The Royal Photographic Society

The Royal Photographic Society

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DIGIT

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No 29

D.I.G.

Digital Imaging Group

In this issue of your magazine:

More Snow by Hugh Thompson LRPS

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And do please take a moment to complete and return your questionnaire in the Freepost envelope

From the Chairman

I was delighted to see the RPS mentioned in the recent supplement on digital photography in the Independent newspaper and also of course the interview with DIG member Carol Wiles whose ARPS I was pleased to present at the Spectacular - see pages 12 and 13.

Although we had an attendance of about 240 members and friends at the Spectacular this year, which was marginally down on previous years, support from the photographic trade was truly magnificent with over £3000 of raffle prizes being donated. For this we owe a tremendous vote of thanks to Adobe, Canon, Epson, Fotospeed, Ilford, Intro 2020, Konica Minolta, Nikon, On Line Paper Company, Permajet, Sigma, our own RPS AV Group and not to forget Malcolm Cartwright of Jessops who once again organised the trade presence so effectively. Malcolm retires shortly and we wish him a long and happy retirement. In 2006 the Spectacular will be on 29 October and Barrie Thomas FRPS has agreed to be our speaker for the day.

After the workshop day highlighted below, our next major event is the Annual General Meeting and exhibition selection in April. Remember this is one of the few exhibitions where every entrant is guaranteed an acceptance and all images selected are published in the catalogue edition of DIGIT in the summer.

With this issue you will find a questionnaire. It has only one purpose: to help the committee better plan and target DIG activities to meet your interests and needs. Please take a few moments to complete it and return it in the Freepost envelope provided.

Barry Senior FRPS

Digital Imaging Group 2006 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
1100 Sunday 23 April 2006. The Old School House. Smethwick PS Club rooms. Oldbury West Midlands
Includes exhibition selection
Please see separate inserts in magazine for AGM Notice and Exhibition Entry

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Next DI Group event
21 January 2006 at Fenton House, Bath: DIG Workshop Day: Bring your digital camera

Workshop at RPS Headquarters from 10am to 5pm. Tea, coffee included but bring packed lunch. We will take photographs locally and download them onto computer for Photoshop manipulation to produce an A3 exhibition quality triptych to take away. Computers and printers on site. The resulting images will feature as an exhibition on the DIG website. This will be a social day with a purpose and to enable DIG members to meet and share their skills and enthusiasms. It is also an opportunity to get to know the RPS Headquarters. If the weather is not good there will be a studio set for indoor shots. £25 for DIG members and £40 for non DIG members. Places are very limited as everyone will have a computer. Applications on a first come first served basis so check the website for availability. Applications with cheque to the Secretary, Glenys Taylor ARPS, 10 Shoreditch Road, Taunton, Somerset, TA1 3BU Email: glenys.taylor@tiscali.co.uk Telephone: 01823 32986 Look forward to seeing you there!

For full information on all events visit the regional websites on the back cover and see the DIGIT website

DISTINCTION SUCCESSES We are delighted to congratulate the following DIGIT members who have recently gained distinctions. If we have missed your name from the RPS records, sincere apologies and do please let us know of your successes. It is good to see Guernsey - twice - and a former resident of Malta featured in this group.

LRPS: Penny Anderson; Rupert Barnes; Anthony Quill; Leonie Selwyn; Ute Weyer; Anthony Wills

ARPS: Eileen Bennett; Carole Hallett; Elizabeth Hilton; Michael Howell; Stephen Le Prevost; John Nabney; Carol Wiles; Martyn Wynn-Rayner

FRPS: Brian Beaney; Philip Drake

Coup for DI stalwart Paula

Paula Davies explains how one of her photographs now adorns the new RPS membership card: 'Autumn Leaves was a print in my L panel. Staff at Bath spotted it through a link from the RPS Forum. I was delighted when they asked if they could use my image.' See page 11 for Paula's leaves.

Microquiz Ltd special offer for DI Group members

Microquiz, who make 35 mm slides from digital files (camera and computer) at high resolution and also scan slides onto Provia 100f professional film, have a special discount scheme for DIGIT. Microquiz is offering a 20% reduction, about 20p per slide. Simply enter the code *DIGIT-JB* in the additional information box when ordering from the website or quote in your order.

The firm concentrates on 35mm slides, offering fast turn-around and consistent results. There is no lower limit on the number of slides requested. Ray Bevan told DIGIT: 'I started Microquiz simply because, as a full time tutor, I was unable to obtain 35mm slides at a reasonable price. We now provide our services to well over 4000 customers at prices they can afford.

Our most common question: What dots per inch (dpi) or pixels per inch (ppi) should I use? My answer – it doesn't matter - always surprises. Film recorders work with a fixed image size so this eliminates the need for dpi information. The only thing that matters is pixel resolution - the product of dpi and image dimension. Our software expands your image to match a fixed device resolution and sends it to our machine. For 35mm slides, our fixed resolution is 8192 x 5461 pixels. So, should you change the resolution in your editing software? No. Increasing the image resolution will not add more detail. Decreasing the image resolution will reduce sharpness.

If possible, choose your digital camera's highest resolution. Most people send us jpeg, tiff or psd files. Naturally, quality cameras and lenses produce better slides, but most people are surprised just how good slides from low-end digital cameras are. They are smooth, not grainy, and the colours are vivid with great mid tones.'

Ray and Gail Bevan want you to be thrilled with the quality of your slides and check all work carefully and replace any problem slides.

ILEX ONLINE BOOKS SPECIAL OFFER

The online book seller ILEX is offering 30% off the recommended retail price for readers of DIGIT. This is a further saving on their 20% discount on the website. Simply put the code *DIG773RPS24ilex* in the box provided when making a purchase through the ILEX website -*http://www.ilex-press.com/publishing/home.php* - to obtain the discount.

For phone orders use 01273 487440. ILEX generously donated one of their titles, Michael Freeman's Black & White Digital Photography Expert, as a book prize at the Rugby Spectacular in November.

The company have published around 35 titles on digital photography and image manipulation as well as a range of books on similar subjects. Robert Tebb from ILEX told DIGIT: Digital technology is constantly erupting with a seemingly endless flow of creative opportunities. And with it comes a plethora of questions – even from seasoned professionals. Our titles are designed to answer those questions and satisfy that demand. The books address a host of technical and creative issues, and offer easy-to-follow, jargon-busting texts by renowned experts in each field. With stunning graphics and beautiful photography, the books guarantee to smooth the way for digital creatives. From capturing to manipulating digital photographs, ILEX books will inspire and inform novice, advanced and professional photographers alike.'

DIGIT had the opportunity to preview the recently announced Digital Studio Series, a set of four titles exploring the hidden depths of Photoshop. Full information can be found at:

http://www.ilex-press.com/publishing/product.php?productid=16224&cat=248&page=1 and there are even sample page spreads for you to assess. The set sells for £46.50 with the special discount as against a full cover price of over £70, and there is no delivery charge.

In soft back covers each volume is arranged like a cookbook with double page spreads on each 'recipe'. This does seem a most comprehensive offer covering Photo Effects, Blending Modes, Retouching and Filter Effects each in a well-illustrated volume of up to 200 pages. ILEX say that The Photoshop Filter Effects Cookbook is the first-ever book to show the settings of every one of the over 100 filters that Photoshop has to offer, while also providing a comprehensive recipe book for some amazing effects. I took a closer look at Photoshop Retouching Cookbook since we all need to correct, adjust, and retouch our images and was pleasantly surprised by the clear, unfussy style and the direct relevance of the illustrations which helped me to see exactly where the example was going. Although based on Photoshop the principles easily carry over to other sophisticated software. This is certainly a really useful and time-saving reference guide with a well-structured contents list (and index) which allows you to find just what you are after. Well worth a look. In depth review in next issue.

In a major review Dr Adi Sethna FRPS explores the subjective and personal aspects of creativity in the digital age

Based on a talk given to the Digital Imaging Group of Smethwick Photographic Society

With the advent of digital imaging the scope for creativity in photography is without limit and a discussion on this subject is now more than appropriate. Creativity needs to be seen in its historical context. Ever since the inception of photography there has been the false assumption that photography depicts reality. This is far from the truth. For several decades only black and white photography existed, although everything photographed was in colour as the world is in colour. The black and white images hardly depicted reality and the photographer had to interpret the world in colour in black, white and shades of grey.

Fence Post by Hugh Milsom

We are now in a position to describe creativity. It is the act of altering an image as seen to make it aesthetically appealing or artistic. Creativity is expressed at several stages in the production of an image and we will take them in turn.

In the modern world the colour passport photograph is probably the best example of photography purporting to depict reality. But does it? Most would admit it to be the least flattering way of presenting a portrait as most facilities for taking passport photographs have the camera far too close to the face, producing a distorted perspective with a large nose and small ears. Immigration officers hardly ever see faces at such close quarters and must need considerable skill to spot the likeness. In this day and age it is not a good example of depicting reality.

I would suggest that depicting reality in photography never existed and is a myth. If photography was meant only to depict reality it would have been so boring that club photography, the RPS, Salons and Exhibitions of Photography would not have existed. From the outset photographers have been altering and enhancing images to make them more aesthetically and artistically appealing, turning photography into an art form. To understand photography as an art form we need to look at other arts like music and literature. In my view all art forms affect us emotionally and, to a very limited extent, intellectually. This emotional reaction affects our mood and feelings, makes us happy or sad and creates in us, in modern terminology, a "high". I often say when I have listened to good music that I have had my "fix". Photography is no exception to this; images convey mood and feelings and, at times, complex emotions which are difficult or impossible to verbalise and which are not always pleasurable. In some instances we admire the cleverness of the photographer for incorporating, for example, symbolism in an image. Though the last two points might appear to be intellectual, it is the emotional counterpart that moves us.

It starts at the taking stage by the **choice of subject matter.** A whole article could be written on this topic, but by way of example the image above was taken by my friend Hugh Milsom in the early 80s and has been highly successful in Exhibitions and Salons. But who would have thought of making an exhibition image of a rotting post? A straight print from the negative is shown above right to illustrate the degree of creativity in the final image.

Creativity continues with the **selection of the camera settings** (aperture, shutter speed, focal length etc), the **selection of view point**, the **exploitation of perspective** (relative positioning of camera and subject matter), **framing** (what is included or not included in the image) and **choice of medium** (colour or black and white). The scope for creativity is even greater at the processing stage, either in the darkroom or digitally. Although the degree of creativity possible in the dark room is considerable and in digital imaging practically limitless, creativity at the taking stage remains of fundamental importance.

Road to the Cuillins by Hugh Milsom

If what is said above is true the so called 'straight' image has never existed and all images are creative to a greater or lesser extent. In a 'straight' image the amount of creativity might be less, but its quality could outclass a so called 'creative' image. Quite often images which most people would accept as 'straight' are anything but straight. Examples of such images are again shown in the work of Hugh Milsom. In the final image *Road to the Cuillins* by Hugh shown above the patch of light on the road never existed and was created in the darkroom along with the dramatic sky. This was done in the early 80s. If done now digitally many would say it was cheating.

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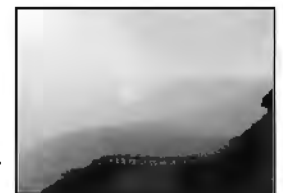
All four final images shown on the right hand side of this page would look perfectly straight to any viewer, but when compared with the corresponding images produced directly from the negative or digital file (shown smaller on the left) it can be seen that they are anything but 'straight' and are highly creative. In my opinion so called 'straight' images and 'creative' images are equally valid and of equal worth and importance. The only difference between them is the nature and level of creativity. These two categories of images, therefore, should not be put in different classes In competitions and exhibitions.


Lindisfarne by Peter Clark FRPS

Creativity which follows the taking stage in the darkroom or digitally has two aspects and although there is a significant difference between them there is also considerable overlap. These two aspects of creativity are best explained through illustrations, but must first be defined. They are :

a **Alteration of the elements of the image**. This means altering the structure or appearance of the component parts of the image. Examples of how this may be achieved include the use of filters, the use of fundamental techniques to alter contrast, enhance or suppress details, modify colour and colour saturation, in addition to the use of specialist techniques such as posterisation etc, and by the choice of paper - gloss or matt, smooth or textured on which to print the image.

b **Alteration of the subject matter or the content of the image**. This implies a composite image made up of two or more images, the combination of which creates something which in reality did not exist, but could have, or to produce an image which could never have existed in reality. Composite images may be of two types, those in which the primary image is complemented by the inclusion of a secondary image and those which are wholly made up of several images.

Desolate by Peter Clark FRPS
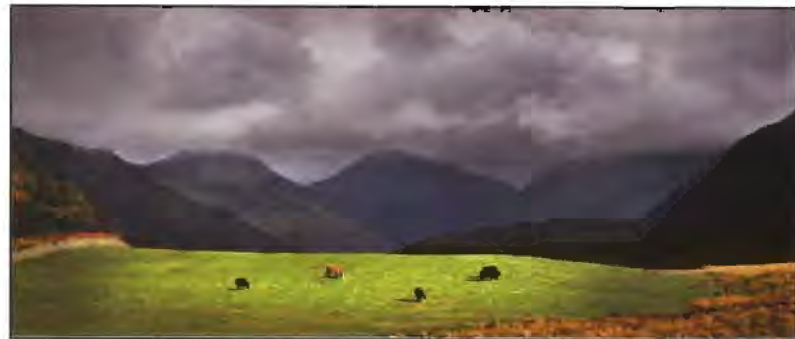
Cumbrian Landscape by Adi Sethna FRPS

It cannot be said after reading this article that I believe that creative images are in any way superior to straight images. However, I find that in national and international exhibitions in this country far too few 'creative' images are selected and are very rarely given top awards. This is not the case abroad in my experience. This article is not the right place to go into further details of why this is the case, but I very much hope that it helps in redressing the situation.

While we are on the subject of exhibitions, competitions and judging, if a work is not to be submitted for selection or competition or included in a lecture the terms 'straight', 'creative', pictorial, record etc are redundant. As I have laboured on 'straight' and 'creative' photography I would also like to express my views on the term 'record' photography and again in the context in competitions and exhibitions. I find that judges call images 'record' photographs depending upon the subject matter. For instance architec-

ture and natural history are supposed to be record photography, but in both these categories pictures could be highly artistic and indeed would need to be if they are to succeed. Subject matter alone does not determine whether or not an image is a record photograph. In my opinion a record photograph is one where the purpose of taking the image is either stated or implied and is solely for the purpose of recording and may or may not have artistic quality.

Examples would be a passport photograph and illustrations made for a technical book. A picture of a bird taken to illustrate different types of feathers for a book on birds would be a record image, but if submitted for selection in a natural history competition or exhibition it may or may not be viewed as a record photograph, and if it is truly a record picture as described here it will not succeed.

Snaps taken on a holiday for the sole purpose of recording the sights visited are pure record photographs and may or

may not have artistic quality. Few of my holiday pictures and those of other photographers are taken for the purpose of recording the sights that we saw, but with the intention of creating an artistic image. It would be wrong therefore to say that holiday pictures are record photography; it is not the subject matter which makes the photograph a record shot, but the purpose for which the picture was taken and invariably this is not with the intention of creating a piece of art. The following of my images and their captions illustrate the points I am making.

Court Jesters This image illustrates the two aspects of creativity; the background is an example of altering the elements of an image and the addition of the figures complements the background to create an entirely new image.

New World

This image illustrates how ideas developed over time can be represented in an image which could have never existed in reality. I often try to imagine what the world would be like in the next century. I believe there will be new materials and what could be better than a material with the combined properties of glass and steel and the floor in the image is represented by that material. Although great advances will be made in physical sciences, I believe that these will be outstripped by those in genetics by a long way and that is shown in the image by the coils representing the double helix of the DNA molecule. What will remain of the past in the next century? Possibly some of the structures of today will survive as have the Pyramids and the Taj Mahal from earlier times and these are represented by the building in the background.

I would also expect that all communicable diseases would have been eradicated as smallpox has been in our times. If that happens people would have no immunity in such a sterile world and infective agents, possibly lurking in the old monuments, would require people visiting them to wear protective clothing as worn by the two men in the image. This image is a prime example of the use of symbolism in creativity.

I often spend a lot of time and effort to work out a creative image in my mind and have always wondered about the thought processes of some of the great modern artists such as

Salvador Angeli and Salvador Barbaqui below

Picasso or Dali. As an exercise, I made myself think like Dali and used the basic elements seen in his paintings to produce this panel of four images without plagiarising any of his existing paintings. I can describe what each of these images mean to me, as I have done so when commenting on 'New World', but I have refrained for two reasons. Firstly because this article would get inordinately long and secondly any art form should allow the viewer to project his own thoughts, ideas and imagination on a piece of art. I would be very interested to hear from readers what they see in these images. In my

lecture on this subject I express my interpretation on one of the images as an example.

Salvador Giraffi & Salvador Timei left

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I have been a long standing student of life after death and I often imagine what different places would be like up there. I thought of an empty plateau occupied by similar minded people; *Pilgrims* is my impression of a place

inhabited by Muslim spirits and *Worshippers* by Christian spirits.

Fantasy

I believe that objects or a piece of art need no explanation by the author and it is for the viewer to project their own thoughts, feeling and imagination on the artistic creation. I therefore asked my wife what she saw in *Fantasy* when I first produced it. She liked it and praised the image unlike her usual sharp, critical comments. She felt that the young woman in the picture had once lived in the house shown in the background, but had died prematurely and had returned in spirit form to play with her beloved doves. Though this picture has been very successful in various international exhibitions when put in a club competition the only comment of the judge was that the dove in the tree was too sharp and needed to be soft like the rest of the background!

Wilderness Child and Legacy below

Both images are composites. The individual components have no message or artistic merit, but when put together they have strong impact. The meaning of the title *Legacy* might not be apparent.

What I had in mind was that Ché Guevara is questioning the destitute as to whether he was the legacy of the several decades of communism which he co-founded with Fidel Castro. My visit to Cuba produced a lot of conflicting emotions and the images from that country are representative of that fact.

The background to my final image *Cemetery* was taken in

an old cemetery and was given a painterly treatment and the nuns were put in to add interest and to provide a focal point. The original colour image was converted to black and white as it transformed the image to my liking.

I would like to acknowledge the help of my friend Peter Clark in giving me ideas, discussing the concept of creativity and in preparing the text and images: without him I could not have written this article. I also thank Hugh Milsom for allowing me to include his images.

Pointillism or Pixel Painting

In this second article from a photographer perhaps best known for his wildlife images, Tony Healy tells us about Pixel Painting. He builds on the style of the French painter Georges Seurat, 1859-1891, who developed Pointillism, an Impressionist painting technique based on colour theory and complementary colours. When viewed from an appropriate distance, the countless dots become areas of tone and colour. Perhaps Seurat's best known painting, Bathers at Asnières completed in 1884, is in The National Gallery in London. Tony's manipulated image of a Bromeliad flower is shown on the opposite page.

Open an image, preferably a copy, and double click the background layer to turn it into a normal layer. If the image is not a copy drag the background layer onto the copy icon at the bottom of the Layers palette.
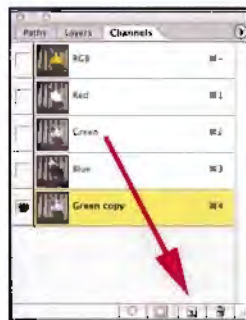
Click on the Channel palette or go to Window>Show Channels. Select a channel that has a good mix of tones, usually the Green channel, and drag it onto the copy channel icon at the bottom of the Channel palette.


Click on the new Channel copy and a B+W image will appear on your screen.

Select the Gradient Tool and a Gradient Pattern. For this exercise we will use the circular gradient. Draw the Gradient tool from the middle of your subject to the outer edge of it. This should place your subject in the middle of the 'gradient circle.

Go to SELECT>Select all, then EDIT>Copy.

Go to FILE>New and when the dialogue box opens click OK.
With the new file open go to EDIT>Paste and the gradient will appear on the screen.
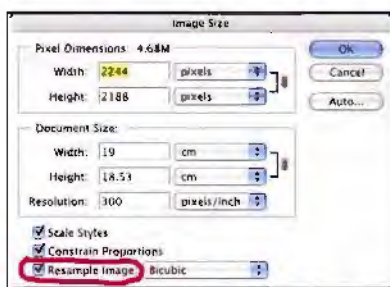
Next go to IMAGE>Image Size and make sure the RESAMPLE box is checked. Also make a note of either the Pixel length or height of the image. You will need this later.

Pull down the Height menu and select PERCENT.
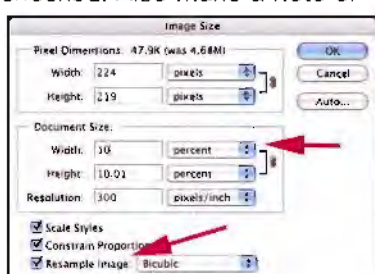
Change the 100% to 10%. Click OK.

Now go to IMAGE>Mode>bitmap. Click OK to flatten the image.
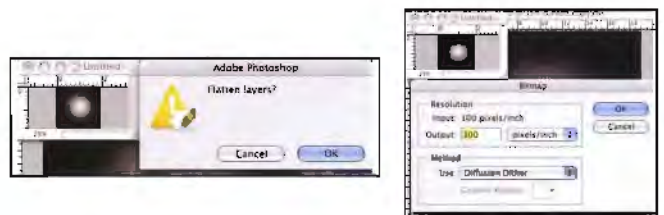
Next go to IMAGE>Mode>grayscale. Click OK for SIZE Ratio 1.
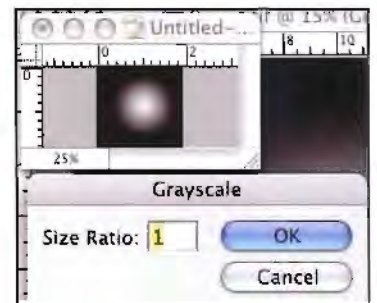
Now Menu IMAGE>Image Size and change the pixel size back to the one you made note of and set NEIGHBOUR.
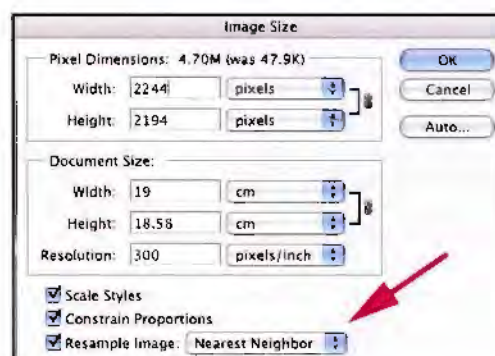
Now SELECT>Select All and then EDIT>Copy. You now have a copy of the enlarged bitmap image as a greyscale on your clipboard.

Move back to the original colour image and its Channel Palette. Click on the NEW Channel icon at the bottom of the Channel Palette (see next page) and go to EDIT>Paste.

Your new image will now appear as an Alpha channel.

Now we have to combine the original soft radial channel with the coarse Alpha version. With the alpha channel selected go to IMAGE>Calculations and enter the GREEN channel in the lower merge option and change Blending Mode to SCREEN - see below.

Click on the LAYER Palette to bring up your MASK Icon at the bottom of the Layer Palette.

Go to LAYER>Layer Style and select Drop Shadow. The Shadow angle can be the same as the original lighting in the image or one that makes the pixel block stand out best.

Now go to LAYER>New Layer and drag this new layer to the bottom of the layer pile. Fill it with an appropriate colour, texturise it, put a border on or anything else you may wish to do.

Some extra controls
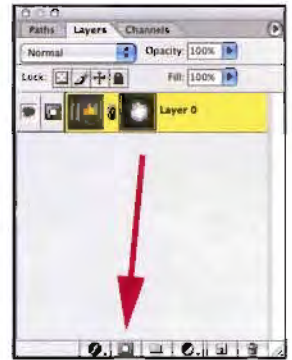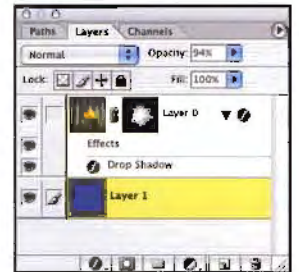
It is possible to control the amount of plain area that is in the middle of the pixel mask. Before merging the two channels click on the low contrast green channel and then open LEVELS. Dragging the left hand triangle to the right will blow out the centre highlight to give a cleaner centre. Use this sparingly as it will start to defeat the tile-like effect of the pixels.

When merging the two channels blending modes other than SCREEN can be used.

This will create a second Alpha channel in your Channel Palette that is the combination of the other two. Load this second Alpha Channel as a selection using CMD Click (Mac) or Ctrl Click (Window) on the Channel.

Lower values than 10% reduction will produce bigger pixel blocks but use with care. For small prints you may find a lower pixel resolution on the original image gives a better result. For example, for an A4 print 2000 x 1075 at 300 ppi will work while an A3 print may require 3000 or 3500 pixels on the longest edge.

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Ian's Way with Borders

Ian Ledgard LRPS offers some notes in response to requests from folio members about creating borders. Ian uses PS7 but the ideas are readily applicable in other software. Ian has been taking photographs for almost 50 years starting with the inevitable Box Brownie. He has worked in mono, colour slides and Cibachrome prints. After retiring he bought a PC and explored the digital world, scanning slides and negs and then buying a digital camera. Now exclusively digital, with a Canon300D, he has been active in the DIG folio for four years having been encouraged to join by John Long. Ian is also active in International Salons working towards the AFIAP award and recently exhibited work at a local National Trust property.

The Inner Keyline This is one is easy. Once you have completed your image adjustments choose the rectangular marquee tool and select an even selection within the image. Choose a colour with the colour picker and then Edit>Stroke and use a setting of 2-5 pixels. You may simply choose to leave it at that. However I often move on and invert the selection so that the border is active. Now you can add noise and/or blur using the appropriate filters. Here is the technique using motion blur with angle and distance tweaked to my liking.

Borders with PS Actions There are a number of actions in PS which will automatically generate borders. They are called frames and can be found in the Actions palette. In the Defaults actions there are just two to choose from: Frame channel and Wood frame. Simply highlight the action you wish to use and press the play button at the bottom of the palette. You will find occasional prompts as the actions run but these are normally self-explanatory and just require an OK. The Wood frame is very effective and the frame channel stops midway to allow you to choose your frame colour with the colour picker.

However PS has more inbuilt goodies hidden away for your use. Click the actions tab and then activate the fly out menu and choose Load Actions. You will need to navigate your way to your program files, to Adobe PS and then choose Presets>PS Actions>Frames>Load. This set of actions is added to your actions palette. You will find that a further 12 frame options have been added. Have a play with them; some are a bit gimmicky but two I use regularly are Strokes and Brushed Aluminium. Splatter and Drop shadow are also worth trying. The Strokes action is the one that prompted these notes. There are various opportunities to make adjustments as it runs or you can just keep clicking OK till the action is completed. The end effect seems to show the start image - the trick is to go to the history palette and highlight the last action - Deselect - which reveals the stroked edge effect. You can then add a stroked outer key line to finish off.as shown opposite above at the top of the column. The Splatter action gives a similar result.

The effects of running the Drop Shadow and Brushed aluminium actions are shown below.

The Photo mags on bookstalls sometimes have freebie CDs which include a range of frame effects with distressed or torn edges, film rebate etc and these are worth trying too. If you have spare cash the Extensis Photoframe software will bring you thousands of options and a dent in the wallet. Some DIG members have recently showed images in an Exhibition type frame which is available free from **www.atncentral.com** where it can be found under Downloads>Mike's Frame Actions. Three exhibition frames are available and this is one of them.

There is nothing magic about borders and as with many digital effects it is a matter of using them in an appropriate manner. However it is my personal view that images generally benefit from the addition of a complementary border.

Picture Page

Autumn Leaves Paula Davies LRPS
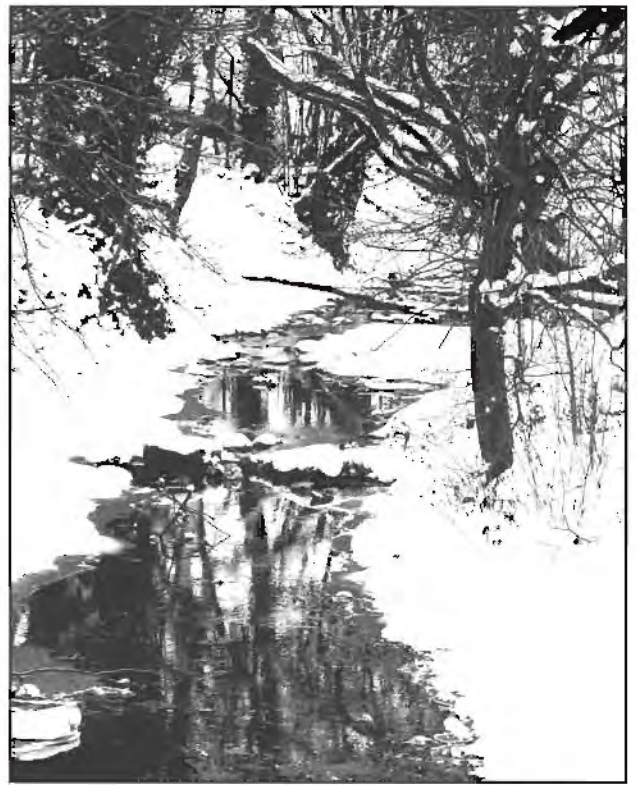
Bleak Midwinter by Olive Linton LRPS

Mersea by Valerie Johnson LRPS

End of the Day by Paul Carr

Starburst by James Foad

Windmill by Anne Gilmore LRPS
winner of the June Folio Competition

Editor's Tip: Recovering deleted files

Have you ever pressed the wrong button and deleted files from your digital camera card which you meant to keep ? Well I have, or rather I seem to have pressed the right button too many times on my new toy and succeeded in corrupting a whole series of photographs. These things happen with new cameras but I was looking forward to seeing the photographs and when I got home from the trip I recalled a cover disk which had been attached to Amateur Photographer some time ago. Searching it out I discovered this was in fact only a demo and, as demos do, it did no more than demonstrate that recovery was possible. I ran it and it told me that my corrupted files were indeed there in Canon raw format. But the demo would not allow me to see them.

So, I took a deep breath, went to the internet and paid my $40 to download a fully working version of **Photorecovery** from **www.lc-tech.com**. And it did the job! My lost files were safe and I could print them.

Since the software also claimed to be able to deal with deleted files, and even formatted cards, I tried some experiments. Indeed it was successful: having formatted my Compact Flashcard I was able to recover all files.

The software is also said to work on any removable media such as a CD or floppy disk and covers not only image files but also Word, Excel spreadsheets and other standard formats.

For a modest investment I think this is a program well worth being aware of since it is easily accessible if and when you should need it. When that time comes, the company helpfully suggests you download the demo first to be sure that the 'lost' images can indeed be recovered. They also offer a full, professional recovery service.

Digital Imaging Group

Sunday 13 November saw some 250 members and friends gather again at the Benn Hall in Rugby for the annual Spectacular. With tremendous support from Malcolm Cartwright of Jessops, we had a host of great people from the photographic world who brought their products and donated extremely generously for the prize draw – including Nikon (flashgun), Epson (R800 printer), Permajet (A3 inkjet paper), Konica Minolta (A3 inkjet paper), Fotospeed (continuous flow ink system and A3 paper), Sigma (flashgun), Ilford (A3 Galerie paper), Adobe (Photoshop CS2),

Welcome by Hilary & Peter Roberts ARPS

Online Paper Company (A3 art inkjet paper), Intro 2020 (30GB portable storage unit) and of course Jessops themselves with a Praktica Luxmedia 4008 digital camera. Altogether the splendid prizes given by these companies were valued at some £3,000, together with a book from Ilex Online Books. We are most grateful to the exhibitors for all their support as well as their prizes, just a few of which are shown in this picture (above right) with Chairman Barry Senior FRPS and Vice-Chairman Ray Grace LRPS. This was great opportunity for members to get together and to hear presentations from companies like Adobe as well as our own Clive Haynes FRPS who took us through the importance of choosing the appropriate paper and surface to create the perfect finish for different styles of photograph.

Many members gained useful information - apart from making the odd purchase - from discussions on the stands.

John Long ARPS hangs a print

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Letter to the Editor

The time has come...

Not suddenly but over the past two or three years; and it was, of course, generated by Digitalitis. Slowly, after indoctrination began at that celebrated full day lecture by Barrie Thomas, digitation of my photography has wrought a change back from slide to print and now, as age begins to show, some decisions have had to be made.

A change came about when transporting those welcomed lectures/shows involving two projectors and fi ton of associated equipment became less of a hobby and more of a physical exercise. Resistance arose. The MMD (Marital Managing Director) began to refuse to massage aching back muscles and a decision was made. I quit.

So, the two beautiful Zeiss Royals and digital synchroniser were found a home where they'd be cherished. Well they hadn't been used for over two years.

A very large set of slide magazines covering 26 forty five minute slide shows/lectures with an average of 320 pictures faced me. What to do with them? Eight shows which are virtually part of history were thought to be well worth saving in some manner. Discussions with MMD took place and a decision made. Those slides have got to be CDd via Pictures to Exe and the commentaries and music dubbed in. I have a Performing Rights Licence so that side is safe. So now there are four shows saved. It took quite a few hours work to handle around one thousand or so slides but we think it worth it.

Now what to do with the rest ? The lecture side was by now, sadly, out of date - although most of the technical side remains in memory - so those had to go. Travelogues were once welcomed but now are both dated and unnecessary bearing in mind how easy it is nowadays for folks to record their visits. So another heartbreaking decision was called for: they were superfluous. Therefore each set was looked at and any slide which showed digital conversion possibilities culled out (a limited few) and the rest binned.

Friends still running steam cameras have been given the empty cartridges and boxes from the sets so far destroyed but there are still about twenty to be dealt with. Amongst these are two or three well travelled sets which have been across the seas and brought new contacts and friends who actually came here to visit us at Links Hollow. Yes, they have also been well seen. Bin 'em.

It's an upsetting job. MMD and I are getting on a bit so may be in the near future a change of address will be called for bringing further cullings. This one will be good practice.

However all is not yet lost. The Tascam four track and Philips two track recorders have been useful in making those CDs and the Rotel amp and speakers may still come in handy.

It's a changing world.

Ray Wallace Thompson ARPS

SPECTACULAR 2005

Our two speakers were Adrian Davies ARPS on developments in digital imaging and Martin Addison FRPS on Painter. Both have new books available for you to enhance your knowledge.

Winner of the Best Print in the exhibition was Norman Wiles LRPS whose wife Carol was presented with her ARPS certificate at the Spectacular by our Chairman, Barry Senior FRPS, who is of course now RPS Vice-President.

Adrian Davies ARPS

Martin Addison FRPS

Norman Wiles LRPS

Carol Wiles ARPS

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In Conversation: John Miller LRPS

In this occasional series the editor chats to a member about their personal take on photography and showcases some of their images.

Adrenaline-pumping motorcycle racing and a complementary hobby of photographing the bikes and sometimes aircraft - a young man's dream. Although John Miller had originally trained in design, manufacture and management in the timber industry, this was going to be no sedentary career for him. Tragically this was to be a dream cut traumatically short at just 24 years old. The previous year he had covered the Isle of Man TT - then the doyen of the bike races - for one of the motorcycle newspapers when in 1970 he was seriously injured in a practice crash for an international race, and missed riding in that year's TT races! The damage to his spine was so severe that he was left a tetraplegic and confined to a wheelchair.

Not surprisingly there were profound psychological as well as physical problems to confront and cope with. Some fifteen years later a tendon transplant gave him limited use of his hands and he was once again able to control a camera. John works mainly by holding the camera in left or right hand or both on occasions and firing the shutter from a remote release operated by his teeth. But, as John told me with a rueful smile: 'My lack of self-mobility and the need to use a wheelchair has of course meant that access to the scenic delights for my viewfinder which most of you take for granted is a bit tricky.' Undeterred he set about rebuilding his chosen hobby into a semi-professional career again so that he could at least cover the costs. His enthusiasm for photography had been sparked at an early age on camping trips in Europe as a teenager. And his great grandfather had been a photojournalist at the turn of the 20th century. Now John himself has press accreditation.

It surprised me that John has increasingly specialised in aviation photography, including air-to-air shots. However, as he explained: 'At least you don't have the problem of terrain: airfields by their nature are flat!' So, from the late 1980s, with careful planning to ensure he was manoeuvred into the best vantage point, he has been turning his lenses on planes. For airborne work John is lifted into the cockpit and uses a throat microphone which activates automatically when he speaks to

talk to the pilot. 'I've even done inverted flight' he told me proudly. 'The aircraft has to be modified so that the engine won't cut out when it's upside down but you don't have much time - perhaps 20 seconds to get the shots before the engine splutters and the pilot is rolling back into the upright. I was hoisted into the right hand seat and selected a 17 mm lens to ensure I could cover the pilot and have an exceptional depth of focus. For these jobs I use a flashgun taped to my harness. I've gone on to do wing walkers - it's especially exciting when they are delightful, attractive young women' he says with a grin.

John's repertoire extends to steam trains and vintage cars and back to his first love of motor cycle and car racing, but these have proved to be more difficult from a wheelchair without the capability to move around easily and rapidly to find the best position before the action has passed. With a background running a motor cycling engineering business after the crash John has applied the design principles he acquired to build a powered wheel chair to give him more independence. And, after five years of fundraising, he now drives his own vehicle. The Transit has an electric side lift and John steers with one hand whilst controlling the combined throttle and brake in the other. It's a good camera platform too!

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With twenty years of involvement with the Disabled Photographers Society John is proud to be a Fellow (FDPS), a distinction he achieved by submitting a panel of photographs.

The Society has a stand at the Focus on Imaging exhibition each year and has had tremendous support and sponsorship from Konica Minolta.

Visit the website at:
www.dps-uk.org.uk

During his annual visit to the DI Group Spectacular at Rugby, John explained to me: 'When I was using film I arranged for collection and delivery from the house. That worked well but all my equipment is digital now so I have much more freedom. I find the LCD screen on the back does give me problems when I want to tape my 'teeth trigger system' across the camera though. Having a computer is fantastic. Digital imaging is time consuming but it's allowed me to achieve what would have otherwise simply not been possible.'

You can contact John on his appropriately named email:
johnmiller@chair2air.fsnet.co.uk
and his website at
www.geocities.com/midukphoto

Behind the lens
John Miller tries out a Nikon
at the Spectacular

Folio competition

John Long ARPS who manages publicity and the website updates
sketches the background to the competition that's catching on.

When details for the new website were discussed, it was thought that an on-line monthly competition might be a idea which would be embraced by keen members of the group. The first trial competitions took place in June and July of 2003 and these were followed by a bigger competition to celebrate the 150th Anniversary of the RPS. This ran during August, September and October 2003 and the winner was Adi Sethna FRPS who received his cheque for £150 at the Spectacular in that year. The judge was Barrie Thomas FRPS and the winning image featured on the cover of DIGIT No22 in December 2003. Since that date, the competition has continued to run monthly with a hard core of regular members taking part. The first day of the month is always quite exciting to see the top three placing and I suppose it is not very surprising that some names appear with regularity!

Although the images for each month may be still be seen on the Competition section of the website, the totals may not always be accurate, as many people delete their pictures after a few months, so they are no longer displayed. Each month, the top three voted images appear on the website. Currently Dennis Stephenson is the top award winner, appearing 8 times in the placings. He is followed by Bill Henley with 7 appearances, Brian Beaney, Gitta Lim and Alan Dedman with 5, and Graham Whistler, Barrie Thomas, Geraint James and Eng Loy Tan with 3. So where's your image? Why not enter this month?

Here and overleaf we feature some of those winning images with a commentary by the photographer.

Nick Sparks LRPS Folio Competition winner in May 2005 tells us: My background is a little unusual. I spent my working life in the financial industry. After taking early retirement I decided to do something completely different and so enrolled on the local college's Art and Design Foundation Course. Having done so I discovered I was entitled to a substantial discount for the City and Guilds Photography Course so I enrolled on that as well to develop an earlier interest in the subject. Subsequently I followed this with an HND in Fine Art alongside more advanced City and Guilds Photography. Since the early days of the ZX81, Sinclair Spectrum, BBC B, and eventually the PC I have been fascinated by computers and with the advent of digital photography all these interests now come together.

So, I find myself in an unchartered hinterland somewhere between Fine Art and Photography and am glad to think that DIG gives me an outlet for this. I have been exhibiting with other artists and generally my work is received with much interest. I look at the images in the RPS and Digit magazines and hope that one day I might produce such wonderful straight images but in the meantime I am thoroughly enjoying the freedom digital imaging provides for the artist in me.

For the Folio competition as an experiment in combining images I set out to do something inspired by Dali's *The Persistence of Memory* but with a humourous impact and lots of colour. One image led to a series....

This one was a composite of three images and a background built using a number of layers. The background was just a black layer with a few white spots put on with a paint brush to represent stars and some squiggly lines to represent lightning. I photographed the clock (yes it does run anti-clockwise already), the rock and the broken egg against a white background to make them easy to select and cut and pasted them into separate layers in my working document. This takes a bit of care and it is important to get the right amount of feathering to the edges at this stage.

The egg layer was positioned suitably above the rock and the white and yoke adjusted with the liquefy tool to follow some of the contours of the rock's surface. The clock layer was not visible during this stage. Then with the clock layer visible it was positioned above the egg and the liquefy tool again used to match its shape to that of the egg white and yoke. The blending mode of the clock layer was set to darken. Finally the whole was flattened and I used the burn tool to add a few shadows. Lots of minor adjustments and trial and error along the way but that's the basics of the techniques used. Great fun!
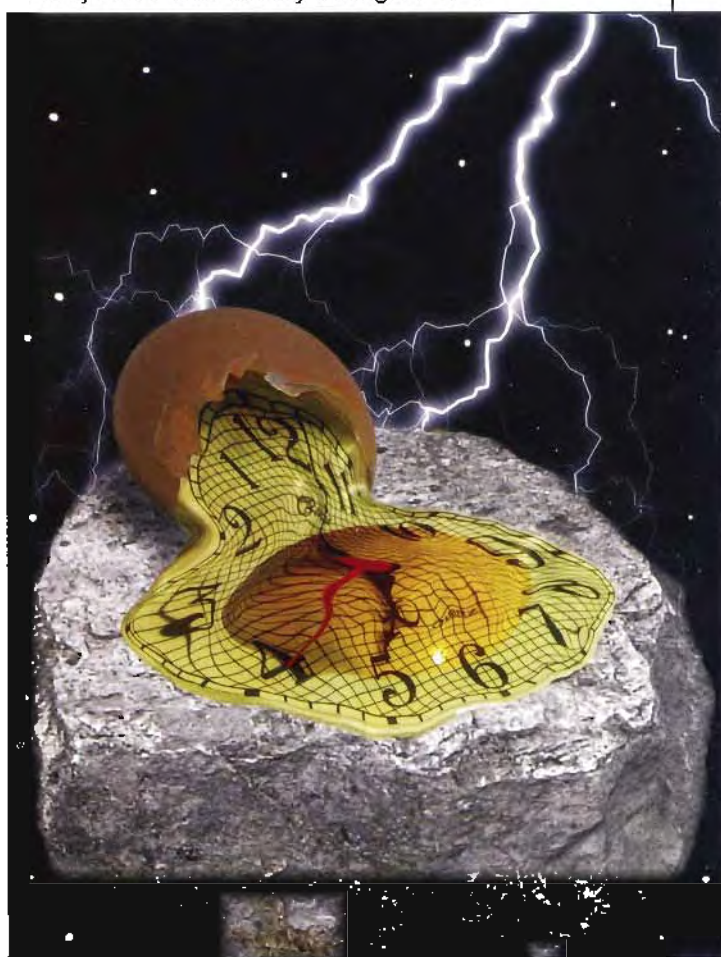
Dennis Stephenson ARPS winner of the Folio Competition in August 2005 explains: I had the idea for some time after taking my car through the wash which I do on occasions. I did try with a compact digital camera but the field of view was too narrow, but having pur-

chased an 11-18mm lens for my D70, the idea became possible. The car wash I use is operated by the staff, and once the wheels are on the track, there is nothing to do but sit back and watch the brushes etc for about four minutes, so you can take loads of pictures as you go through, until the terrifying bit comes. A large bar, which squeegees the car, appears and is literally an inch from the windscreen, with a Please do not Brake sign and you just hope it does lift. It always does.

I then selected the best shot, with a few PhotoShop simple adjustments. I had also taken a view of the rear window with the brushes, and used a portion of this to put in the rear view mirror which was clear in the selected shot.

Alan Dedman Folio Competition winner in July and again in October 2005 writes about Evening Mooring below: The image was taken with a Nikon Coolpix 8800, at 1/165 sec and f/6.3, focal length 8.9mm. As the sky was very bright I had to choose carefully the best exposure and not leave it to the Auto Exposure. This was taken at Blakney on an evening outing with the North Norfolk Camera Club.

In the evening light it seemed as if the line of boats in the background was coming back up the river to their moorings, although they were actually moored already. These nicely filled the background so that I could get the juxtaposition between them and the boats moored in the foreground. I thought this would make a lovely soft watercolour, or simplified image. The bottom right hand corner was blank, so I moved around to get the mooring post in. As the light was strong in the top left hand corner, I got down to lower my viewpoint and leaned over to the right to make sure I got the masts and posts to fill the sky. I couldn't move any further to the right as the tide was coming in fast, and I had very little time to get the photo before my shoes filled with water.

Later I lightened the foreground and darkened the sky, but this was for effect. I did think the original photo would look good as a monochrome, perhaps, with a hint of sepia. However, after thinking about it for some time and asking others, I went back to how I had first thought of it.

Sealed up tight to weather the storm

Bill Henley LRPS relates the story behind his Folio competition winning image for September 2005 and how he linked it back to a childhood memory of an old natural history book.

My wife and I woke in the morning to find the caravan rocking in the wind with the sound of heavy rain on the roof. We had booked a trip for that day round Ramsey Island off St Davids, Pembrokeshire and were now considering what to do. We were unlikely to get a refund, and the even worse weather forecast ruled out postponing to the next day. So at 1pm we arrived at the jetty clothed in waterproofs, warm hats and having just taken pills to ward off seasickness. As we arrived the cloud dispersed and we set off in brilliant hot sunshine that lasted the whole trip before returning to the previous dull and blustery scenario. I was equipped with my EOS 20D and my now ageing 100-300mm Canon zoom. Multiplying by 1.6 gave an effective maximum focal length of 480mm.

Not having Image Stabilisation and coping with small boat that was rising and falling in quite a choppy sea, I lodged myself at the bow end and endeavoured to click the shutter just as the boat reached its peak before plummeting down again. The RSPB launch was expertly piloted but kept a fair distance from the wildlife to avoid disturbance. Evidently if the mother seal is frightened she will desert her young and leave them to die. I therefore proceeded to fill my 2GB card with high-resolution JPEG images. I used JPEG rather than RAW both to conserve memory on the card and to permit the longest run of multiple shots before the camera stopped taking pictures in order to complete the digital processing. It was a compromise between image quality and obtaining the most shots possible in the hope that some would be in focus and not have camera movement. A high resolution JPEG image requires about 3.6MB with RAW taking about 8.7MB. With JPEG I could take about 5 images in a burst. The most successful image was the one that had a large

male seal basking on a rock with a female looking on from the shore. Evidently the male seal had settled on the rock at high tide and would stay there until lifted off by the next high tide. Of the eight images of this scene nearly all were technically acceptable but only one had the male seal looking in the right direction with the rays of the sun glancing off his head. I was pleased to have captured the eyes of both the male and female seal looking at me.

I cropped the image into a square, slightly sharpened and slightly increased the contrast. The latter two adjustments helped to compensate for the lower quality of my old lens when used on my digital camera. My newer EFS 17-85mm with image Stabilisation produces higher quality images but off course has too short a focal length for wildlife photography.

The image posted for the competition was therefore very much just a straight photograph. For a different print I modified it further to make it look much more like an engraving from and old book of natural history. I have the two volumes of Oliver Goldsmith's *A History of the Earth and Animated Nature* dated 1876. I remember as a toddler finding the images of snakes strangling cattle particularly frightening and developed an unnatural fear of the vacuum cleaner hose for a while. The manipulation involved creating a layer with higher contrast and saturation and finding the edges. The opacity of the new layer was then reduced to obtain the desired effect. I then printed at 48cm square onto a coarse watercolour inkjet paper from Lyson.

More Solid Thoughts from Ray Wallace Thompson ARPS - and some images

Last issue's article about stereo photography brought back memories of early days. Comparisons with Digital and Stereo are valid. In Digit today there is a cameraderie such as we had in Stereo in the 1950s onwards and Digit is, as Stereo was, a step onward in photography and the similarities are the technical/picture possibilities enabling one to do remarkable things.

I first saw projected stereo as part of the Stockton on Tees International launched and run by late Jim Milnes in 1955 onwards (now the Northern Counties International) and not only was that an innovation but it
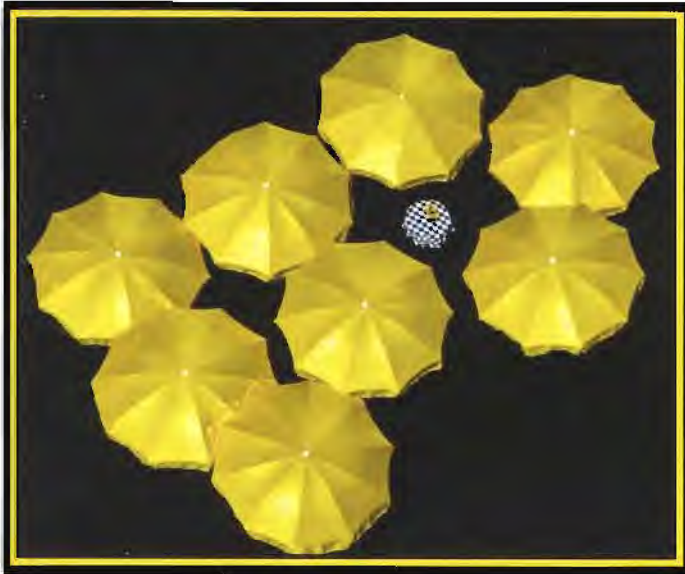
was presented as an Audio Visual show...a world first. Later in 1958 Bill Dalgoutie of Kodak gave us a stereo talk and I was sold....Architecture in 3D...had to be bang on .. I bought a Stereo Iloca in 1960 and, I believe, made a universal 'First' with 'Intro to Stereo' a 45 minute Stereo Picture/Stereo Sound lecture lasting 40 minutes and given about 50 times including once in London to the RPS Colour Group. To present this I used one of the first Hawk projectors made by close friend Bob Nightingale of Ilford (in those days). We had formed a Stereo Section of SPCS. Bob and Pat became members as did a number of overseas folk but in particular Phil Shenton of Richmond (South) Club who actually built a close coupled stereo camera to take close ups.

We soon acquired a 24 membership and experienced some mild aggression which caused one member, Bob Stephens, to telephone me to ask for a Special Stereo Meeting (I was in the Chair) which I did. He proposed we form an independent Stereo Society and with 100% meeting support we did. So was formed the Third Dimension Society with Bob as Founder, Jim as Secretary and me as Chairman. Unashamedly I used every influence I had as member of RPS and PSA and as a Local Govt bloke and by the end of the month we had everything needed including a scarce Duplex projector from a friend and a set of 100+ viewing specs from Lord Londonderry. Financial support never stopped coming in. As Founding Chairman and Editor of the magazine I picked up two silver plates as a top editor in the PSA Competition and this brought more overseas members including Ruth Bauer of Cincinnati, Stereo Queen of PSA. and also Lee Klinefelter of

Norfolk Va who invented dual polarisation picture-taking to explore strain lines. Many stereo folks became correspondents such as Harold Lloyd and others.
We tested new cameras, films etc. All this resulted in a very wide

Friendship List and Dorothy and I had great pleasure in frequently having visitors from distant lands including Australia, S Africa, USA, Canada, France, Denmark etc. I frequently carried out judging stints, often overseas as for Hamilton SC,Ont.

I retained my Honorary Membership of SPCS and never ceased planar work. However as my vocation as a Chief Officer Architect continued to expand into a six day week it was necessary to pull out of active work which had frequently seen me lecturing twice a week. But I retain and value my honorary membership of the Third Dimension Society which has branches in a number of centres in GB and I can give addresses if required. Seeing the 3D Society's Annual International Exhibition is an experience well worth repeating

When retirement came along 26 years ago a fresh approach to photography was indicated and this was spurred initially by that master of the website, Frank Auffret, then that lecture by Barrie Thomas and finally some years on the invite from Bryan Gilbert to become a founding member of the Teeside Digital Photo Group which, I had expected, would enable the sharing of knowledge and pictures in my previous ways. By invitation, I presented my dual digital print exhibition '70 years behind the Lens' in the Green Dragon Gallery last year from August to December and also made it into a CD AV (I have dual Performing Rights Licence) and I can freely share it if anyone is interested. Currently it has been to Lebanon Pa., Hamilton Ont etc., also to the Indian International.Photo Council of which I am an Associate and Hon Memb. It's my perverse intention to present another exhibition '90 and not out' in 2007 when I'll be that age.

I find it difficult to enter internationals, an ideal way of sharing (got an Hon Mention last month) due to cost and pressures. Of course work in the previous disciplines has left its mark on the way I currently shoot and find myself carefully considering near homologues (62.23mm in 4" stereo mounts), intermediate parts and then infinity (63.5mm). By keeping such in mind in Stereo one could do strange things like visually hanging an elephant's trunk over an audience in front of the 6'0" window. Now I can't see that happening in straight digital work but over-laying a stereo pair of chips in digital form must be attracting stereo workers and, with compatible movements in the RPS AV group where digitalisation has superseded dual projection, there appear to be three groups working along almost identical lines.

An interesting situation is clearly developing...

Decisions, Decisions

In this first of a two-part comprehensive overview of what to look for Sid Pearce FRPS examines some of decisions you need to consider in buying a digital camera today.

Sid's interest in photography started about 50 years ago with a Box Brownie. After the usual family pictures he got seriously involved with the first Nikkormat camera, followed by a Nikon F and Nikons 2/3/4. With eyesight not as good as it was, he went fully automatic with a 90FX. Sid's first digital camera, a Nikon 5000, was replaced in 2005 by Canon 20D and he has settled on Permajet papers and inks for all images. He says he is firmly in the grip of Photoshop, writing magazine articles on imaging and and publishing booklets. Over the years Sid has travelled to over forty countries seeing and photographing many wonderful things. Specialities are travel, nature and floral work. With sixteen different addresses over the last forty years Sid has now returned to his roots in Grimsby.

Initial Thoughts on Price and Type

First, remember that your purchase will be superseded by a new model within a year, and a reduced price - just as it has always been with any camera purchase. And there is now little difference between a digital and a film camera except that the sensor takes the picture instead of film. Virtually all the main technological advances have been made: whatever camera you buy the images will be first class, and the cost will be almost the same as buying a film camera. New models will come along but the advances will mainly be cosmetic. So, there is no reason to hesitate in changing to digital.

A main consideration is always money. The purchase of the camera is not the only cost. Spare batteries, additional memory cards and image storage in the field and new lenses or converters all add up. With the multitude of cameras available consider the type of photography you do and list your main requirements. If you are a point and shoot photographer who wants family holiday pictures, with the odd landscape, then a small automatic camera to fit your breast pocket could be the answer. One step up is the compact camera with a zoom lens and plenty of controls. The small viewfinder means you only see the full image on a rear facing LCD. These work very well in dull or cloudy weather outdoors but are difficult and on occasions impossible to see in full sunlight.

If your budget does not stretch to a true SLR, there are now many superb SLR-type cameras with optical viewfinders that may well fit the bill. They have numerous controls and good quality zoom lenses. Within a lighter and more compact body, they have much of the versatility of the SLR. You get the effect of a SLR through the viewfinder but in reality it is a small LCD that you are viewing. Mostly this is fine but tracking a moving image results in some jerkiness in the viewfinder.

Then there are the true SLRs for the professionals and keen amateurs. Up to about three years ago, very few amateurs could justify the thousands of pounds cost. Now a body can be purchased for as low as £5-600. If you are likely to use your camera in a very rough environment you should consider a metal bodied model with water seals, at a substantial cost.

So with price and type sorted we can now look at the attributes of the various camera types available.

Resolution

This is really the amount of detail a camera will capture. Manufactures make great play of the number of pixels per inch (resolution) of their taking sensors. They say that their camera is a so many mega pixel camera: fine so far as it goes. But when you crush more and more pixels onto a sensor the first and perhaps the biggest trouble is noise. It can show up in big name cameras when using ISO 400 and above. Colour fringing is also a problem, for example on the edges of a bird's wing against a blue background. If you have a poor quality lens or camera firmware (the camera's built-in software which can sometimes be updated) you capture poor quality pixels, regardless of how many. So, a 6 mega-pixel camera with a superb lens and good firmware can turn out images much smoother and film-like, than an 8 mega-pixel camera with a poor quality lens. But if all other things are equal the 8 mega-pixel camera will result in more detail and tones.

You are far better off purchasing a camera that will suit the size of print you need. Remember that a 20x16 inch print will be viewed further away than a 6x4 inch print. You can get away with 200ppi (image resolution) on the former but you will probably need 3/400ppi for the latter. It is quite surprising how large a satisfactory print you can get from a small 3 mega-pixel camera. For A4 (12x8 inch) you need to be able to print at about 250 dpi and for A3 at 200ppi or even slightly less. I would look for a resolution that would let me print at the largest size I would ever want and a little bit more, giving me leeway if I needed to crop.

There are a number of different sensor chips used by manufacturers in their cameras; they include CCD, CMOS, FOVEON and LBCAST. CCD stands for Charge Coupled Device. These have been used in many cameras for a long time. The drawback of CCD sensors is that they drain camera batteries quickly, get warm in use, and as a consequence static electricity builds up on the sensor and attracts dust. This can in turn create image artefacts.
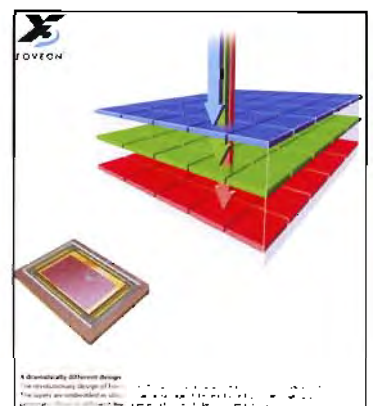
CMOS (complementary metal oxide) are a reasonably priced alternative. These sen-

sor chips use less power, are cooler in use and appear to be less affected by noise and colour fringing.

There are also a number of sensor variations. Fuji manufactures what they call a Super CCD that has a honeycomb appearance of large CCD elements. Their latest sensor chip has both large and small elements next to each other on the same chip. The large elements take detail from the whole image while the small take details from the highlight areas. Fuji states that images taken with cameras using this sensor retain more detail in the highlight areas. Their latest model SLR also has a facility to mimic various types of film stock. I have not yet been able to ascertain how well this innovation works in practice.

Fujifilm CCD sensor
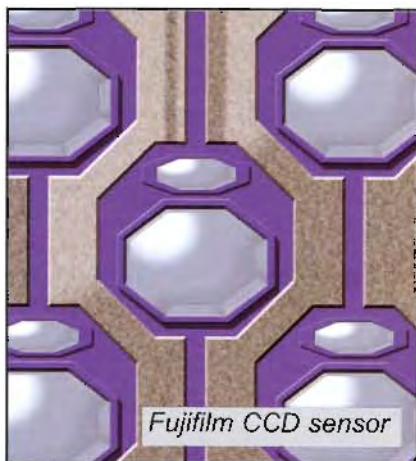
Sigma, a company better known for their lenses, has produced a camera with a completely different sensor, the Foveon©. Sigma explains that CMOS and CCD sensors capture 25% of the Red and Blue light and 50% of the Green. The Foveon© sensor - see illustration in previous column - captures all the Red, Green and Blue light to give an optimum full colour image.

Camera Controls

Digital cameras have a lot more controls than film cameras have ever had. White balance, panorama modes, best-shot selector and noise reduction are some of many secondary options that are available. But to maintain a creative grip of your photography, the main controls as always will be shutter speed and aperture.

Exposure

Many of the reasonably priced point and shoot cameras have purely automatic exposure. For much of the time the exposure will probably be correct, but this does little if anything for the creative mind.

Some of the more sophisticated compact cameras have a range of fixed exposure modes. Portrait, Landscape, Sport, etc. The camera fixes the exposure to the optimum setting for the type of subject chosen. As you go further up the price scale exposure options will include shutter priority, which means you choose the shutter speed and the camera sets the aperture for best exposure. Aperture priority means you choose the aperture and the camera chooses the shutter speed for best exposure. Generally, but not always, when a camera has these two controls you will also get a full manual option. The smaller cameras have most modes controlled internally by a menu, whilst the larger cameras mainly use external buttons, dials and switches. For some people internal modes are no problem, but I prefer external but-

tons and dials that I can instantly see rather than fiddling with menus.

Does the camera you like have an exposure compensation mode? You may be taking a picture against the light. This situation could easily fox the cameras exposure meter. Being able to increase or decrease the set exposure by small amounts could prove a boon in a difficult lightening situation.

ISO

In a film camera you make the decision to buy the speed of film you require on the basis of the type of filming you will be doing. You then use the full roll of 24/36 at that speed. In a digital camera the speed can be changed if need be for each picture you take. When using a digital camera I use this facility as a third exposure control. A word of warning. Do check how your camera can handle increased ISO settings and the amount of noise this may create in your image.

White Light

Calibrating your camera for the type of lighting conditions is known as white light balancing. Almost all cameras have an automatic setting and several options such as sunlight, cloudy, incandescent, fluorescent and flash. If you consider that at times you may be shooting under mixed lighting, it will pay you to go for a camera that has a custom white balance facility. This will enable you to set the white balance for the prevailing light source.

Those are the primary features of a digital camera. In the next issue of DIGIT I will look at some of the main supporting features and the snags like dust and noise. If you cannot wait, then just log on to the website to read a summary.

Meantime, there are a number of websites where you can see reviews of various digital cameras, including:

www.steves-digicams.com
wwwdigicamreview.co.uk
www.dcrescource.com
www.planetphotoshop.com

I trust that so far this first article will make your task of purchasing a digital camera a little less fraught. Whether looking for a small point and shoot to take with you in your pocket, an SLR style camera without the big boys' weight, or a full blown SLR with all the bells and whistles, it is the ease of use and the quality of the image you get that will be the final arbiter as to which model you buy.

Happy shopping till next time!

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370 pages.
www.focalpress.com

The author is one of a small band who is a both a professional photographer and a lecturer and writer on digital imaging. This is yet another excellent imaging book by Mr Andrews and is written in his usual clear and easy to understand manner. Many of the full colour pictures have been changed since his book on version 3 but it is still compatible with Elements 1, 2, and 3. The book is a complete easy to follow introduction to Photoshop Elements. All the new additions to the program are fully explained along with many new tips and techniques given in detail. The book will give you all you need to know on every aspect of imaging, including web design, printing, image management, panoramas, text with images and of course general manipulation of your images. If you are a user of Elements this is a must have book for your bookshelf. If you are just starting to learn, the curve will be that less steep.

Photoshop CS2 A-Z
Phillip Andrews
Focal Press
ISBN 0240520025
www.focalpress.com

Phillip Andrews is a photographer and a hands on teacher of Photoshop in Australia, and it shows. He is a beta tester for Photoshop and an alpha tester for Photoshop Elements. If I had had this book as a reference when I started with Photoshop 3 my learning curve would have been considerably cut. Some books you can never get into, some seem to fit like an old glove. To me this is certainly one of the latter. As far as I can see every action you are likely to make as a photographer is covered. Virtually every tool, command and palette has before and after illustrations. Additionally there are loads of professional tips scattered throughout the book. Photoshop is a massive program. This book is a must have, easy to follow reference that will guide you through CS2s many tools and commands.

Blowing the Dust away

I was not sure where I could get a good blower to get rid of the dust on my digital SLR. The usual puffer with small brush that I used for cleaning trannies did not have enough puff. I eventually found a medical appliance company that had one. It is a rubber bulb that you squeeze (the same as the one used for taking your blood pressure) with a non-return valve and a directable six-inch tube with a jet at the end. It works very well for me. It is not cheap but it is a piece of quality kit. The price including postage is £10.50.
Ring Braun & Co Ltd
on 01652 632 273
with your credit card or send cheque to:
19 Pasture Road
Barton on Humber
North Lincolnshire DN18 5HN

Useful Plug-ins for Photoshop

Always try out a demo of any software before buying. Even if you like it, the program may not be compatible with your computer. And be clear about the price you will pay for a download, and what documentation you get.

Alien Skin Eye Candy 5 *www.alienskin.com*
This set of three programmes contains ten plug-in filters. Some of the plug-ins will suit photographers, others graphic designers or web and multimedia creators. As a photographer I found Backlight, Motion Trail and Perspective in Impact, Stone and Brick Wall in Textures and Snowdrift and Smoke in Nature of most interest.
Impact: Includes, Backlight, Bevel, Brushed Metal, Chrome, Extrude, Glass, Gradient Glow, Motion Trail, Perspective Shadow and Super Star.
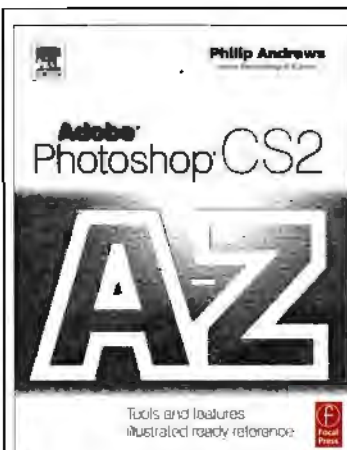Textures: Includes, Animal Fur, Brick Wall, Diamond Plate, Marble, Reptile Skin, Stone Wall, Swirl, Texture Noise and Weave.
Nature: Includes, Corona, Drip, Fire, Icicles, Ripples, Rust, Smoke, Snowdrift, Squint and Water Drops.

Neat Image Pro+ Edition *www.neatimage.com*
Noise (grain) is a problem with a number of digital cameras at high ISO settings or slow shutter speeds. This plug-in allows you to define an area in an image where no detail is present. It then creates a noise profile that removes noise from the whole image. If you wish you can also refine the profile manually. Alternatively you can download a noise profile from the Neat Image website for your own particular camera.
Noise Ninja *www.picturecode.com* This is one of the most popular and powerful noise reduction programmes, operating in either basic or advanced modes. Suitable for Mac or PC, and at 8 or 16bit. It can be used stand alone or as a Photoshop plug-in. One of this programmes innovations is a remove or add noise brush.

Joining up the Initials
A quick guide to how it all hangs together and the key role of the Digital Imaging Group Regional Organiser

We often forget that the Royal Photographic Society (RPS) with its international role to enhance the art and science of photography and to encourage others - and that includes those who are not yet members - has many layers. First, the membership benefits from geographical groupings called Regions - Ireland, South West, Yorkshire and so on - 18 in all, each looked after by a Regional Organiser (RO). There are local programmes and activities. And in a complementary structure, cutting across the geography, are the special interest groups - ranging through Film and Video, Nature and Travel, to name just three of the 15. Each has its own programme, focusing on that particular area of interest, independent of geography. Our own specialist interest, The Digital Imaging Group (DIG), has seen phenomenal growth, reflecting the shift in photographic technology and is now one of the largest special interest groups in the RPS. And in its turn DIG has a regional organisation (although I will avoid the acronym DIRG!) allowing a geographical focus for the specialist interest. Ten Digital Imaging Regional Group Organisers (DIGROs) oversee these regional groups. Contact details are listed on the back cover of this quarterly magazine, DIGIT, with its essential contribution from members' knowledge and expertise.

See the RPS website at http://www.rps.org/regions.html for full details of Regional Organisers and activities.

Well that completes the initials but it is important to remember that whilst these stalwarts are unpaid volunteers, they are all part of the Society and have commensurate responsibilities and obligations. For example, your committee - again listed on the back cover - is responsible to Council. DIGROs are members of the DIG committee and so also responsible to Council.

Working with the DIGRO, each region has a Treasurer to handle finances. The RPS helps with setting up any necessary bank accounts in arrangements also used by the RPS Regions and DIG itself emphasising that, ultimately, we are one Society. Plans for major expenditure are notified to DIG and the RPS Treasurer in advance. Public liability insurance cover is provided through the RPS policy for events run regionally.
Although your £12 DIG subscription does not cover direct financial support for regional events, additional subscriptions should not be charged for participation in those activities. DIG will consider underwriting major events run by the regions so they do not need large cash reserves. And a small float may be provided from DIG central funds to enable new regional groups to get started. Because the RPS is an educational charity it generally includes the public in its meetings although DIG members are charged a lower rate.

Through DIG itself, in addition to the magazine, we offer the excellent website (*www.digit.org.uk*) with a Folio where members submit and comment on images; a lively forum for the exchange of views and expert knowledge; and even some photographic items for sale. DIGROs can post their regional information here too. There is an annual exhibition of DIG members' work where each member is guaranteed a print for display around the UK and sometimes abroad. Selection for the exhibition takes place each year at the Annual General Meeting and suggestions for exhibition venues from the RGs are always welcome. And of course there is one, sometimes two, major meetings like the Spectacular.

The RPS is keen that Groups and Regions should work together so DIGROs should co-ordinate events with the relevant ROs - perhaps more than one. Sometimes events can be run jointly. Meetings vary from a few like-minded souls gathering at a member's home to major events with hundreds attending for a full day or weekend with speakers and workshops. Clearly a lot of planning is needed for these big events which need to be promoted widely to be successful. The RPS Journal, the DIG website (contact John Long ARPS) and of course DIGIT itself will all carry details - if you tell them - as well as the neighbouring DI Groups.

There are a number of excellent speakers with extensive skills within the DIG who are willing to provide their knowledge and services for minimal costs, often just their travel expenses. The DIG Secretary (Glenys Taylor ARPS) can often help with speakers.

Well that's just a brief look at how it all hangs together. More detailed information is available from either headquarters or DIG. And if you fancy becoming, or helping, a DIGRO in your area please contact the DIG Committee DIGRO liaison member Ray Grace LRPS.

RPS Wessex Digital Imaging Group Meetings 2006
at Aldbourne, Wiltshire. Usually 10am to 4pm

Informal Days, limited to ten people and at various levels, on Saturdays 7 January, 8 April and 8 July. Contact Maureen Albright to attend or if you are interested in holding a meeting.
Sunday 19 February - Digital AV
May (date to be confirmed) Techniques Lecture plus attenders' work.
Sunday 1 October - Digital AV Lecture with Erhard & Heidi Holbrecker from Switzerland. Major award winners in several International AV competitions and presenting their work at Essex, Wilmslow, Smethwick & Aldbourne.
Digital Imaging Group Regional Organiser for Wessex DI Group: Mrs Maureen Albright ARPS Tel 01672 540754
Email: maureen@maureenalbright.com. More details on the *www.wessex-dig.org.uk*

KEY CONTACTS
DIGITAL IMAGING GROUP

Chair: Dr Barry Senior FRPS
01425 471489
barry@littlepics.freeserve.co.uk

Secretary: Glenys Taylor ARPS
01823 282516 or 01823 323986
glenys.taylor@tiscali.co.uk

Vice-Chair and DIGROs:
Ray Grace LRPS
01249 716165
ray.grace@BTOpenworld.com

Treasurer: Peter Roberts ARPS
01926 420105
peter-roberts@ntlworld.com

Webmaster: Bill Henley LRPS
01453 825068
henley@onetel.com

Publicity and Website Updates:
John Long ARPS
0117 967 2231
johnlong@lineone.net

Exhibitions: Alex Dufty LRPS
01454 778485
alexpatdufty@hotmail.com

Graham Whistler FRPS
01329-847944
graham@gwpmultimedia.com

Clive Haynes FRPS
01905 356405
clive@crhfoto.co.uk

Maureen Albright ARPS
01672 540754
maureen@maureenalbright.com

Tony Healy ARPS
+61 (0) 2 9958 1570
tonyhealy@optusnet.com.au

DIGIT: Jim Buckley LRPS
01932 843893
jbphotos@btinternet.com

DIGITAL REGIONAL ORGANISERS
Members wishing to attend regional digital imaging meetings should contact the organisers listed below for full details

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Eiger (East Anglia)
Joy Hancock FRPS
joyandmike@woodview24.freeserve.co.uk

Cumbria
Harry Bosworth
harrybos@aol.com

Midlands
www.midig.org
Clive Haynes FRPS
clive@crhfoto.co.uk

Central Southern
Moira Taylor LRPS
no1greenside@onetel.net.uk

Wessex
www.wessex-dig.org.uk
Maureen Albright ARPS
maureen@maureenalbright.com

Scotland
Alistair Knox LRPS
akphoto@btinternet.com

East Midlands
www.rpsdigital-em.org.uk
Bob Rowe ARPS
bob.rowe@btinternet.com

Western
Glenys Taylor ARPS
glenys.taylor@tiscali.co.uk

Southern
Barry Senior FRPS
barry@littlepics.freeserve.co.uk

South Wales
Tony Lane ARPS
mail@tony-lane.co.uk

And finally, when will you send us an article for DIGIT? Remember that everyone is learning and all experience is valuable. We look forward to hearing from you, by post to 1 Aldenholme, Weybridge, Surrey KT13 0JF or email to ***JBPhotos@btinternet.com***. Thank you.

Jim Buckley LRPS Editor