

Viewfinder

Special Edition



Intro:

Hello and welcome to this Special Edition of Viewfinder. This is an example of the monthly journal produced for and by members of the Hemel Hempstead Photographic Society. It is a modified version to give you an indication of the typical content of our publication, and also to show the activities and contributions of members of the society.

Info:

Monday Meetings:

The society meets every Monday for ten months of the year, except for those Mondays which are Bank Holidays. There are no meetings during July and August, so that our 'year' of meetings runs continuously from September to June.

Time and Place:

For face-to-face meetings we assemble before 7.45 p.m. in the first floor hall of the Salvation Army Church in Waterhouse Street, Hemel Hempstead, HP1 1ES. There is ample free parking nearby. We have a half-time social break for refreshments and a chat, and meetings usually finish at about 10.00 p.m. Other meetings are held on-line using Zoom; they start at 8.00 p.m. and end about 10.00 p.m.

The Members:

We are a large group of individuals from various walks of life, for whom photography plays an important part in our leisure time. We are enthusiastic amateurs who enjoy taking pictures, using any suitable equipment including smart phones, and processing them (as little or as much as we wish) for display on a screen or in print; examples are given on subsequent pages.

We are a friendly club and we warmly welcome anyone who would be interested in joining us. Your present level of photography is immaterial - we range from beginners to experienced photographers, and one of our aims is to provide an environment in which everyone is able to learn and make good progress.

Activities:

There is a varied programme arranged so that we have either visiting speakers (e.g. perhaps a photographer presenting his/her style of photography), or practical photography sessions (e.g. to learn and practise a particular type of photography), alternating with club competition evenings.

Charges:

These vary year-by-year depending on our costs - at present annual adult membership is £40 to cover the fees and expenses of visiting speakers, competition judges, club equipment, etc. The entrance fee for each face-to-face meeting is £3 to cover the cost of refreshments and the fee for hire of the hall. It is great value - on average roughly only £4 for each 2-hour meeting over the year for a regular attender!

For more information about the society, visit our website - <https://hhps.org.uk/> or our Facebook page - <https://www.facebook.com/Hemel-Hempstead-Photographic-Society-212959242110740/>

News:

Examples of Monday meetings:

The first meeting of the month was the fourth round of the **Projected Images League Competition**. This is always the most popular competition, with many members participating and a good attendance on the evening. This was no exception - there were 52 projected images for us to enjoy from our members. We are grateful to the visiting judge, who enjoyed the general high standard of the images, awarding a range of marks from 15 to 20. He held back twelve of the images for a second viewing and awarded 20 marks to six of those. Our thanks also to our P.I. Competition Secretary for organising this event.

During the next meeting we welcomed a visiting speaker who gave a fascinating presentation entitled "**The Story So Far**", which she describes as her "journey from learner to the present day". To briefly summarise, she described how her photography developed rapidly from a beginner with a bridge camera in 2007, to the achievement of ARPS (Associate of the Royal Photographic Society) in 2010. She has followed this with exhibitions of her work and several prestigious awards at home and abroad up to the present day, and she enjoys giving talks about her photography story. She illustrated her presentation with lots of her wonderful prints which are also available for viewing on her web site.

The following meeting was a **Members' Evening** - "An opportunity for members to present their favourite travel images" - compèred by one of our senior members. Each participating member presented a set of photos from their travels (some presenting more than one set), together with a commentary on their story about them. This was a most enjoyable and interesting meeting, which included a wide variety of locations and images, and we are grateful to those members for their contributions about:

Lake Lucern	Cuba	China	The USA	Rottneist	Jersey
Australia	Argentina	Madeira	New Zealand	Provence	Beijing
Perugia	Budapest	Vietnam	Car-Fest South 2016		The Klondike Railway

The final meeting this month was for the 5th round of the season's **Colour Print League Competition**. As usual, we invited an external judge for the evening - we welcomed her for coming to critique and assess the images. There were 32 impressive quality colour prints for the judge to comment on, from which she held back nine for further viewing and assessment, before awarding three of those the top score of 20 marks. We thanked her for her interesting and helpful comments and her assessments. Thank you also to our Print Competition Secretary for organising this competition.

[*The News Page is also the place to find announcements and reminders of up-coming calendar events.*]

Photographs:

Photographs by different members show their interest in a wide variety of subjects - some members specialise, others do not. A good selection of photographs appears in Viewfinder each month. Here there are examples of their work which they have chosen to display in competitions and which have been highly praised by independent visiting judges. The information about each one is from the photographers themselves. As you can see, the images can be either colour or monochrome.

Please note: Each image is subject to copyright, and must not be copied or presented or reproduced elsewhere without the prior permission of the photographer, via initial contact with HHPS.

Also note: For a better view of the images here, your PDF Reader app should allow you to zoom in. Depending on the size and quality of your screen, the resolution of the images should enable you to have a good view when the pages are magnified by at least 3x or 300%.

Landscapes:

These are popular with many photographers and viewers alike.

'Morning Tranquillity':

This simple, serene scene was taken in Richmond Park in the early morning mist after we had been deer spotting. It was shot hand-held at 1/80s and f/9 at ISO 100, using a focal length of 70mm on a full-frame Canon DSLR. No changes were made in Lightroom but some editing was done in Photoshop. It was cropped slightly and a few small objects floating in the water were removed. The contrast was increased a little in the tree on the right to emphasise it subtly. When the image was first assessed, the judge commented that he found a few distracting features, so they were edited out for this image. The moral of the story is that you should always look for and remove all distractions - and even more so in tranquil images.



'A Wintery Scene':



One morning in January I awoke to see there had been a fall of snow. It seemed there would be some photo opportunities and when walking around the village I saw what I thought was a pleasant "Christmas Card Scene". The camera used was a hand-held Olympus E-M10 Mark II, a Micro 4/3 Compact System Camera fitted with a 14-42 mm focal length zoom lens set at 14mm (full-frame equivalent 28mm). The camera's ISO value was set at 500, requiring an exposure of 1/800s at f/7.1, with exposure compensation of -0.7 EV so as not to lose the detail in the snow. The image was processed in Photoshop Elements, cropping slightly and adjusting its contrast and saturation..

Landscapes can also include cityscapes, as in this creative example:

'London Storm':

This was taken with a Panasonic TZ100 compact camera, 15 mm focal length (42 mm full-frame equivalent), f/3.8, 1/800s, ISO 125. The original image was captured from the Millennium Bridge in London. A storm was just passing over and there was bright light behind me to create some dramatic lighting. The image was highly texturised in Photoshop using a displacement map to create some diffusion. A layer mask was then used to brush detail back into key areas. Finally an 'edge' of the original picture (effectively a line drawing) was added at low opacity to create a little more structure to an otherwise very soft picture.



Flowers are a popular subject to photograph for several members:

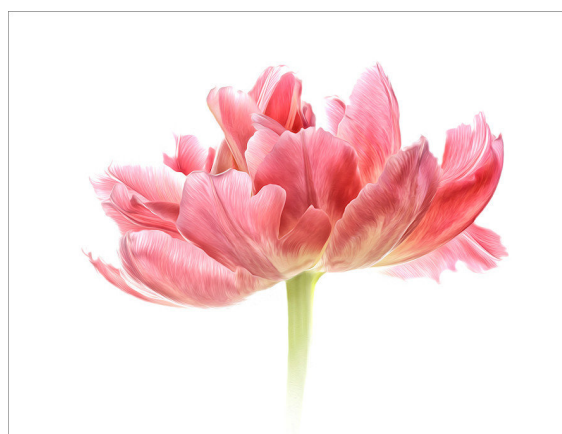


'Slipper Orchid':

This image was taken in a glasshouse during a visit to the Royal Horticultural Society Garden Wisley. A Canon 800D full-frame DSLR was used with a 24 - 200 mm zoom lens at focal length 63 mm. At ISO 800, the exposure settings were 1/60s at f/9, the latter adequately blurring the background. There were no particular challenges for this image and, having to move along, there was time for only one shot to be taken. Post-processing with Photoshop Elements was minimal with some Levels adjustments, and Sharpening in an attempt to make the attractive hairs on the outline more prominent. The background was darkened and the brightest areas cloned out at 50% opacity before cropping to this format.

'Tulip':

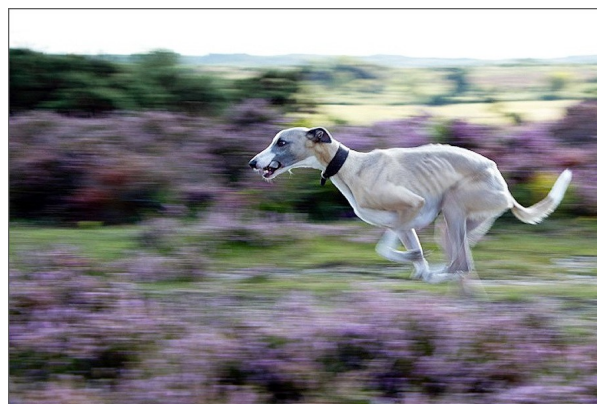
Tulip is a focus-stacked picture using about ten images stacked in Helicon Focus software to give a result that was sharp from back to front. They were taken with a Canon 5D Mark III camera and a 100mm macro lens. With an ISO value of 100 the exposure of each layer was 1/5s at f/6.3. Lighting was diffuse room lighting and a large lightbox was positioned behind the flower to give a pure white background. The fine detail of the petals was brought out using Nik Color Efex Pro software, and a more painterly effect added using Photoshop's Oil Paint filter. Finally the flower stem was brushed over with white so that it was less prominent in the image.



Several members enjoy photographing pets or wildlife either in the wild or at wildlife centres:

'Speeding through the Heather':

This is my favourite photograph of my whippet, Tom - it has been framed and it hangs proudly on my lounge wall! It was taken using a Canon 550D APS-C DSLR, following lots of practice in panning the camera. I was sitting on the ground and I had the help of my son who was standing to my left with a handful of sausages calling the dog to come to him! We tried many times until I managed to match his speed perfectly with the movement of the camera. There was minimal editing - just using Auto Colour Correct and then brightening up the image bit.



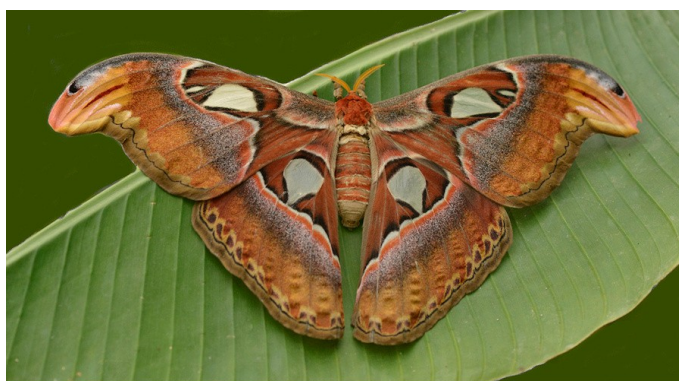
'In Clear Sight':



This image of red kites was taken in the Elan Valley in Wales. After much preparation, planning and practice, the settings used were 1/2500s at f/8 and ISO 800. Not having a gimbal tripod (and anyway the birds move fast) the shot was hand-held using a heavy Canon EF 100-400mm lens at 400mm. Half an hour's intense shooting resulted in very tired arms! This was my favourite of the images shot there as it was sharp (many weren't!) and the bird was looking almost directly at the camera. In Lightroom the image was brightened by 1/3 stop and the brightness of the shadows increased as far as possible (+100) to compensate for the red kite being back-lit by the sky. The image was then edited in Photoshop just to improve the composition.

'Giant Atlas Moth':

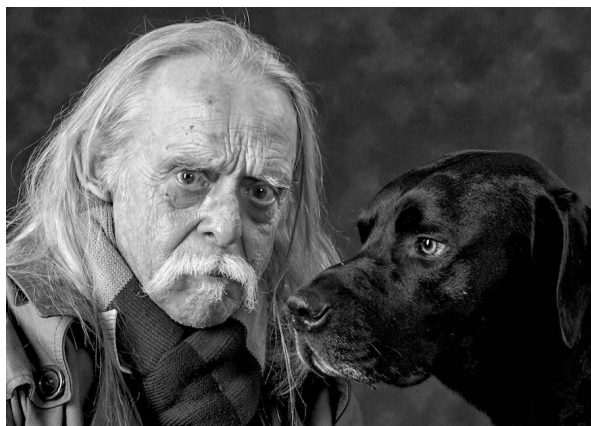
This photograph was captured at Butterfly World during an evening's photography opportunity. Most of the butterflies were getting near the end of their lives and rather tatty, but this beautiful moth landed on a large leaf just in front of me and settled down. A hand-held Nikon D800 full-frame DSLR was used with a zoom lens, aperture priority, ISO Auto at 1400, f/6.3 and 1/125s. The image was edited in Photoshop CS5. The original image had very distracting areas behind the leaf, bright blobs, etc. A new green background layer was made under the image layer and then distracting areas were rubbed out to let the green show through. The image was then sharpened.



The society also encourages studio work (in which the lighting etc. can be fully controlled), and a sub-group of HHPS is called the Studio Group. Any member can participate, although at any one session numbers necessarily have to be limited to give each attendee adequate time to set up and take photographs. The variety of subjects has ranged from professional models, posing or in action, to still-life sets.

‘Symmetry’

This image was captured during a Studio Group evening at The Vyne Dance Centre in Berkhamsted. The dancer was lit by studio flash - four heads in all - two positioned at the front, and two high up at the back to produce rim/hair lighting. It was shot on film - Fuji Provia 400X transparency film - using a medium format camera, a Bronica ETRSi, fitted with a 100-220 mm zoom lens, and with the camera mounted on a heavy-duty tripod. The aperture was f/16 and shutter speed 1/60s (although the exposure time is actually determined by the flash duration). The transparency film was processed by Peak Imaging and no post processing was used except to scan the slide to produce this digital image.



‘Deep in Thought’:

This photograph was taken at a Studio Group session in the club’s usual meeting hall. It is a photo of Alan and his dog Bonzo captured using studio lighting. It was taken with a hand-held Sony A77 Mark II DSLR, the attached lens being an 18-70 mm zoom set at 70 mm to get in as close as possible but without disturbing the dog. With the camera set at ISO 100 the exposure was 1/100s set at f/8. The image was converted to monochrome in Photoshop 2020. The original shot was 3/4 length but it was cropped to give a tighter head and shoulders image, making the dog’s similar expression to Alan’s more noticeable.

Now here are some more examples of members’ images from various other genres:

Sport -

‘In the Glove’:

This was taken on a baseball field, using a Canon EOS 100D with a Canon EF-S 55-250 mm IS lens. The settings were: aperture priority mode, ISO 800, focal length 96 mm, aperture f/6.3, shutter speed 1/4000s. The ISO was cranked up to help get a very fast shutter speed, and aperture priority mode was used to set f/6.3 for a not too shallow depth of field, to get the glove, ball and face all in focus. It was taken from a low angle to give a different perspective which is one of the image’s main strengths, as is the expression on his face!



Transport -



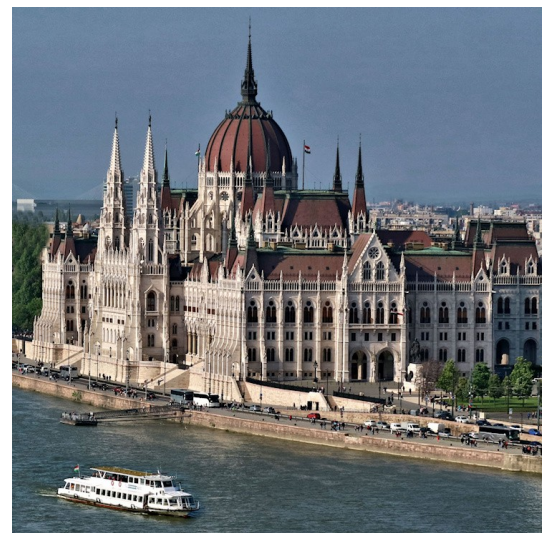
'Pulling Out':

This photograph was taken at Strathspey Steam Railway which is part of the Aviemore Railway system, and it runs parallel to the main line. A hand-held Sony A77 Mark II DSLR camera was used and set to ISO 200 and Aperture Priority Mode. The lens was an 18-70mm zoom, set at about 35mm and an aperture of f/14; the shutter speed set by the camera was 1/250s. The image was processed using both Lightroom 4 and Photoshop Elements 14.

Architecture -

'Parliament Building in Budapest':

This was taken from a very popular tourist viewpoint overlooking the Danube. The light was beginning to get a bit softer in the late afternoon. A Canon M3 mirrorless camera was used with a 55-200 mm telephoto lens at 81 mm. The camera was set in Programme Mode and gave an exposure of 1/400 at f/9 with ISO 100. The image was cropped fairly closely into a square format to avoid some other less attractive buildings around. The sharpness was very pleasing, giving good detail in the building at this level of crop. It was tempting to fiddle around with some HDR type treatments but I realised that the image should be able to stand as a straight photograph without any further adjustments!



Street Photography:



'The Busker':

This photographer likes the idea of Street Photography but is always a bit wary about poking a camera in people's faces, so this was a candid shot, captured in Chichester. A Canon 60D was used set to ISO 400, with the EF18-135 lens at 113 mm focal length; the exposure was 1/500s at f/5.6, and -1/3 stop exposure compensation, shooting in raw. The image was cropped fairly tightly to get rid of some extraneous street furniture and people's heads which were distracting. It was then run through a Topaz adjust filter to make it a bit more contrasty and vibrant. Corel PaintShop Pro was also used which is very convenient for sorting images and basic adjustments, and it also incorporates a raw converter.

Creative Abstracts:



'Overhead Elegance':

This was taken during a recent trip to the USA, specifically in the Old Capitol building in Iowa City, Iowa. This town was once the state capital, and the building stems from this time, boasting several photogenic staircases as its most attractive features. The camera used was Canon 500D DSLR with wide-angle zoom lens. The image was adjusted in Photoshop Elements to crop the image slightly, to improve the compositional balance, and to tidy up uneven colouring. The levels were adjusted and saturation increased by a small amount to bring out the colour of the wood.

Building Interiors -

'Covid Footprints':

This was taken in the wonderful Wells Cathedral. The weather was very mixed but at this moment the sun was shining and the angled light in the cloisters made the shot irresistible. It was a handheld shot using a Canon 5D Mark IV full-frame DSLR with a zoom lens at a focal length of 32 mm. The set exposure was 1/250s and f/11 at ISO 400, but due to the steep contrast between the light outside of the windows and in the cloister, I used the HDR setting to take a trio of images which the camera combines into a single JPEG file. The resulting image needed only very minor tweaks in Lightroom. The blue markers along the floor were left in saturated colour, giving the "Covid Footprints".



Creative Composites -



'Knock Knock':

Over the years I have acquired a large collection of pictures of doors. They are appealing subjects which represent the culture of their country and suggest an entry into another way of life. However, they are rarely good stand-alone pictures and I felt it was time to put them to good use. Presenting them as a composite seemed to be the way to go and initially I tried a collection of nine set out as a 3x3 grid. However, this lacked impact so I decided to go for quantity and put 48 pictures in a 8x6 grid. This took considerable arranging with the more colourful images placed in the centre to provide a balanced composition. The central doors are mostly from Cuba, and the edge doors from Tuscany. The images were taken with a range of cameras, including compacts and phone cameras. The composite was made in Photoshop, resulting in a large multi-layered file.

Articles:

Each edition of Viewfinder usually contains at least one helpful article: some aimed to be of interest to inexperienced photographers, others for the more advanced, and some which should appeal to all. For members there is an index on our web site for all the Viewfinder articles, with links to the on-line archived copies of the journal.

Some examples of the wide variety of Viewfinder articles from the last two seasons are:

Astrophotography:	Stargazing and taking photographs of the night sky
Composition:	The rules of photographic image composition
Dark Images:	Suggestions for producing images with mood
Edward Weston:	One of a series about famous photographers
History:	About who invented or discovered photography
ISO:	ISO values, image brightening, and ISO invariance
Jordan:	A member's travel photography in Jordan
Lighting:	The lighting for making portrait head-shots
Photoshop & Lightroom:	Tips for producing good competition images
Portraits:	Models in Venice in natural or street lighting
Printing:	Printers, papers, profiles, and soft-proofing
Sharpening:	Sharpening workflow and types of sharpening
Still life:	Suggestions for producing still life photographs
Studio:	A plan for setting up a home photography studio
Viewfinders:	Comparing optical and electronic viewfinders
Yoshihisa Maitani:	The Genius of the Olympus film camera designer

The article on the following pages has been reproduced here as a complete example.

DIGITAL CAMERAS:

Some of the basics about digital cameras for the benefit of those new to photography, or for new members, or perhaps as pointers for anyone who might be considering an upgrade or some additional gear, or before you compose your requests to Santa! Inevitably, it contains generalisations!

A Fixed-lens camera:

As a separate camera, this is usually the cheaper option because there is no need for extra lenses, and the fixed lens is often a zoom, giving a broad range of views from wide-angle to telephoto. Most of them are quite small - indeed most are called Compact Cameras, but within the group there are some that are almost as large as a typical DSLR (see below) and similar in shape - they are usually called Bridge Cameras. It is certainly possible to make good images from all these cameras, but many will have some limitations due to the tiny size of their image sensors and/or their lack of user controls. Smaller sensors generally give poorer image quality in low light and, although automatic functions can give success, often being able to adjust the camera's controls can make the difference between an acceptable image and a good image. There are, of course, one or more fixed lens small sensor cameras in smart phones, and their manufacturers are developing excellent in-camera processing software to overcome their limitations, so that they are also capable of producing excellent images. This is the biggest area of growth in camera technology.

Even if you have an ILC as described below, it can be useful to have a compact camera or to make use of your phone - "The best camera is one you have with you!". Anyone thinking of buying one should consider going as high up the range as you can afford, which is likely to give you one with more manual control, and/or a bigger sensor, and/or better processing. My personal preference is to have a compact camera with an electronic viewfinder.

An Interchangeable lens camera, ILC:

It is likely that the majority of camera club members will have an ILC camera, to which prime lenses of different focal lengths, or zoom lenses of different focal length ranges, can be attached. There is a ring in the front of the camera body into which a lens locks by a simple twisting motion - an attachment known as a bayonet mount. Most have a viewfinder for composing the shot - a Digital Single Lens Reflex (DSLR) camera has a mirror inside which reflects the view from the camera lens through the viewfinder; a Mirrorless camera (MILC) has an electronic viewfinder reproducing the scene on a miniature screen in the viewfinder.

Anyone thinking of moving to an ILC needs to understand that from the start you are likely to be moving into a specific manufacturer's system, because different systems often use different bayonet mounts! Most of these system manufacturers make gear only to fit their own systems - e.g. a Canon mount is different from a Nikon mount, so a Nikon lens cannot be directly attached to a Canon camera.

Another primary consideration is the sensor size, and there are three main commonly used groups of ILC cameras, those with: a Micro 4/3 sensor, 17x13mm; an APS-C sensor, 24x16mm; a FF sensor, 36x24mm; these are approximate figures - different manufacturers vary them slightly. FF is short for Full-Frame, so-called as 36x24mm was usually the largest image captured on film by the previously very common 35mm film cameras. Generally there is an increase in technical image quality with a larger sensor.

There are bigger sensor formats but they are not so common - cost also increases greatly with sensor size! Similarly, it is also worth bearing in mind that generally the physical size of the camera body, and the size and cost of lenses of comparable quality, also increase with sensor size. However, any of the ILCs will generally give their users more control, more creative flexibility, and higher image quality, particularly in low light and other difficult conditions, than will the majority of the fixed-lens cameras.

Examples

Fixed-Lens Cameras:

Compact camera with a zoom lens

112 x 64 x 38 mm (lens retracted)

6.2 x 4.6 mm sensor



Bridge camera with a zoom lens

128 x 93 x 114 mm (lens retracted)

6.2 x 4.6 mm sensor



Interchangeable Lens Cameras:

Mirrorless ILC with electronic viewfinder

125 x 72 x 37 mm (body only)

Micro 4/3 size sensor



DSLR ILC (optical through-the-lens viewfinder)

130 x 97 x 71 mm (body only)

APS-C size sensor



DSLR ILC (optical through-the-lens viewfinder)

141 x 113 x 82 mm (body only)

Full-frame size sensor



Note: All digital cameras have a rear colour LCD screen for viewing their menus and captured images, and for taking pictures using a live-view of the scene.

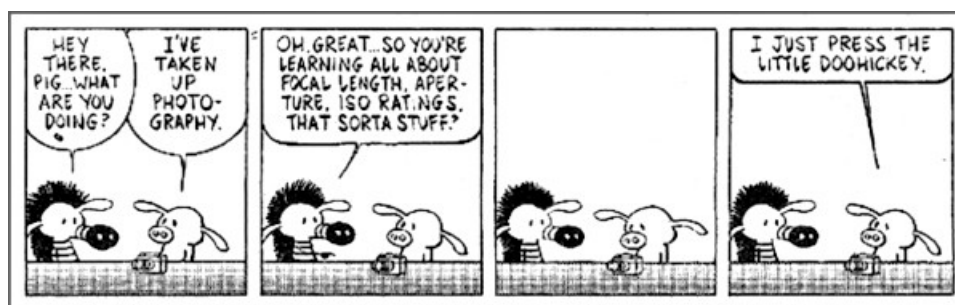
Other information that might regularly appear in the monthly Viewfinders: special announcements, competition results, stories, suggestions, advice, and always the following request to which any member is welcome to respond with a contribution:

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.

Thank you.

Editor

And finally:



...and a few quotes about photography:

“Photography is a way of feeling, of touching, of loving. What you have caught on film is captured forever... It remembers little things, long after you have forgotten everything.”

— Aaron Siskind (1903-91), photographer.

“While there is perhaps a province in which the photograph can tell us nothing more than what we see with our own eyes, there is another in which it proves to us how little our eyes permit us to see.”

— Dorothea Lange (1895-1965), documentary photographer and photojournalist.

“To me, photography is an art of observation. It’s about finding something interesting in an ordinary place... I’ve found it has little to do with the things you see and everything to do with the way you see them.”

— Elliott Erwitt (age 93), advertising and documentary photographer.
