

Viewfinder



THE NEWSLETTER OF FIELD END PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY

February 2007

What's coming up in this issue:

Well to start with you will have noticed a different layout, why, well I'm pleased to say that some of you have responded to the request for images for the new section '**Winners Enclosure**' and after hours of tinkering with layouts it looked better across the page.

We also have FEPS member John Probert's article that was published by the RPS 'Digit' magazine. Val Walker follows up on her Digital (Photoshop) Evening with more information and links to follow through to.

Finally has Chris Wallace's choice of shirts had an effect on his position as Slide and Digital competition Secretary Read on.

Ted Weller – Editor.

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FEPS Member John Probert has an article published in R.P.S. magazine.

The following article from member John Probert was originally published in "Digit", the magazine of the Royal Photographic Society's Digital Group, which John says explains the repeated references to RPS distinctions. Perhaps we can persuade John to load some of his images onto the FEPS website.

The buzz I got when I walked into my local library and saw the entire gallery area full of more than 40 of my pictures was quite something. And the feeling was enhanced by a sign saying "An exhibition of photographic images by John Probert LRPS".

So how did I get there? I had taken thousands of slides over many years, and knew from occasional awards and judges' comments that a few of them had potential for display and maybe even commercial value. However I had never come to terms with darkrooms, and you know how difficult it used to be to get a decent print from a decent slide. So the slides generally languished in boxes or occasionally found their way into magazines for projection.

The advent of digital changed all that. I didn't have a digital camera then – I've only just bought one – but in 1999 I went for a new PC with a hitherto unheard-of amount of RAM, and splashed out on an Epson printer, a Nikon slide scanner, and, yes, Photoshop 5.

The next step was to select the slides that might have potential, scanning them, and seeing what Photoshop had to offer. Some of the best ones just needed "tweaking" in Photoshop to optimise colour balance, contrast, etc. Others seemed to benefit from selective work – usually as simple as enhancing particular colours, or using a filter ("poster edges" became a particular favourite) to

emphasise certain aspects of the image. I couldn't – and still can't – be bothered with too much cutting and pasting. I'm afraid my old-fashioned view remains that if the sky in an image is poor, or if the background doesn't suit the subject, then the original image probably isn't worth spending more time on. I certainly remove blemishes, and I may even admit to removing the odd waste bin, but that's about as far as it goes.

Around the middle of 2000, I noticed that a leisure club of which I was a member was putting on small art displays and approached them to see if they might show some of my photographs. Suddenly I was faced with filling an entire corridor with images in about two months' time.

There seemed to be two obstacles to overcome. The first was that if I actually wanted to *sell* any photographs, I couldn't use prints from my Epson 1200 and expect them to last for any length of time. At that point someone recommended Loxley Colour – send a CD to Glasgow and get fantastic prints on proper photographic paper, by return, which magically looked pretty similar to what I'd seen on my monitor. I remain only a very tiny customer of Loxley, so I'm sure they won't be aware of how important they were to me.

The second obstacle was how to avoid spending a fortune on framing, and by a stroke of luck I found Rodney Pelham in Northwood.

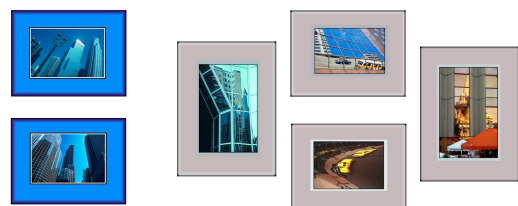
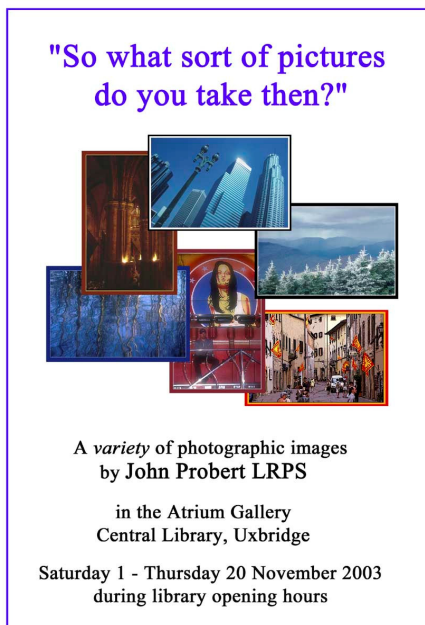
Looking, with Rodney's advice, at how to frame my images taught me a fantastic amount, but looking at how to group similar images together taught me even more. I started to sense what combination of mount and frame colour complemented each image best. But I had to balance that against a need to display similarly themed photographs together, which required similar mounting and framing. I also discovered how to apply borders in Photoshop, picking out an exact colour from the image, creating a thin border line, and then a background canvas colour that created the visual effect of an "inner mount" at rather less cost. The exhibition duly took place, I sold quite a few pictures, but more than anything I proved to myself that not only could I take half-decent

photographs, but I could also *display* them in a coherent and appealing way. An exhibition at my old school followed, then the one in Uxbridge library, then two in a local community theatre and one in a local restaurant. It will never make me a living, but it's the greatest *fun*, and I am still trying to find enough time to keep it going *while* making a living! Obviously the main benefit I obtained from "going digital" was the ability to have control over my own images, but there were so many other advantages too.

For publicity, I could send low-resolution images to someone else, or I could create my own publicity material in Photoshop. For my Uxbridge exhibition, the local press did a big spread, and it was supplemented by digital images I'd supplied to them. I was even able to create my own business card with tiny colourful images on it.

Even more valuable,

though, was the ability to test display options in Photoshop. By creating mini-versions of each image to scale, and then simulating both the final mount and frame colour, I was able to try out different arrangements without leaving my PC. Here's the layout one of the display boards at the Uxbridge exhibition. Bringing the two city skylines on the left together was quite straightforward,



but the four city reflections needed low-key mounts and a silver frame to combine the powerful but different colours of each photograph.

Of course, with original digital images, you can pretty well guarantee repeat quality. So I could dispense with the red spots on “sold” items and promise to replicate the same image, maybe at a different size, maybe with a different mount, frame, etc. To put this across, again I used the power of digital processing. I was able to print a single display page, on photographic paper, illustrating the relative sizes of the available images, and simulating the effect that mounting and framing would have on both appearance and final cost.

So whilst some of my final images do take full advantage of the digital possibilities, that’s not really the point. The control the technology gives me is what really matters. I now have a “portfolio” of my available images – it’s printed six images to an A4 page, with titles. I can show anyone an overview of what I can do without carrying a heavy load about, and if they like what they see, I can quickly find something a little larger to keep them interested.

What’s the one thing I’ve missed out? The web, of course! I don’t have my act together there yet at all. My pictures have been in various places, but I really do need to set myself up with a proper website. Maybe I’ll have another look at what I can contribute to the RPS site, and the Digit site.

Oh, and by the way, I got my LRPS with digital images on CD in 2003. My mentor, the excellent Chris Palmer, persuaded me to replace all my colourful borders with pencil line borders and simple edges, and of course he was right. Imagine how much fun it would have been to replace the borders in the conventional way! Now for my ARPS...when I can find the time.

John Probert.

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FEPS Visits

We are planning a number of outings this year and hope that they will be well attended. These are as follows:

Shell Wildlife Photographer of the Year Exhibition at the Natural History Museum. This is surely a ‘must see’ for any photographer, learner or expert. The date proposed is 10th March. It is FREE!

The RHS Garden at Wisley. The Gardens are large and will afford plenty of subject matter for your pictures. The date of 24th April is proposed so as to catch spring flowers in better weather.

Other outings in the summer with no date yet fixed are:

A visit to **Beaulieu House and Motor Museum** where we may be able to get a privately escorted view and another **Canal Boat Trip** (the last one was good fun).

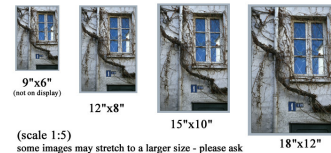
Annual Dinner

Please don’t forget that we would appreciate any items to put in the raffle, thanks.

John and Harry – Social Secretaries

How would you like your picture?

Step 1: Choose the size



If you want the print on its own, to do your own thing, go to step 4! The cost of the print increases with the size.

Step 2: Mount the Print



Decide whether you like the chosen mount colour. The mount cost is fixed. If you don't want it framed, go to Step 4.

Step 3: Frame the Print



Decide whether you like the chosen frame colour. The cost of a framed print is double that of a mounted print.

Step 4: Order the Photograph

Take a form, fill in all the details, including any special requirements. Hand to a member of the library staff. Go home. Celebrate.

Evening on Computers - 12 March

As some of you may have noticed I'm doing an evening in March about Computers. I'm not going to be doing anything about Photoshop but will be looking at other Computer use areas such as security, backups, music files and a few other things. If anyone has a topic they would like me to cover or any questions you have, then could you let me know over the next few weeks so I can research them if I need to.

You can e-mail me at phil@philchapman.co.uk or just see me at one of the meetings.

Phil Chapman

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Winners Enclosure.

As some of you may recall I suggested that some of you might want to contribute to a new section called '***Winners Enclosure***'.

My thoughts behind such a section were that we all witness the deliberations by judges at the various competitions, but, do we ever get to know the 'story' behind the winning image(s). Hopefully by reading this we may be able to pick up useful tips on possibly what makes an image '***A Winner***'.

Mike Longhurst and Chris Wallace start us off.



Mike: This one was taken in Prague and took three evenings to get right. The shop was right opposite front door of my hotel in the old quarter and I had seen its potential before. I had no tripod, but there was fill-in light coming from the lights of the hotel foyer, which had a glass front. This meant as it got darker, the posters on the outside would still be well lit and not silhouetted.

The shop goes further to the right and it was a question of finding the right section for a good composition. Then there were issues of exposure and whether I wanted a person passing etc. I shot lots of exposures and combinations of people. Exposure tip; as it gets darker, just follow the meter and assume it is going to be progressively more forced to under-expose by the lights as they get brighter. So I compensated by 1/3 stop right up to over 1 stop. There is not going to be anything 18% grey to meter off, so no use to look!

Oh by the way it was January and freezing cold. Also drizzling much of the time and I chose the left section of the shop partly because I could shelter under the hotel entrance.

Mike Longhurst

'Chapel on the Hill' by Chris Wallace.

(1st Place in Print Competition No.3)

This shot was taken in March 2006 when Kirsty and I had a week in St. Ives, Cornwall. The chapel itself is at the top of a small hill in 'The Island' (or 'St. Ives Head') part of St. Ives, just around from the coastguard lookout station (follow this link to see a map:

<http://www.streetmap.co.uk/streetmap.dll?G2M?X=151945&Y=41140&A=Y&Z=3>)



It was my first outing with my newly acquired large format 5x4 inch view camera. For those interested in the technical details, it is an Ebony 45SU fitted at the time with a Schneider 90mm lens (a medium wide-angle when used on 5x4 inch film). Tilting the lens and the film plane out of parallel and aiming the camera downwards allowed me to get the grasses in the foreground AND the chapel in the distance all in focus without stopping the

aperture right down. However, as the grass was very close, I had to extend the lens a long way forwards (in much the same way that macro lenses extend more the closer the subject is). On an SLR camera, the reduction in light reaching the film (since the image has enlarged more with the greater distance between the lens and film) is metered and allowed for automatically.

Unfortunately with a view camera EVERYTHING is manual, and I forgot to compensate for this!

Luckily I took two shots, one in colour on Velvia 100 slide film (yes, you can still get film for large format!, around £1 per sheet) and one in monochrome on Adox CHM50.



It was quite windy when I took the photo, and I had to wait around 20 minutes for the wind to die down long enough to get my required 2 to 5 second exposure. This was in addition to around 10 minutes setting-up: not exactly point-and-shoot!

I developed both images in wet chemistry at home, scanned them using an Epson flatbed scanner (a Perfection 4990 Photo), converted the colour into black & white, then cobbled together the best (correctly exposed!) bits from the two images. After showing the full-frame print at Chris Palmer's critique evening at the end of last season, I took on board the criticism that the right-hand side was rather bland and cropped the image down to make the chapel central. This left a rather dull sky which I cloned and adjusted with greyscale curves to give a bit more moodiness!

Chris Wallace.

LEARNING PHOTOSHOP AND USEFUL WEBSITES.

In connection with the digital evening that we had on January 29th, obviously there was not time to cover everything that people may encounter problems with, but there is a lot of help on the web. Numerous tutorials are available that explain in depth with pictures on the palettes and not just text. This means they are easy to follow even for beginners. Some of the better and more useful ones I have found are:

Website http://www.photoshopcafe.com/tut_photo.htm has a list of tutorials for various levels of ability, including understanding layers.

The article I used largely for the handout on layers came from <http://www.elated.com/articles/introduction-to-layers/>

There are also other useful articles on this site including articles on tips and shortcuts. If you are having any problems with selecting parts of your image, read the article at <http://www.elated.com/articles/selecting-stuff/>. This covers all the selection tools and their uses. For more advanced users it also discusses selection using layer masks.

One of the most comprehensive sites is called <http://graphicssoft.about.com/>. The opening page may not look very promising but the site is huge and covers other image editing programmes as well as Photoshop, including Elements and PaintShop Pro. If you scroll down the left hand menu to "Beginner Basics" you can then choose from loads of tutorials based on simple fixes such as removing red-eye. For more advanced users there are tutorials on virtually every topic you can think of and some you haven't!

Another site with easy to follow tutorials is www.graphic-design.com. Go to the list of tutorials at <http://www.graphic-design.com/Photoshop/tutorials/index.html>. This page has links to about 30 tutorials and also links to other sites where you can browse further.

I know there are lot of other good websites out there. If you find any particularly good ones, why not pass on a recommendation through Viewfinder?

Val Walker

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Chairman's Chat.

Hello everyone. I hope you will forgive the absence of the customary '*Chairman's Chat*' in this issue of Viewfinder. As many of you may know, my brother has been visiting with his wife and daughter over the last few weeks and so my attentions have been concentrating mainly on family matters. There are a few events I should like to bring to your attention.

North West Fed Final between Amersham PS and Harrow CC is to be held on Saturday 24th February at Barn Hall, Amersham Community Centre, Chiltern Avenue, Amersham HP6 5AH. Starred and nominated slides and prints also compete for Slide and Print of the Year. Doors open 2.00pm, competition commences 2.40pm. Entrance is free.

Thank you and good luck to everyone who sent in work for the Strictly Digital competition. Andrew tells me 11 members' submitted images and these have now all been entered. The final will be held at Amersham Community Centre on **Rosebowl Day** - 13th May. FEPS have come 2nd in all of

the preliminary Rosebowl rounds, so we will have to wait and see if this is good enough to get us through to the Final.

The RPS is holding a seminar on 'Managing Digital Images' on Saturday Feb 17th. The guest speaker is Tony Riley who will be discussing RAW images (why to use and how to develop them), preparing your files for digital projection and for web, and basic colour management. Adobe will be giving a presentation on Adobe Lightroom – what is coming.

This is an all day event (9.45am – 4.00pm) and is open to all. Venue is Drake Hall, Amersham Community Centre.

Tickets must be booked in advance by e-mail to mark.buckley-sharp@tiscali.co.uk.

Cost is £10 for RPS members.

Marilyn Dennis

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New Format for 'Match-a-Slide.

During one of our slide/digital competition evenings I had a cunning plan (much in the same way that Baldrick did in the Black Adder series). To boost the excitement and theatricality, we could have a new type of Match-a-Slide competition. Instead of just points being awarded in the usual manner, this competition would be fought as sudden-death duals, with the losing slide being 'matched': i.e. burned using a lit match. This could well give interesting visual effects if the 'matching' was performed with the slide held (by tweezers) just in front of the projector as it was incinerated (I think Ken might object if we try it while the slide is being projected IN the projector!).

Don't worry about being left out if you've stopped using slide film, the Shred-a-Print competition will cater for you. Judging prints could be just as exciting if we mount a document shredder next to the display stand, ideally using a shredder fitted with a transparent waste bin for maximum audience viewing pleasure.

On a practical note, we would probably have to inform any visiting clubs of the new rules - or maybe not: they'll soon get the hang of it!

Chris Wallace

Slide and Digital Competition Secretary - at the moment!

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Audio Visual Links:

Due to the success of Ian Bateman's evening on AV sequences I've included a link to his page at Wantage Camera Club which I hope you will find interesting;

<http://www.ibateman.co.uk/wcc/index.htm> and then follow to AV Group.

Ted Weller