

## NO WiFi - NO PROBLEM!

Close on the heels of Exeter CC's evening - a smaller club, **IVYBRIDGE CAMERA CLUB** also held a hybrid Zoom evening for their first night of the new season on Tuesday 14th September.

Reasons for trying this new way for future club meetings were those stated earlier. So, after such a difficult time, with the pandemic, mounting deaths and the NHS under such enormous pressure - it was to be expected that some members would still feel too vulnerable to meet face-to-face. How to cope with all this?



*Bittaford Village Hall, and the set-up inside.*

In preparation for the inaugural meeting, three club members convened to try out some of the potential technical issues.

Thus, the first problem to be resolved was how to connect to Zoom while at the same time, enabling those still at home, to join in a "live" evening.

Chairman, Ross Marven volunteered his mobile phone as a WiFi hot-spot using its mobile data connection. Ross enjoys a good, quite reasonable, contract but felt that about 10Gb would be quite sufficient for an average evening, lasting about two-and-a-half hours.

To ensure there would be sufficient coverage in the hall meant a quick visit. This showed 1 to 2 bars on a 4G connection.

First hurdle safely jumped!

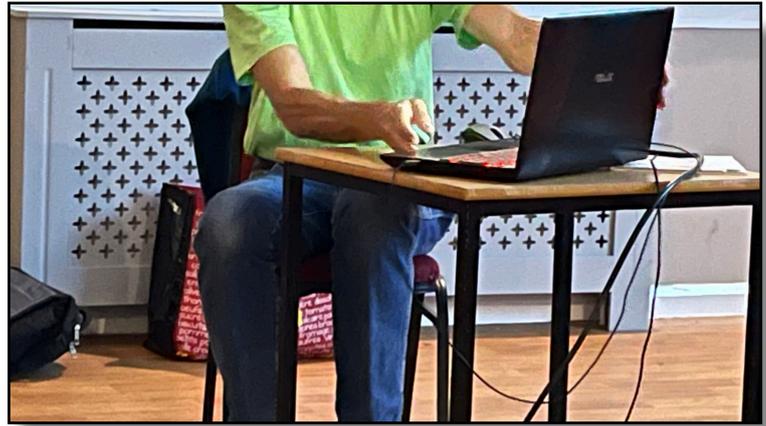
Another member, living a few miles away, offered to see if he could connect to a Zoom meeting broadcast from the Village Hall using the phone connection. He could!

Ross' laptop was used to connect to his phone and to handle the Zoom connection. The built in webcam and microphone worked satisfactorily.

Second hurdle cleared!

Now to make it work for the meeting!

Government and venue Covid guidelines for live meetings were implemented.



*Chairman Ross Marven operating the laptop and his mobile being used as an internet hot-spot.*

Socially-distanced seating was pre-arranged. Restricted use of the toilets were enforced, as was disinfection after each use. Refreshments were not available.



*Socially distanced seating (left and above the meeting in progress - both live and on Zoom).*

Admittedly, not as ambitious as Exeter's first hybrid meeting was. This was essentially an evening showcasing members images in 10 minute slots. Primarily, it was a Zoom meeting from the Village Hall, using a mobile phone as a hot-spot and laptop as microphone, loudspeaker and webcam.

Once more, sound was an issue - especially when trying to hear comments from attendees in the further parts of the hall.

Postmortem:

- For a first attempt, it has been deemed to be very successful, and will be built on.
- Expenses amounted to a fairly modest £5 for the increased data requirement for the mobile data increase. This 2 hour meeting used 1.1Gb of data.
- Consideration will be given to investing in a dedicated webcam and lapel-type microphones. How to many to buy needs to be discussed.
- Generally, a thumbs up from members - both remote and at the Village Hall!
- In both examples, these clubs are deeply indebted to a dedicated few "techie members". They generously gave their time and effort into researching the feasibility of this new innovation. Also, thanks to the likes of Ross who selflessly allowed their mobile phone to be used to enable an internet connection.

What is YOUR club doing? Maybe you don't know? If so, please get in touch? I'd happily write about your efforts. Or if you would like help and advice I'm sure there's SOMEBODY out there in our wonderful Western Counties Photographic Federation who would be willing to offer advice.

If the later is needed - please email me, and I'll put you in touch with others for help and guidance.

My grateful thanks to all club officials who helped me to write this article. Aren't camera club members lucky to have these people who go over and above to help their club flourish and succeed - especially after such a trying few months?

I'm sure you tell them frequently that they've appreciated?

I am also very grateful to Elaine Brown of Ivybridge Camera Club, who so willingly gave of her time to handle the photographs I asked for. All taken on her mobile phone!

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