

Viewfinder



November 2017

Intro:

Welcome to the November edition of Viewfinder for the 2017-18 season, and thank you to those members who contributed to, and/or commented on, the previous edition for October. You will find the usual mixture of information and photographs here, plus an extra article that has come all the way from Italy! Thank you, Jimmy McCracken.

Philip

News & Info:

Early in November, it was a surprise and concern to members to hear that one of our key players, Mike Mitchell, was in hospital for a serious operation. As most of you will know, Mike works hard and diligently, as Programme Secretary, to arrange the events in our society calendar that we enjoy throughout the season, and to liaise with each of our visiting judges and speakers. It is pleasing to know that he is making a good recovery, and we wish him well. We are also grateful to Brian Young, who has taken on the responsibility for maintaining all aspects of the programme for the time being.

Monday Meetings:

For the final meeting of October, we welcomed Tom Way to give a talk entitled 'Wildlife Through a Lens'. This young man has been working as a professional wildlife photographer for several years, by both selling his own fine art photographs and giving talks like this one. He described the gear he uses and how he uses it to capture amazing shots of wildlife in the UK and abroad, his passion being the large animals of Africa. Of course, he had many wonderful examples of his photographs to show us as projected images. One of the interesting (perhaps surprising) points he mentioned was that he does very little post-processing of his captured images, preferring to display what he saw 'through the lens'. See more about him and his work at: <http://tomwayphotography.co.uk>

The first Monday of November was the Second Projected Image League Competition of the season. There were 53 entries from 26 members and again we saw the generally high standard of members' images. We are grateful to our visiting judge, Lloyd Moore, for coming along to give his commentary about each entry. He was obviously impressed, as he held back a large number of excellent images for scores of 19 and 20. We also thank our Projectionist and P.I. Secretary, Richard Anthony for organising the competition and recording the scores. The results are on pages 9 and 11.

Our second November meeting was led by one of our senior members, John Humphrey FRPS. In his usual relaxed and entertaining style, he treated us to a captivating demonstration of creative photography magic! Starting with images as recorded by the camera, he showed us how the various tools and filters available in software packages such as Photoshop, can be used in imaginative ways to transform even quite ordinary images into highly creative works of art. Our thanks to John for this interesting and inspiring session. No doubt this approach will also stimulate the on-going debate regarding when a photograph becomes no longer a photograph. Is it even possible for a clear line to be drawn? Or should we accept an ever-increasing degree of Gaussian blurring?!

The third Monday meeting was our second Colour Print League Competition of the season. There were 34 good quality prints from 17 members. The visiting judge was Chris Sargeant, and we thank him for coming along to assess and mark the entries, and for giving his commentary on the images. Thanks also to John Humphrey for introducing each image on the night and for recording and reporting the scores. The results are on pages 10 and 11.

During this month there was a very special meeting - the 80th Anniversary Lecture by Will Cheung FRPS. This was held on Friday 17th November in the Bennetts End Community Centre, this larger venue being chosen as it was anticipated, correctly, that we would have a much larger audience compared with our typical meetings in the Salvation Army Hall.

For many years photographer Will Cheung has been a photography tutor and a photography magazine editor - currently of the monthly free newspaper, 'Photography News'. In his inspiring talk he spoke of his own enthusiasm as an amateur for all types of photography - his principal earnings are from his journalism not from selling photographs. He always carries a camera, and takes pictures anywhere, of anything, and in any conditions of weather and light.

In addition to the more usual photography topics of locations, travel, etc., he told us that he always has various other projects in his mind, so he is on the lookout for suitable images for those. Two example themes from many that he described in his talk were: images containing some rubbish/litter, and images containing an umbrella. He illustrated those, plus several more on-going projects, by the use of many projected image examples, in both monochrome and colour.

We thanked Will for his interesting and entertaining talk describing quite a refreshingly different approach to photography. You can read more about him and his work, and see lots of his images on this web site:

<http://www.williamcheung.co.uk>

and you can see Photography News here:

<https://www.photographynews.co.uk>

Reminder:

Advance Notice - Competition:

Please consider preparing your entries with suitable titles for the **Projected Image Set Subject Competition: 'Film Titles'**. It is now only a few weeks to the registration date in Christmas week, for the competition which takes place on Monday the 8th of January.

Philip

Images:

The following featured photos were some of the top-scoring images from the first rounds of the three League Competitions:

'Geranium' by Richard Anthony:

The flower was photographed in my garden but not on the plant, as the flower was too close to the ground and the plant was in the shade. The flower was held in a retort stand mounted clamp and backlit by sunlight. A reflector was used to bounce some light back onto the subject. By the time I had the shot sorted, the early morning dew had evaporated so I had to add some water droplets. For the shot I used my Sony SLT-A65A APS-C sensor camera, and a 90mm Tamron Macro lens, mounted on a tripod. Spot metering determined the exposure of 1/160 sec at f/16 and ISO 400. The JPEG image was processed in Photoshop Elements 10, accessed via 'Open as' a Camera Raw image, then exposure tweaked, and clarity and levels adjusted. The image was then cropped to an almost square format to exclude some of background at the sides of the flower.



'Cormorant Family Tree' by Dennis Barlow:

This was taken at Rutland Water on a cool, cloudy autumn day.

I used a hand-held Fujifilm XT2 Compact System Camera, with an APS-C sensor, and a 100-400mm zoom lens at 347mm (full-frame equivalent = 521mm), with in-lens image stabilisation.

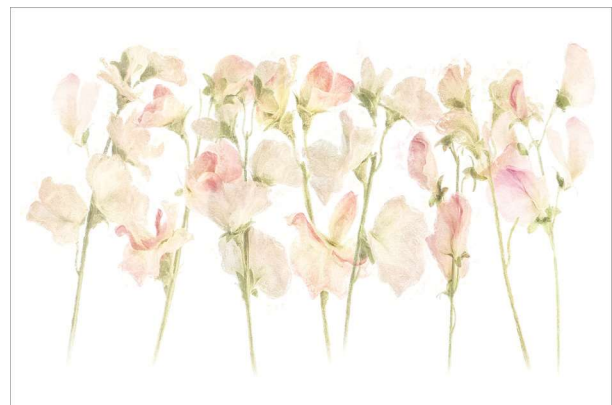
The exposure settings were 1/500 sec at f/8 with + 0.67 EV exposure bias.

The processing involved minor cropping and levels adjustment, using Photoshop Creative Cloud 2017.

'Sweet Peas' by John Humphrey:

This is a composite image. Each sweet pea was separately photographed, with a lightbox as the pure white background and natural window lighting to give balanced illumination for the flowers. The individual images were combined in Photoshop and a range of digital treatments applied. These included levels adjustments to lighten, combining a black and white layer with a blurred coloured layer to soften, and applying a displacement map to add texture.

The images were taken with a 100mm macro lens on a Canon EOS 5D Mk III camera. The exposure settings were f/8 and 1/15 sec at ISO 100.



'The Magician' by Rob Harley:

Steve Price is a self-employed Magician who came to the Studio Group in order to get some publicity shots. He has an expressive face but also distinguishes himself with shoes that shine. He wore an equally impressive pair of blue shoes for another part of the evening.

At one point in the shoot he started flicking playing cards through the air. I moved to one side to get an angle and took the shot. When I reviewed the photos I liked the "reveal" that you could make out the thing in the air was a card and that he was holding a pack of cards - which allowed you to understand what was happening.

Because I had moved to the side, the background was not wide enough and you could see the ladder on the left. This is one reason why I don't shoot film - it was a minute's work to remove the ladder in Photoshop but it would have ruined a film image.



The Studio set up is shown in this image. The key light is on the left and we used the shoot-through brolly on the right to act as the fill light.

The exposure settings were 1/125s and f/8 at ISO 100, using a focal length of 28mm with a 24-105mm f/4 IS USM lens on a full-frame Canon EOS 5D Mk II.

'Sleeping Tiger Symmetry' by Hilary Moore:

The original image was taken at Chester Zoo in 2014, at the bewitching noon day hour! I had spent ages waiting for him to lie down and sleep with his head up looking my way. I deliberately wanted to show the usual side of a tiger not the hungry all teeth and snarls version.



It was taken with a Sony A7R II hand-held digital full-frame mirrorless camera set to Aperture Priority Mode, ISO 500 Pattern Metering, and Auto White Balance. The lens was a Sony FE f/3.5-6.3 24-240 zoom at F/7.1 giving a shutter speed of 1/250 sec.

In Photoshop CS5 I cropped the image to a square to fit my mount. Then using the Nik Collection I applied a sepia finish and desaturated it to take out most of the colour. I then added a white circular vignette to wash out the back ground. I finally used a sharpen filter. I then printed it on Canon Plus Glossy II paper using a Canon Pixma Pro 9500 Mk II.

The first time I entered this image, the judge for that competition didn't like it and gave it a low score!

'In the Glove' by Vicky Sinclair:

This is a picture of my son doing what he loves best. It's taken on a baseball field after the game, using a Canon EOS 100D with a Canon EF-S 55-250mm IS lens. The settings were: aperture priority mode, ISO 800, focal length 96mm, aperture f/6.3, shutter speed 1/4000s.

I cranked up the ISO to get a very fast shutter speed and used aperture f/6.3, not too shallow, so I could get the glove, ball and face in focus. I used aperture priority mode to let the camera give me the fastest possible shutter speed. It was taken from a low angle to get a different perspective and I think that's the main strength, as well as the expression on his face.



'Saturday Afternoon in Xi'an' by Jim Turner:

This was taken from the balcony of a modern shopping mall, overlooking the 14th Century Bell Tower which is now stranded on a traffic island in the centre of the modern city of Xi'an in China. Xi'an (pronounced as two syllables - tshee an. The name means, literally, "Western Peace") has a population of more than 8 million people, and on Saturday afternoons they all seem to converge on the centre of the city!

This is the entrance to a pedestrian underpass which encircles the Bell Tower and the area is invariably crowded, with

people waiting for buses or trying to make their way to other parts of the city centre - particularly the bustling Muslim Market on the opposite side to where this photo was taken (a tourist trap if ever there was one - it's also home to the oldest and largest mosque in China, originally built in the 8th century, but extensively rebuilt in the 14th -15th centuries).

I used a Canon 40D with a standard Canon 17-85mm Image Stabiliser lens. I particularly wanted to create a sense of the bustling crowds by using a slow shutter speed and used a 3-stop neutral density filter to reduce the amount of light hitting the sensor. Nevertheless I needed to stop the aperture down to f32 at ISO 100 to get anywhere near a slow enough speed. With some experimenting I found that 0.6 to 1 second achieved the result I was looking for, without being either too blurred or too static. I took several frames (hand-held, as I didn't have my tripod, so had to balance the camera on the balcony!) and this is one of two which I think worked well - the other one was published by the Guardian earlier this year under the theme of Diversity in their Readers' Photographs section. What they both have in common is a static anchor point - in this case the man at the top left who is stationary; in the Guardian picture it's two people looking at the crowds from a stationary bus.

All the images were processed in Lightroom, but it was really just a question of correcting a warm colour-cast caused by the ND filter, and increasing the contrast, saturation and a minimal amount of sharpening to give the images more punch.

Landscape Photography by Jimmy McCracken

Hi everyone,

My name is Jimmy McCracken and I am possibly HHPS 's only overseas member....hence seldom seen on Monday evenings!!! I live in so-called retirement in an olive farm in Southern Tuscany and Philip has asked me to write some thoughts and advice on photographing landscapes.

The great plus about landscapes is that they do not move. They can change from minute to minute but, once set up for composition on a decent tripod, it is a matter of waiting for the decisive moment which may or not arrive. Judgment is important but we all need that bit of luck where the light is concerned.

So we can start with basic equipment for landscape photography:

1. A reasonable quality camera body capable of taking a change of lenses. (My personal camera is a Canon 5D mark 2, around 10 years old.)
2. A lens capable of shooting in the range of 24-70 mm on a full-frame camera. (Prime lenses are excellent but I prefer the choice of compositions allowed with a zoom lens.)
- 3a. A simple filter system to fit onto the chosen lens. You will probably find that most skies if included in the image are around 2 stops brighter than the land, and often record as having blown out highlights, i.e. no pixels. Fitting a neutral density graduated filter to the lens allows you to darken the sky without affecting the lower part of the image. I have 3 filters: 0.3, 0.6 and 0.9, and they can be used in combination if necessary.
- 3b. I recommend the use of a polarising filter which can give an added depth and punch to some of the images. It's sometimes very effective and is supposed to function best when the light is at right angles to the camera, but it is a fickle beast and often ineffective...trial and error...and it loses 2 stops of light.
4. A remote shutter release to ensure minimal camera vibration on pressing the shutter button; alternatively you can use the two-second delay setting from the camera controls.
5. Last but not least, a sturdy tripod to eliminate camera shake. When I started doing landscapes I, in my inexperience, thought I could manage without one...how wrong I was! Using a tripod forces you to work more slowly and give the proper consideration to all the factors to be decided before pushing the shutter button, and for me it adds to the feeling of freedom to stroll around and consider the vista before you decide what to do next.

So there we have the basic kit but as yet no pictures; no article on photography should go any further without a few photos, all of which were taken using the 5 items outlined above, and all (apart from those of Venice) were taken within about an hour from my home. All the images were shot at ISO 100 and Aperture $f/16$, and the shutter speed would vary with the proper exposure.

Morning Light on the Ruin: >>

Shutter speed: 1/20 sec





<< **Misty Spring Morning:**

Shutter speed: 1/13 sec.

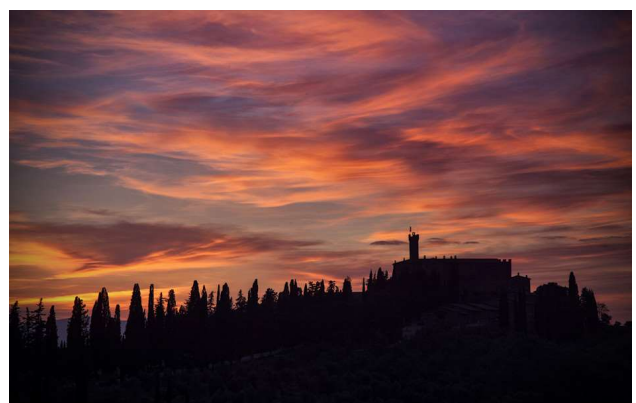
Clouds over Autumn Vines:

Shutter speed: 1/8 sec.



Sunset:

Shutter speed: 0.8 sec.



Off we go early, on a morning forecast to be sunny, and arrive at our location with our kit.

Where do we start? We set the camera with our lens onto the tripod, and think about our camera settings and our image composition.

Most experienced photographers shoot landscapes in Aperture Priority Mode to get their desired depth of field. We normally want our image to be sharp throughout, so a small aperture (large number) will give us this: f/16 seems to be used much of the time to utilise the sweet spot on many zoom lenses.

The other 2 settings for an accurate exposure are the ISO and shutter speed. ISO is next to be considered and, if possible, set at the lowest number (i.e. 100 on my camera), the finest setting for a clear quality image free of unwanted noise.

As for shutter speed, on aperture priority it becomes subservient to the aperture setting. The shutter speed can drop very low but with the trusty tripod there should be little danger of camera shake.

Just to drive home the point I show two images of Venice at night (cityscapes with the simple camera settings, similar to landscapes in technique). Shutter speeds of 20 seconds are not uncommon and everything is sharp and punchy and, of course, taken on a tripod!!!



<< **Campiello San Baldo:**

ISO 400, aperture F/13,
shutter speed 25secs.

Rialto at night:

>>

ISO 100, aperture f/11,
shutter speed 25 secs.



With those settings it would be impossible to hand-hold with any confidence. The settings, of course, are not set in stone, and may have to be adapted to suit both the light available and the artistic interpretation of the author of the image.

I hope you find the article outlines the obvious needs for simple but rewarding landscape images. There will follow on from this (for the brave of heart!!!) another article with slightly more advanced details of my landscape experiences. For the meantime I wish everyone at the Club,

Good luck and light in the years ahead!

Best wishes,
Jimmy McCracken

Projected Images											
Group C											
Name	Round 1		Round 2		Round 3		Round 4		Round 5		Total
BARLOW Dennis	18	20	18	18							74
HOWARD Brian	18	15	18	16							67
MITCHELL Mike	17	17	18	17							69
SHARP Steve	17		20	13							50
SINCLAIR Vicky			19	18							37
STONE Vincent	16	14	16	16							62
TURNER Jim	20	18	17	15							70
VAN GEENE Linda	16	17	18	17							68
WILLIAMS Emyr	15	14	16	17							62
Group B											
Name	Round 1		Round 2		Round 3		Round 4		Round 5		Total
BALLARD Steve	15	16									31
BYFORD Philip	16	16	16	16							64
COTTON Peter	16	17	19	18							70
GUEST David	17	16	19	16							68
HUTCHINSON Graham	16	16	17	17							66
LINDSEY Graham	17	15									32
McDOWALL Mary	17	15	17	14							63
MOORE Hilary	20	17	16	18							71
WINSLOW Paul	15	18	17	16							66
YOUNG Brian			20	15							35
Group A											
Name	Round 1		Round 2		Round 3		Round 4		Round 5		Total
ANTHONY Richard	20	19	17	19							75
HARLEY Rob	18	19	19	16							72
HUMPHREY John	17	18	19	20							74
JONES Steven	18	16	16	18							68
JORIMANN Uily	17	17	18	20							72
MARSHALL John	18	19	19	20							76
McCRACKEN James	17	17	17	20							71
SHAW Ian	17	16	18	16							67
SMITH Ron	19	18	17	16							70
STAMP Cathy	17	18									35

Colour Print											
Group C											
Name	Round 1		Round 2		Round 3		Round 4		Round 5		Total
GUEST David	19	20	19	17							75
SINCLAIR Vicky	20	17	15	18							70
SPONDER Ted			16	20							36
STONE Vince	19	14	17	20							70
TURNER Jim	20	16	19	17							72
Group B											
Name	Round 1		Round 2		Round 3		Round 4		Round 5		Total
ANTHONY Richard	18	16	16	15							65
BYFORD Philip	18	15	15	17							65
HOWARD Brian	14	14	16	14							58
HUTCHINSON Graham	16	19	16	18							69
MITCHELL Mike	15	17									32
MOORE Hilary	16	17	18	18							69
WINSLOW Paul	18	17	20	16							71
Group A											
Name	Round 1		Round 2		Round 3		Round 4		Round 5		Total
FORD Graham	17	16	17	15							65
HARLEY Rob	16	20	16	18							70
HUMPHREY John	20	19	17	17							73
MARSHALL John	19	19	19	18							75
SHAW Shaw	14	16	16	15							61
VAN GEENE Linda	17	18	15	16							66

Top-scoring Images:

Competition	Judge	Group	Position	Name	Image Title
2nd Projected Image	Lloyd Moore 06/11/17	C	1 st	Steve Sharp	Shadows in the Sun
			2 nd	Vicky Sinclair	Bee Planet
			3rd=	Brian Howard	Large Ball Dahlia
			3rd=	Mike Mitchell	Autumn Snow in the Rockies
			3rd=	Vicky Sinclair	Landing Swan
			3rd=	Linda van Geene	Ships' Graveyard
		B	1 st	Brian Young	Washing Day
			2nd=	Peter Cotton	Obscuring the View
			2nd=	David Guest	Dragonfly at Work
		A	1st=	John Humphrey	Shaggy Parasol
			1st=	Ully Jorimann	Heart of the Dahlia
			1st=	James McCracken	Montenero Evening
1st=	John Marshall		Triangle		
2nd Colour Print	Chris Sargeant 20/11/17	C	1st=	Ted Sponder	Locked in Time
			1st=	Vince Stone	Anxiety
			3rd=	David Guest	After a Hard Day's Work
			3rd=	Jim Turner	The Lookout
		B	1 st	Paul Winslow	About to Burst
			2nd=	Graham Hutchinson	Mr Martin
			2nd=	Hilary Moore	Chairs by Colourful Wall
			2nd=	Hilary Moore	Looking Up at Ashridge
		A	1 st	John Marshal	Say Cheese
			2nd=	Rob Harley	Amber
			2nd=	John Marshall	Golden Hour in Whitby

P.S.

Memory Cards

Images are stored on the film in a suitable camera, but in the digital cameras now used by the majority of members, the images are stored in wonderful little marvels of technology - the memory cards. Two main types are used in the more recent digital cameras - compact flash (CF) cards are the bigger ones with a more robust casing and pin connectors; secure digital (SD) cards are smaller, thinner, and with flat connectors; the latter are becoming the most common medium.



CF Card



SD Card

They contain very tiny components that could be broken by miss-handling, so they should be used with some care - particularly try not to bend them when inserting or removing them from their slots. However, although careful handling is sensible for the security of the captured images, there are stories around the Web that cards have endured quite extreme conditions - some are reported to have survived having gone through a machine wash cycle in a garment pocket; others have been found in cameras dropped in rivers and yet their recorded image files were still intact!

As all our work is initially held in these cards, it is worth considering buying good quality ones from a reliable supplier. Names such as SanDisk, Lexar, Toshiba, Samsung, Sony, and a few others, seem to be given mostly good reviews. It seems to be the general view that cheap memory cards could be much more risky than are cheap batteries. Before use each card should be formatted in the camera, not in a computer's card reader - look for 'Format' in the camera's menus. This formatting process prepares the card for recording images by the camera's own on-board computer.

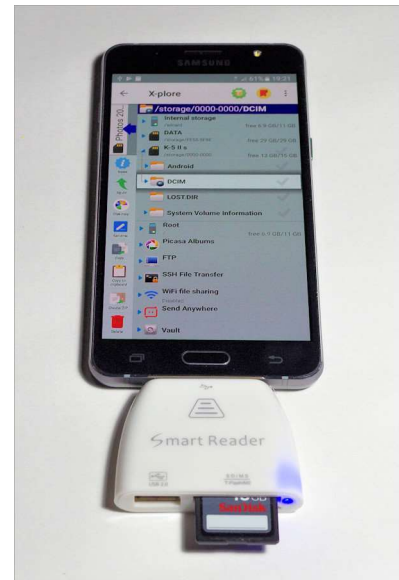
It is good practice to make back-up copies the photo files from the memory card to a computer's disk drive, as soon as possible. This can be done by putting the card from the camera into a card-reader slot in a computer, or by using a USB link cable (usually supplied with a new camera) from computer to camera. Some cameras can now transfer their files via a wi-fi connection, perhaps even into a 'Cloud' store; the advice is as usual: consult your camera's user manual for the details.

Anyone who will be on a trip with a camera for several days or even weeks, and with no way to copy the image files to a computer or cloud store, should consider that it might be safer (regarding the security of the images) to have a set of lower capacity memory cards, and change to an empty one regularly, rather than relying on one large capacity card.

One very important point is that a memory card and any connecting leads must not be removed or detached while formatting, or while photo files are being recorded or transferred - this can corrupt the memory structure, making any further image retrieval much more difficult or perhaps impossible. Another point of good practice for a Windows PC: when needing to remove a memory card from a computer's card-reader, or to detach a USB connector, make use of the 'Safely Remove Hardware' button in the System Tray (bottom right of the Windows Desktop screen).

If you have a smartphone (or a tablet) with sufficient memory capacity, and your camera does not have wi-fi, another possible backup solution when travelling is to take along a suitable card-reader that slots into its micro USB socket. (It is possible to add extra memory to many phones and tablets, in the form of a micro SD-card, for a small extra cost.)

An example is shown here for an Android phone, with the SD card from a DSLR plugged in. The image files can be copied to the memory in the phone by using one of the free 'file manager' type apps.



Philip

Contributions:

If you have any stories to share, or some useful hints and tips to pass on to other members, please think of Viewfinder. Maybe you have an image that tells a story, demonstrates a photographic technique or the use of a much-loved piece of equipment. If there is anything that you would like to describe or explain for the members, you might consider producing something for inclusion in a future Viewfinder. In particular, it would be great to have something to interest and challenge the more advanced members.

If you have anything to contribute, please email using the address in the footer, or see me on a Monday evening. Please keep those articles flowing in! Thank you.

Philip

And finally: Consider all the positive points about digital cameras, because there are no negatives.
