

# Tom Duffin – city photographer

Although he was born and brought up a Fifer, Tom Duffin now considers himself to be from Edinburgh, possibly born from his love of the cityscape, which is evident in his photos.

It is Tom who is responsible for the beautiful photo of Edinburgh Castle which paints it as a castle in the clouds that most people will have seen somewhere. He spends a lot of time on creating the images and it is little surprise then that he keeps the locations he uses close to his chest.



Edinburgh, Scotland. 25th-31st May, 2018. The sea fog called haar is plaguing the East coast of Scotland as the rest of the country basks in sunshine. If you can get above the haar there are some magical sights. Photo © Tom Duffin

Self-employed since the age of about 25 he has been involved in several businesses including a paragliding school which he ran for about 12 years. This more than anything has helped him develop the kind of photos he has become known for.

Tom explained: “I think the paragliding helps me a lot. When you are on a glider one of the real skills you have to develop is perspective and knowing whether you are going to reach a certain point in the distance. So you develop a skill of knowing whether you will make it on your glide angle. That has given me a pretty unique skill that I use in photography a

fair bit. A lot of the photos I take I get really far away and I am looking for a perspective where I have something on the horizon and maybe something else just below it, waiting for the sun to appear behind. I think it is almost a natural instinct now and an example of how several things come together in your life to help with whatever you're currently doing."

He then had a spell building a land yacht which folds into a suitcase and would fit in the boot of a car, and which assembles without the need for any tools. If you need any spares then he may well have some somewhere.

With no formal training other than being self taught, he reckons that the best training is to do it and just keep trying it until he gets it right.

Now he spends his nights in various high locations in the city – sometimes up on Arthur's Seat in the middle of the night, waiting for sunrise, to get the shots for which he has become best known. It does not always work of course, as his work is totally weather dependent.

He used to get perhaps 20 or 30 people to come along with him on his shoots to participate in the creation of the images, but that has since stopped. The image which we show below is taken on Salisbury Crags with Tom about 300 metres or so away from the subjects. In this photo there are actually three young men, but one of them is lying down as they were taking it in turns to reenact what is called the Tip Off in basketball.



Two boys compete for the ball as they jump on the edge of the cliffs overlooking the city of Edinburgh at sunset. They became Scottish Youth Champions two weeks before this photo, and this was the last time they played as this team they have been part of for years, as they all moved into the adult squad, or off to other parts of the country to study, or seek

work. PHOTO © Tom Duffin

The one who is out of shot is radio presenter and panto villain Grant Stott's son, Sam, who was one of around six players who trained at the Craggs sports centre who played basketball on the Scottish team.

Tom said: "These guys were the Scottish champions in this year, and it was a bit of a coming of age as they were all about 18 and would move on to the adult category after that. They had played together for about seven years and were a particularly tight knit bunch – and about six of them were in the Scotland team as well.

"There's a location that I call the Royal box on the crags and it sticks out. For a while I was about five or six years ago, I was I was getting people to come along and participate in the images. And we did that for a while then. I think people got bored with it.

"In this particular case, these guys – there are actually three guys as one of them is lying down and you can't see him. They were taking it in turns

"The team was based at the Craggs Sports Centre, and they were the Scottish champions that year. And so this was the year where they were coming of age, really. They were the under 18s – after that you then went on to the adult category. So these boys had been together for seven years playing together with this club. They were really a particularly tight knit bunch of guys.

"And I had had in mind this shot for a while – doing the tip off as they call it, which is what happens at the start of a basketball match, the ref throws the ball up, and they go for it. And I had wanted to get people involved.

"And then the guys won the Scottish championships – it was literally the last game they would ever play together if they won the Scottish championships. I was along at the Craggs and I

said “Guys, could you come up the Craggs with me tonight?” And they agreed right away.

“We took a couple of basketballs last he took a couple of burst basketballs because we cut the slit wider so that you could actually put your hand inside the ball, and when they jumped the ball would actually come off their hands and to communicate with I had to have my mobile hanging from my tripod on speaker and one of the guys was lying down with his phone on speaker. So I would say 3-2-1 jump, they would jump and I would take a series of shots, and they must have jumped I don't know 200 times.

You can see the results of Tom's sleepless nights on his [Facebook](#) page and website. He is also generous enough to share them on our Facebook and Twitter pages when he gets round to it.



Photo courtesy of Tom Duffin