



Collage produced using Pixlr Smartphone App using iPhone 13 Pro Images

Welcome to this edition of the newsletter

Firstly a big thank you to the many of you who emailed me following last month's publication of the newsletter in which I asked if was time for me to leave YouTube. I was overwhelmed at the number of responses that were suggesting that I carried on with producing tutorials even if it was covering old ground as new subscribers would probably welcome a new look at the camera set ups.

I would like to try new ventures to push me a little out of my comfort zone yet still maintain a core level of camera based tutorials.

As smartphones have become almost essential camera equipment and capable of producing excellent image quality especially using 3rd party apps which drill down and allow the use of the RAW format sensor file.

There are many excellent sites catering for smartphone users combining smartphones and gimbals, smartphone applications for videographers etc. I'm not sure what direction I will try but probably hybridising convention cameras with smartphones and reviewing the wealth of applications which allow editing and using image applications to produce works of art etc., would be of universal interest.



The "not so Grand Hotel" at Wigan (Pixlr edited image)



iPhone 13 Pro telephoto 77mm EFL Lens

iPhones and iPads

I recently took the decision to purchase the iPhone 13 Pro. This was primarily due to the much publicised improvements to the 3 lenses and in particular the super wide lens which was always soft on my iPhone 12 Pro Max.

Whilst the main lens certainly seems to be yielding some super images at the moment I am less than impressed with the super wide lens which still looks soft.



Super wide lens



Crop from above image



Close-up macro shot



Normal lens

Again out of camera images look a little over sharpened. I need to try some 3rd party apps where you can adjust this.

Photographing Firework Displays



In the UK we will be celebrating the 5th November Bonfire night to recognise the discovery of the plot to blow up the houses of parliament by Guy Fawkes and his gang.

Many people think that a fast lens is needed to capture these sights but quite the contrary as fireworks actually emit very bright light and a small aperture such as F8 might be needed.

Here are some of my suggestions to maximise your chances of getting better images.

Use a tripod. Perhaps the most important tip is to secure your camera to something that will ensure it doesn't move during the taking of your shots. This is especially important in photographing fireworks simply because you'll be using longer shutter speeds. The best way to keep your camera still is, of course, tripod.

Use a remote release. To prevent any camera movement when releasing the shutter a wired, or wireless, shutter release is advisable. Using the 2 second timer requires more anticipation of the likely firework bursts.

Aiming your camera. One of the most difficult aspects of photographing fireworks is working out where to aim your camera.

The challenge you'll face in doing this is that you generally need to aim your camera before the fireworks that you'll be photographing goes off – anticipation is key. Planning is important with firework displays and getting to the location early in order to get a good, unobstructed position is important. Think about what is in the foreground and background of your shots and make sure you won't have people's heads bobbing up into your shots. One thing that you should always consider when lining up fireworks shots is whether your camera is straight and level. This is especially important if you're going to shooting with a wide focal length and your shot will capture other background elements (ie a cityscape).

Which lens focal length? I generally shoot at a wider focal length than a tight one but during the firework display will try a few tighter shots (a zoom lens is the best option). Of course zoomed in shots like this one can be quite effective also. They enable you to really fill the frame with great colour. Keep in mind however that cropping of your wider angle fireworks shots can always be done later to get a similar impact in your photography.

Shutter Speed. Fireworks are naturally a moving subject, so it's probably more important to get shutter speed right than setting the right aperture. To capture this movement you need a long exposure. One technique to photograph fireworks is to shoot in 'bulb' mode, if your camera supports it. This is a mode that allows you to keep the shutter open for as long as you hold down the shutter (preferably using a remote shutter release of some type). Using this technique you press the shutter button as the firework is about to explode and hold it down until it's finished exploding (generally a few seconds).

You can also experiment with fixed shutter speeds to see what impact it will have but I find that unless you're holding the shutter open for very long exposures that the bulb technique works pretty well.

However, don't keep your shutter open too long. The temptation is to think that because it's dark that you can leave it open as long as you like. The problem with this is that fireworks are bright and it doesn't take too much to overexpose them, especially if your shutter is open for multiple bursts in the one area of the sky. By all means, experiment with multiple burst shots – but most people end up finding that the simpler one burst shots can be best. You can always merge shots in post editing.

Shoot in manual mode. I find I get the best results when shooting in both manual exposure and manual focus mode. Auto focusing in low light can be very difficult for many cameras and you'll end up missing a lot of shots. Once your focusing is set you'll find you don't really need to change it during the fireworks display – especially if you're using a small aperture which increases depth of field. Keep in mind that changing focal lengths will mean you need to need to adjust your focusing on most lenses.

Rode Wireless go II Updates

Rode has released an update for the Rode Wireless Go II microphones, bringing new podcasting and live streaming functionality and allowing complete remote configuration from your smartphone. The latest software update brings the Rode Central app to iOS and Android, no longer locking you into a desktop or laptop for configuration



The Rode mobile app to allow configuration of the Rode Wireless go microphones.

Rode Connect is a podcasting app allowing you to connect up to four Rode NT-USB Mini or Rode Wireless GO II microphones, allowing you to live mix your audio in real-time when hosting a live stream or podcast with multiple users simultaneously. Both Rode Central and Rode Connect are available completely free.



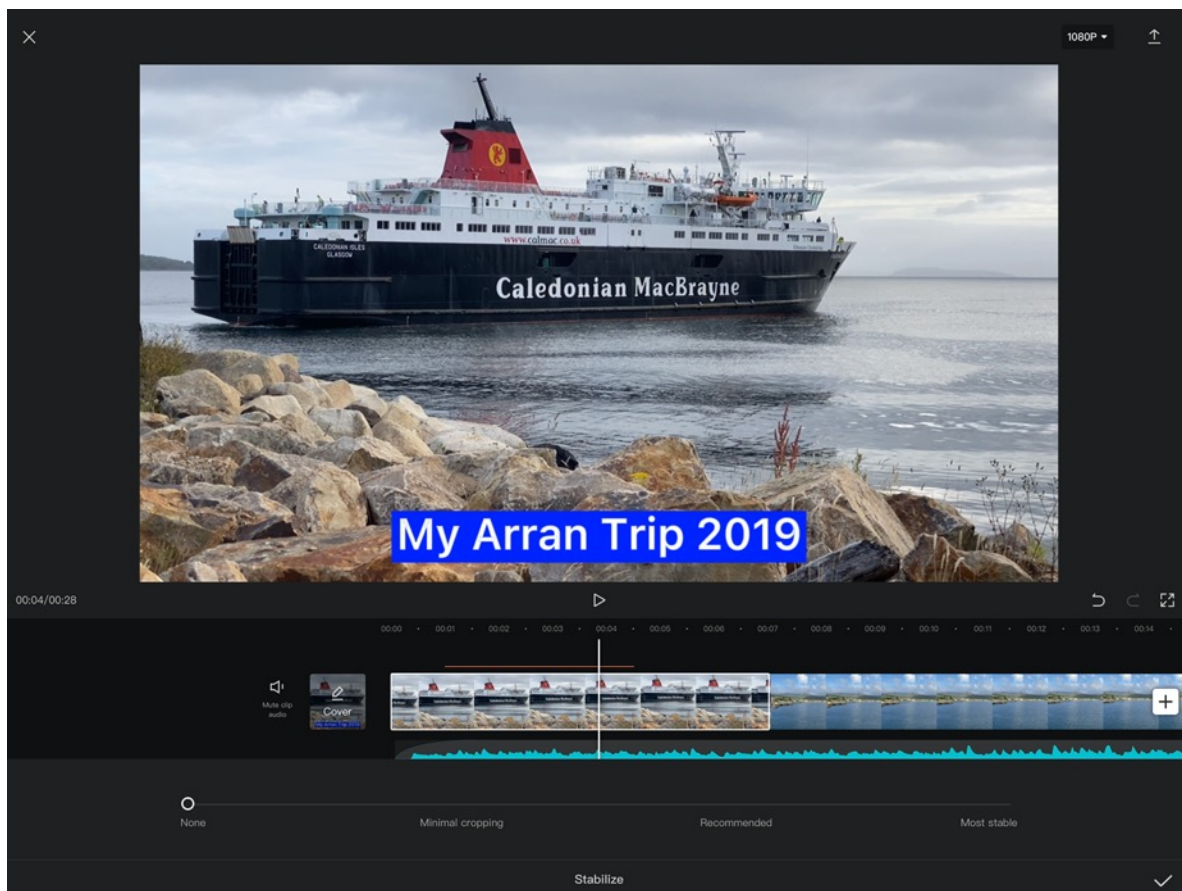
The Rode connect program running on a Macbook Pro showing the two microphones connected to the system.

Using the Rode connect program allows you to additionally record the session if you wanted to use the system to collect 2 audio sources for a video production.

Sadly the Mobile app (and also the desktop app) do not allow you to select a portion of the recorded audio for export, you have to export the whole audio track. There I also no way to import the audio into an external program in the apps – you have to download from the transmitters to your computer before editing.

Capcut Video Editor for iOS and Android Smartphones/Tablets

I came across a very neat/functional video editor program for smartphone/tablets which is used to primarily create Tik-tok videos however you can create ordinary video productions with relative ease and very low learning curve.

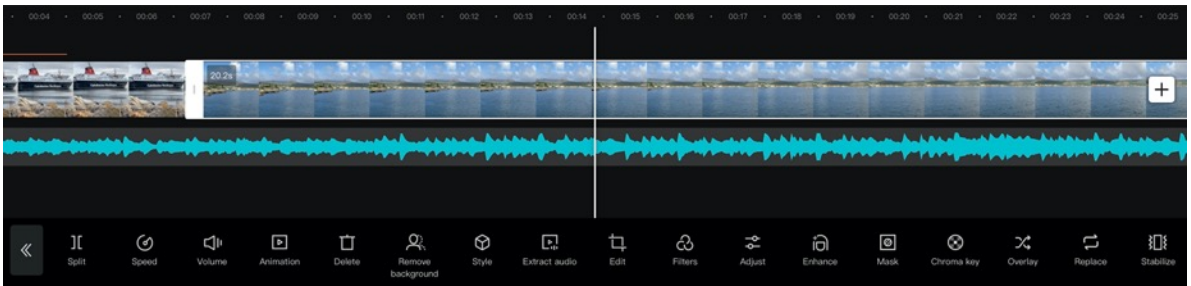


The user interface of Capcut

There are a few “quirks” with the interface which took me a little while to work out how to achieve some of the essential tasks in a video editor. Positioning audio was one of them. It seemed impossible to reposition the start of the audio once it was placed upon the time

line. The way to do this is to position the cursor where you want the audio to start and then add the audio from the library of sounds or your own.

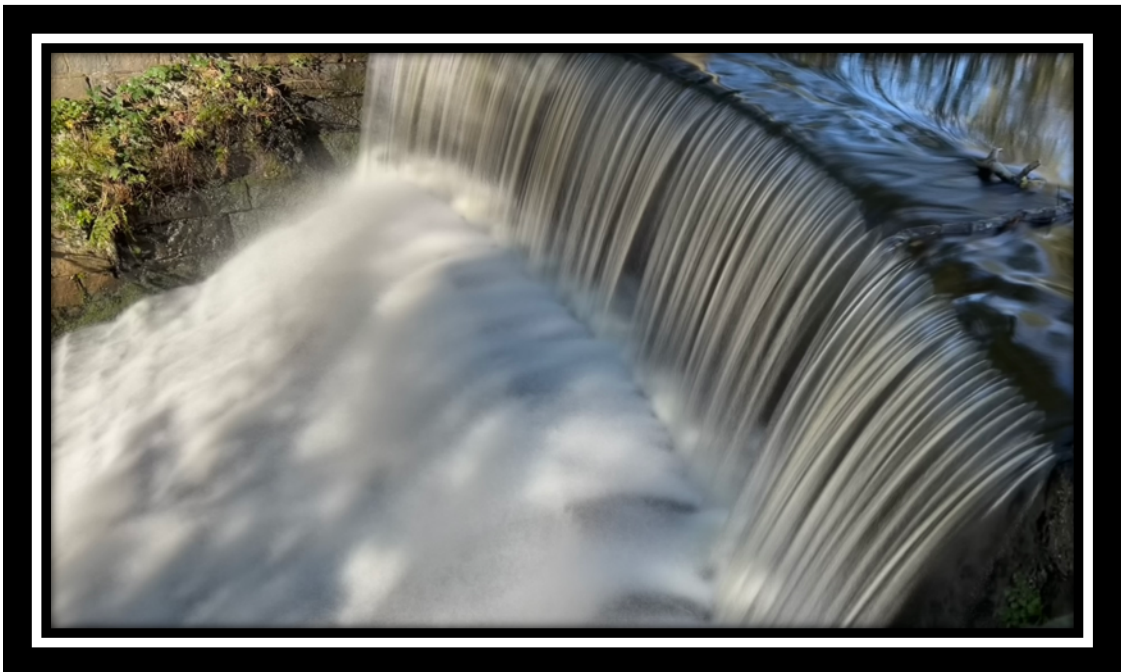
I think syncing audio captured using an external audio recorder might be a little tricky, if not impossible, to get lip-sync correct. I'll do some more research on this one.



The Many options for editing that are available

I've been using this on my Android phone (Samsung Galaxy S21 pro) and on my 12.9 inch iPad Pro and so far the program has worked smoothly when editing even 4K video files. One of my next YouTube tutorials will be edited using this program just to see how it compares to my other option which is Lumafusion.

Where Has Live Photos Gone in IOS 15

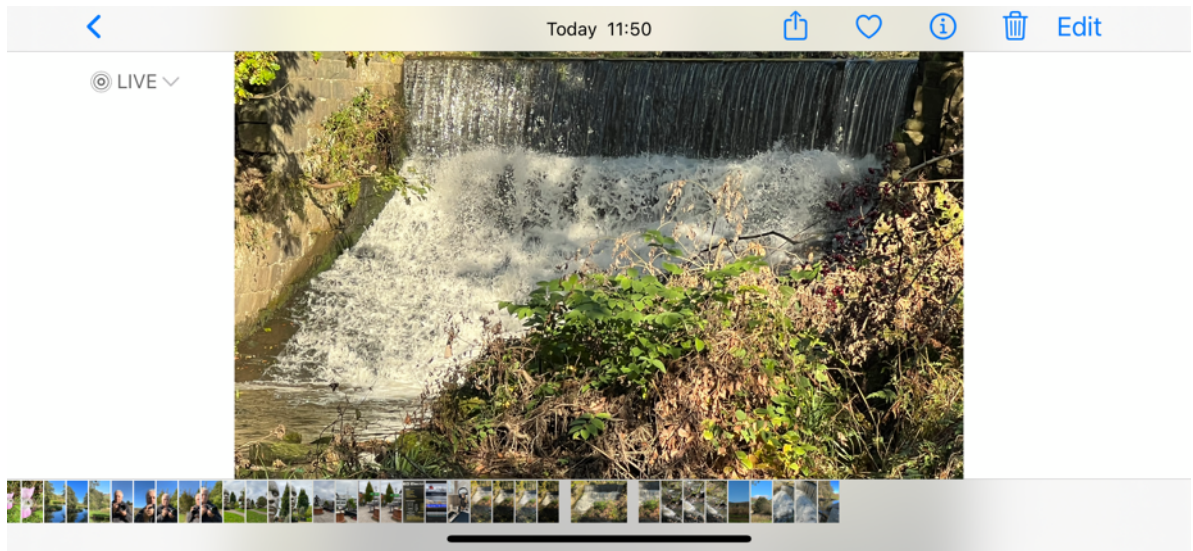


With IOS15 Live Photos has undergone a slight change in the way that the 5 second burst of images can be used to create different visual effects such as the long exposure image shown above.

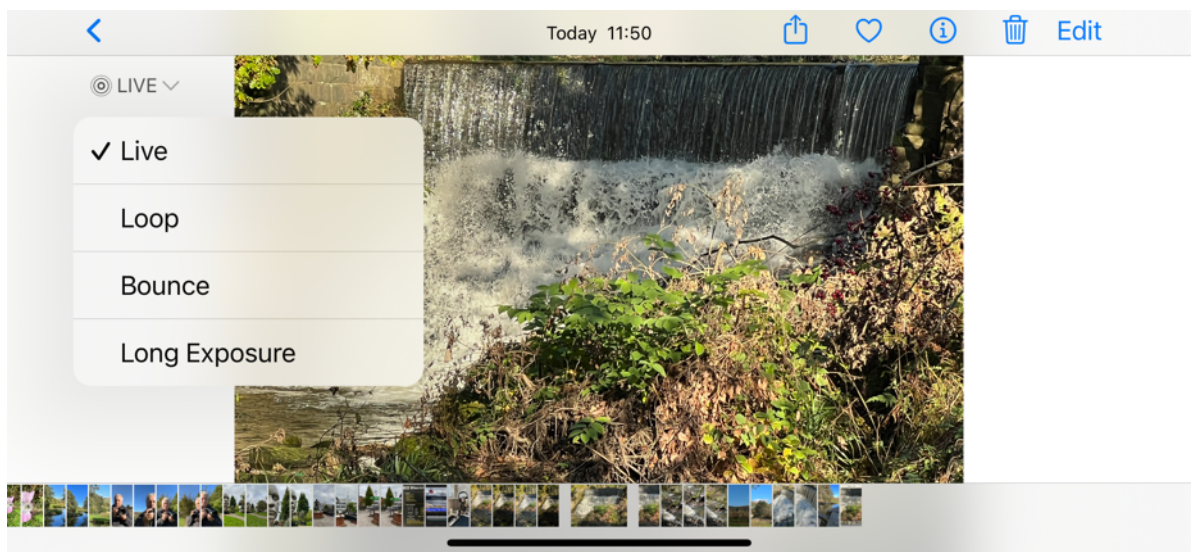
Now when you “swipe up” on the live view image you will see the detailed information about the image including the time and place the image was captured, the lens used, aperture, shutter speed and ISO and any exposure value compensation.

At the top left hand side of the screen you will see the icon for Live photo with a drop down option.

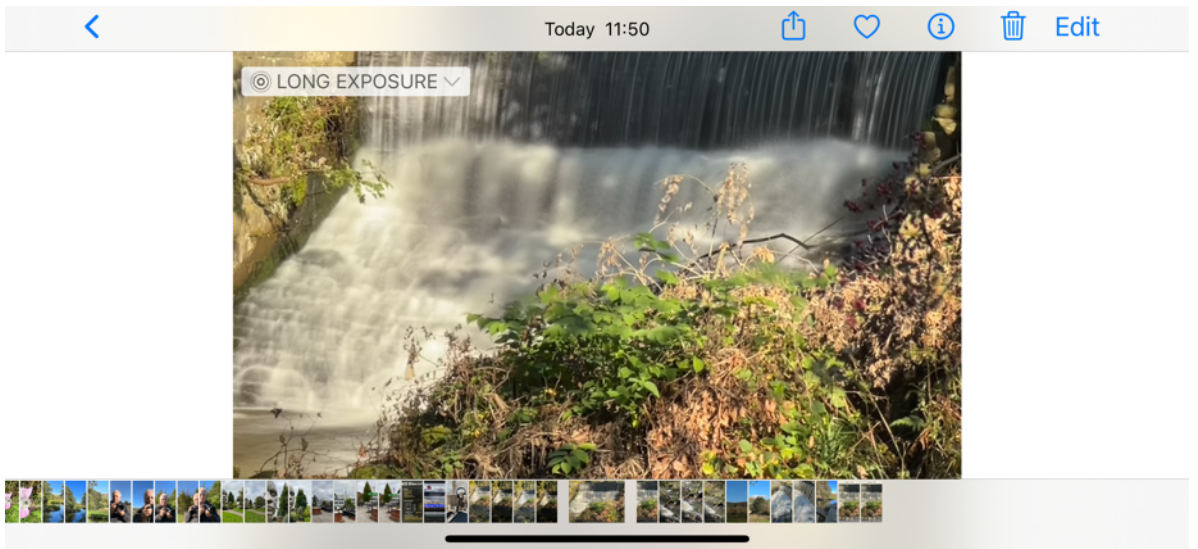
If you touch this icon you will see the options of Loop, Bounce or Long Exposure.



The live icon now is at the top left of the screen and when touch reveals the other available image creation options.



The long exposure mode creates a composite image to simulate a long exposure.



The simulated long exposure from the Live Photo capture.

iPhone 13 Pro Camera – First Impressions

So I have been using the iPhone 13 Pro for about 1 month now and have had a good opportunity to test out the 3 cameras in this device.



A landscape shot using the x3 lens 1/732sec F2.8 @ ISO 32



Ultra Wide Camera lens 1/242 sec F1.8 @ ISO 32



Wide Camera Lens 1/2252sec F1.5 @ ISO 50

In general I'm pleased with the image quality. Perhaps the images are a little over sharpened when viewed on a larger monitor and a little bit of blur added to these images does improve the "gritty" look.

I'm regretting not getting the Pro Max version now as the standard screen size is a little too small for editing on the road and I have to airdrop them across to my iPhone 12 Pro Max or iPad mini for closer inspection.

I have yet to shoot some extensive video on this phone as to be able to comment on the quality. Certainly the "cinematic" mode needs to be controlled properly so as not to have depth map anomalies showing up in the video clips.

FZ300/330 Zoom Lever Failure Update

In a previous newsletter I reported that I was going to attempt to change the top plate of the camera as this is the only way to fix the problem of the zoom lever intermittent operation. The actual control is not a switch but a variable resistor (potentiometer) which obviously goes "noisy" with use. Before I ordered the replacement top plate from a supplier in Vietnam (Panasonic will not sell it here in the UK!!) I decided that I was going to try and attempt to clean the potentiometer with a switch cleaner. I downloaded the service manual for the camera and followed the steps needed to be carried out to remove the top plate.

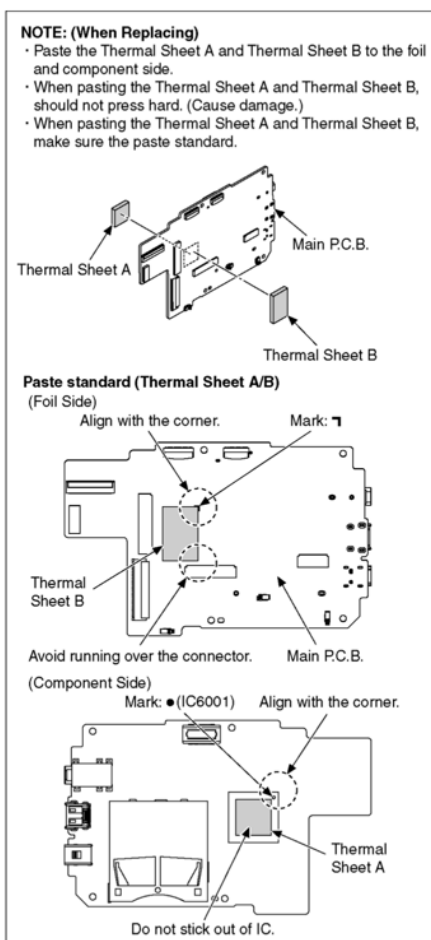
It looked quite an involved procedure requiring the removal of the main PCB in order to gain access to some screws.

That wouldn't have been a problem for me as I am used to that sort of operation.

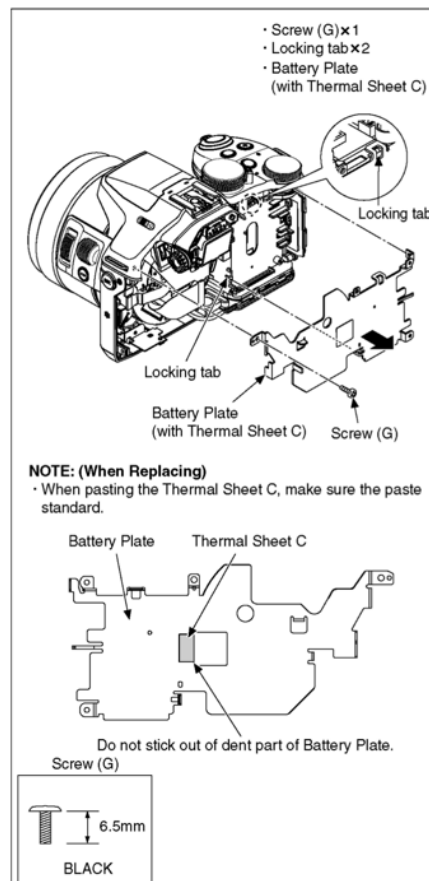
However what was difficult, and in the end I decided to abort the procedure due to the fact that I may have damaged the weatherproofing of the camera body, was trying to separate the camera back from the main body as it appeared to have interlocking tabs which I just could not open without fear of breaking something.

There is obviously a technique needed to separate the camera back which isn't detailed in the service manual. Also some thermal pads needed to be replaced which I didn't have. It is something that may be taught to accredited service technicians.

So I will live with the problem and when I use that camera will just use the side lever to change the zoom.



9.3.3. Removal of the Top Case Unit and Battery Case Unit



If anyone has gained access and found the secret of this removal please let me know.

So that's it for this newsletter. The next will be early December

Graham