

**WOODFORD COMMUNITY PHOTO COMPETITION – SPRING 2012**

**THEME – WINTER SUN**

(taken in Woodford between December 2011 and March 2012 inclusive)

**JUDGING PROCESS**

[28.4.12]

Twenty-two photos were entered. First, what should be considered when judging photos on this theme?

Any photographic competition entry requires technical and artistic competence as a baseline, and the best relative technical and artistic quality above that. Applying this thematically, within this context a judge needs to look for a competent quality scene and/or strong image – and on this particular theme, several specific elements then suggest themselves, so a judge needs to look for at least one or preferably a combination of two or more of these elements, for example: ice, snow, frost, bare deciduous trees or wintry-looking conifers; strong sunlight/shadows somewhere in the image, backlit/sidelit image, sun in the image ...

All this said, a first sift clicked quickly through all the photos, hoping for some “wow” or “hey, that’s a competition entry” reactions (only a few). A second systematic sift produced a (wider) short list (with one or two rejections only because there was a better similar photo). A third systematic sift produced a shorter list (leaving reserves). An overview now looked at the three resulting photo groupings to make sure they looked right, with one or two adjustments up or down. A final fourth systematic sift then produced a provisional winner.

Next, I listened to the assistant (!) judge’s thought processes, which usefully produced fresh insights and judgement factors. I liked the “zooming in” test (for quality and framing), and the “interest” test. We discussed the pros and cons of our differing lists and selected a consensus winner, which just happened to be the main judge’s choice!

The winning photo is not perfect. The close runner-up would make a nice Christmas card, but had several blemishes. Two others made the final shorter list. There were six reserves, leaving twelve others.

I will not bore you with a critique of every photo. However, of note:

- amongst the remainder, one otherwise lovely photo had to be ruled out because it had no winter content, and surely could not have been taken within the specified period – the deciduous trees were in full leaf!
- amongst the reserves, all nice shots in their own way, but variously, issues with: framing and symmetry, insufficiency of winter elements, lack of foci and/or contrast
- within the final shortlist, two strong back-lit countryside scenes, but again a lack of winter apart from leafless trees

- the runner up was a beautiful pastoral side-lit wintry scene, but with four blemishes: framing on the right hand edge, insufficient fronting foreground, refractions (which can work but not here), and a contrail

Here is the winner:



*Reflection in flood water of Barr Green Farm in January*

It is a very strong image, technically sound, with near-perfect symmetry and reflection, two winter element blocks (frost and ice) separating the upper and lower mirror-images, conifers and bold deciduous skeletons, and muted cool colours contrasting with the bold sunlit but still pastel farmhouse frontage, which provides a left-side focus balancing the two diagonal lines of the tree tops diverging to the right. It even has the (unjudged) bonus of being recognisably Woodford!

It is not perfect for one reason – the barn on the right hand side. The shot needed to be taken slightly left (although there may well have been a reason, hidden off-left, why this was not the case), or cropped in from the right towards the right vertical edge of the trees. As it is the viewer is first distracted to the right by the barn, and then second the diverging tree-top lines are cut short before drifting off-image, so the eye is forced down, or up - again to the barn.