

## A SIDEWAYS LOOK

# I enjoyed G&T with Maggie and Denis

In our latest feature on owner-managers, Kent photographer **TREVOR GODFREE** explains why, after a career travelling the world, taking portraits of world leaders and enjoying a gin with Margaret Thatcher, wedding and portrait photography deliver his goal of 'simply making people happy'.

**I'M** PRETTY fortunate my prime motivation as a professional photographer is simply making people happy.

How many other people in business have that as their corporate objective?

I've spent more than 30 years taking pictures for a living, and to say that it's been a varied career is putting it mildly, from shooting portraits of royalty and leading political and business figures to advertising shots for Procter and Gamble and BP.

Today, I mainly concentrate on wedding photography and taking family portraits from my base at West Farleigh near Maidstone, and I get as much buzz out of that as I ever did as a busy, London-based freelancer.

The first camera I ever owned was a 35mm Ilford Sportsman, which I bought for a school A-level project. That sparked my interest in photography, and in the 1960s I enrolled at Ealing School of Art and Photography - Freddie Mercury was in the year above me, and others who went there included Pete Townshend and Ronnie Wood.

After I left, I was offered a job on cruise liners taking pictures of passengers - pretty irresistible for a lad with long hair and a silk scarf straight out of college. It was a great life: the perks included first class travel, and I travelled the world from South Africa to Sydney.

The oil crisis of 1974 temporarily scuppered the cruise industry, so I decided it was time to get a serious job, not least because I was about to get married. So I knocked on doors and made phone calls, and I picked up work from advertising and PR agencies, and the Central Office of Information.

This gave me the opportunity to photograph some of the most famous people in the world, including commissions to shoot state visits and royal occasions featuring the Queen, Princess Diana and Prince Charles, magazine portraits of Yasser Arafat and King Hussein of Jordan, and ministers such as Peter Mandelson, John Prescott and - most memorably - Margaret Thatcher.

I'd turned up early at Number 10 Downing Street to take her picture, and somehow managed to walk in on her and Denis in their sitting room, reading the evening paper. They asked if I'd like to join them for a drink, and so we sat together enjoying G&Ts! She looked after me, and was very aware of what a photographer really needed to get the best result.

You could say my business was unconventional. I used to occasionally meet up with my business partner at "head office" - the Army & Navy coffee shop in Victoria Street - but we were always busy thanks to word of mouth recommendation.

But I wanted to spend more time with my wife and children, so 10 years ago I decided to move into wedding and lifestyle photography, partly spurred by the change in the law which meant people could get married in some really interesting places as well as church.

I still do some work in London - last year I took the directors' portraits for the BP annual report - but I spend most of my time taking wedding pictures around Kent, as well as family portraits.

It's a change of pace and style, but I love it. Wedding photography is highly competitive, and you can only survive if you create a complete story of the day in pictures. Couples want natural shots, particularly capturing the unexpected, and the same creativity applies to taking family portraits.

I still don't do a lot of marketing, although I have a website and attend weekly networking meetings of the Wealden Business Group in Tenterden, although that's mainly to mix with people who can provide me with services, from insurance to banking to plumbing.

I love my job every bit as much as when I first picked up that Ilford camera. It's a great career, although, to be truthful, digital photography means I'm chained to the computer during the week when I'd really rather be out taking pictures.

■ **Trevor Godfree Photography** can be contacted on 01622 817835 or visit [www.trevorgodfree.com](http://www.trevorgodfree.com)



Trevor Godfree of Trevor Godfree Photography

'I turned up early at 10 Downing Street to take Margaret Thatcher's picture, and walked in on her and Denis in their sitting room. We sat together enjoying G&Ts'

[www.kentbusiness.co.uk](http://www.kentbusiness.co.uk)