does not deserve its dreadful reputation. The last three years have seen the town blossom with five new restaurants and more national retailers coming to the High Street. Let me urge all your readers to buy Andy's new book and look again at this ancient market town and marvel at what a treasure we have with its river, theatre and cinema, leisure centre and health clubs, easy access to Box Hill and the Downs and a number of specialist retailers and art galleries.

Leatherhead has always been a nice place to live and work and now Andy has enabled us to see it again with new eyes and truly appreciate this jewel at the crossroads.

Peter Snell
President Leatherhead & District Chamber of Commerce



Acorn
COMING SOON...
A day in the life of Leatherhead

PRE ORDER YOUR COPY NOW!!!
£9.99
ESTIMATED LAUNCH NOVEMBER 2005

Town faces wants for exhibition

CALLING all budding models in Leatherhead.

Acorn Images Ltd is trying to rouse up people for a photo about today (Thursday).

The agency is trying to capture the vibrancy and energy of Leatherhead for an exhibition in The Theatre in September.

A book with the pictures in will also be published in time for Christmas.

And the agency team want as many people as possible to play a part in the shoot.

They will be at the Swan Centre from 12.30 until 1.30pm to photograph people in small groups.

And at 1.30pm they will move to the bottom of the High Street where they will use a crane to take a picture of as many people as possible.

Throughout the rest of the day the team will be visiting businesses, playgrounds, skate parks and other venues to get a lasting memory of Leatherhead.

Helped by the enthusiasm of the local press, Andy Newbold's ambitious project aroused considerable community interest. These press cuttings are some of the many which helped give the project high local visibility, ensuring success for the exhibition and book. In addition to the local newspapers, the monthly Surrey Life and Surrey Downs Magazine devoted features to the story and images. The fact that a local photographer was prepared to do so much to enhance the local image was greatly appreciated by the local Chamber of Commerce. Importantly for Andy's business, he is now widely known and respected throughout the community.

Photogenic town

Critics have been baying into Leatherhead. Now one man and his camera are fighting back. Maggie Walsh meets photographer Andy Newbold.

Leatherhead is a town that has long been known for its high street. It is a town that has long been known for its high street. It is a town that has long been known for its high street.

Andy Newbold is a photographer who has spent a whole day in Leatherhead, capturing the town from every conceivable angle. He has taken 1,300 photos, which will be used in a book and an exhibition.

Andy is a local resident and he is passionate about his town. He wants to show the world that Leatherhead is a beautiful town and that it has a lot to offer.

Andy's project is a testament to the power of photography to capture the beauty of a place and to show the world that there is more to a town than what the critics say.

Andy's book and exhibition will be a celebration of the town and its people. It will be a chance for everyone to see the town through Andy's eyes and to appreciate the beauty of Leatherhead.

The turnout for the exhibition was huge and many local businesses have asked to use images. Promotions with hairdressers Toni & Guy and other organisations have followed.

The book was launched on 10 November 2005. Everyone in the book signed two copies, which are to be auctioned for the 'Wildlife SOS' charity.

Local resident Michael Caine's wife liked the book a lot - though 'not a lot of people know that'.

The result for Andy Newbold is that

he has become something of a local celebrity. He has been made an Honorary Member of the Chamber of Commerce and invited onto a panel of advisors for 'Leatherhead Tomorrow'.

Best of all, he is now widely known in the local community as a photographer and his business has shown a significant upturn as a direct result.

It worked for Andy, so this great marketing idea may also work for other photographers - even those located in the best of High Streets.

Andy Newbold learned his craft working in various aspects of the photographic industry, including managing an in-store studio, high-quality portraiture and weddings with Alan Jackson in Glasgow and three years with Eric Dawson Strange in Cobham.

Andy may now be contacted at 6 High Street, Leatherhead, Surrey KT22 8AN, UK. Telephone +44 (0)1372 383018 Website www.AndyNewboldPhotography.com

A website devoted to the A Day in the Life of Leatherhead project may be found at www.DayInTheLife-Leatherhead.co.uk