

DIGIT

THE MAGAZINE OF THE ROYAL PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY DIGITAL IMAGING GROUP

Number 71 2016 Issue 4



Upcoming DIG events



Details of all DIG events are available on the Group's website at www.rps.org/special-interest-groups/digital-imaging/events




Colin Harrison
FRPS MFIAP MPAGB APAGB
DIGITAL ADVENTURE

Digital Imaging Group
Thames Valley Centre

Sunday 15 January 2017, Woosehill Community Hall RG41 3DA




David Clapp
Professional Landscape
Photography Unveiled

Digital Imaging Group
Western Centre

29th January 2017 Clyst St Mary Village Hall, Clyst St Mary, Exeter EX51BG




Mike McNamee FRPS
**Digital Imaging and
the Evolution of the
Creative Image**
Digital Imaging Group
Thames Valley Centre

Sunday 19 February 2017, Woosehill Community Hall RG41 3DA



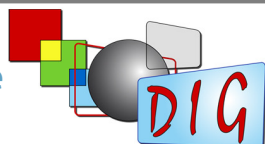

Paul Sanders
**PICTURES ON A PAGE
AND
THE MIND'S EYE**
Digital Imaging Group
Thames Valley Centre

Sunday 26 March 2017, Wokingham, Berkshire RG41 3DA

Print with Confidence

- monitor calibration
- printer profiling
- colour management through software
- ink and paper choices

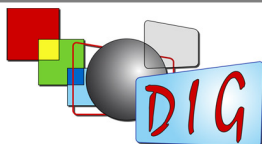
A range of papers and demonstration items will be available with special deals on papers and accessories on the day



A Lecture by
Permajet

Digital Imaging Group
Eastern Centre

2nd April 2017 Foxton Village Hall CB22 6RN

Andrew Mills
**The Art of Photography
- Lighting for still life**

Digital Imaging Group
Thames Valley Centre

Sunday 23 April 2017, Wokingham, Berkshire RG41 3DA

A Date for the Diary

The 2017 Annual General Meeting of the RPS Digital Imaging Group (including selection for the 2017 Print Exhibition and a talk by Viveca Koh FRPS)

will be held on the 5th March 2017 at

The Old School House, Smethwick Photographic Society Club Rooms, Churchbridge, Oldbury,
West Midlands, B69 2AS.

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Solent skies by Rachael Talibart LRPS

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EDITORIAL

Gary Beaton



As I sit down to write this introduction to DIGIT, I have taken a few moments to reflect on how I ended up here. And I realise just what an interesting few weeks it has been! I hope you'll bear with me if I share some of it with you.

Having been a member of the Society for many years, albeit a rather quiet one more recently, I decided to investigate what else the RPS could offer me and very quickly liked what I saw in the DIG. Soon after I joined there was a general invitation for volunteers to look after a variety of things that go on within the Group. Not being one to just stand by, I responded. Little did I imagine that I would end up being asked to take on editorship of DIGIT.

The DIG clearly brings together people with a shared interest, and although there are activities arranged through the Centres, DIGIT is one of the elements that is available to all members wherever they may be and however much they may be able to participate in other activities. With this in mind, I feel privileged to have the opportunity to contribute in this way to the Group and I hope that I will be able to maintain the high standards that you have become used to for DIGIT.

Alongside this edition of your magazine you will have received the catalogue of the recent Projected Image Competition. The number of accepted images makes it a bumper-sized catalogue and consequently, this edition of DIGIT is slimmer than usual. Nonetheless, we have a great selection of features ranging from fine art photography, through travel and one of the key things that digital imaging offers us, compositing an image. In addition, our Challenges in this issue cover a range of topics and techniques, which explain the author's thoughts and intentions and show just how much work goes into a successful image.

I hope you will enjoy reading the magazine as much as I have enjoyed preparing it in my new role.

FROM THE CHAIR

Janet Haines ARPS



As I write this the autumn leaves are turning to the most glorious colours and reminding us yet again of the eternal cycle of life. A time to reflect on the past summer; what we have enjoyed or achieved. Perhaps how we didn't take enough time to stop and admire the changing seasons as the spring bulbs gave way to summer blossoms. How we didn't give ourselves time enough to enjoy our photography and to learn and grow. I know I certainly allow too many other things to get in the way of my own shooting time, which in turn limits my ability to develop new skills or try out new ideas. Will winter give us more time? I kid myself that with the longer nights I will find the time to buckle down to learn some new Photoshop tricks, or simply to process some more of those hundreds of decent images sitting in my library of RAWs. But I lack the discipline, allowing myself to be too easily distracted.

Many of us need targets and focus to help us towards the goal of 'improvement'. What I have witnessed, throughout my time in the Society, is that by aiming for the RPS Distinctions individuals not only become focussed, but how the entire process lifts their game and challenges them to do better in all aspects. It is not about the letters after your name but the pride of producing a super panel of work at whatever level you are at. By aiming for the target we focus and I guarantee you that the whole endeavour will lift the quality of your work and your enthusiasm for your art to the next level. So I challenge you to really think about taking that next step in the Distinction process and in doing so improve your photography.

DIG continues to roll around the seasons with an aim of continual improvement for the benefit of our members. We hope you like that we no longer produce competition catalogues as part of DIGIT, but that you get separate catalogues. Our new DIGIT Editor, Gary Beaton, has worked exceptionally hard to deliver the bumper catalogue plus DIGIT: Quite a challenge in this, his first edition. He is a delight to work with and with Barrie Brown enthusiastically taking on the role as Assistant Editor, we have a great new team. Welcome to you both and thank you for volunteering.

*Evening shore*

The fine art of landscape and seascape photography



RACHAEL TALIBART LRPS tells us about her transformation into a fine art photographer.

I recently stewarded at an exhibition of landscape and seascape photographs. One afternoon, a woman came in, eyes bright and eager but, as she crossed the threshold, her shoulders slumped and she said 'Oh, I didn't realise it was a photography exhibition'. Had I not offered her a warm greeting, I think she would have walked out immediately. Persuaded to remain, she ended up spending more time at the exhibition than almost anyone else during the entire week. As she reached the last image, she said, with surprise, that there were some beautiful pictures on the wall but, now with suspicion, of course, these days it's all done digitally and it's not 'real'. Sometimes, as photographers, it seems as though we can't win either way! If photography is representational, a faithful reproduction of

something anyone might see, it is dismissed as 'not art' and, if it is more interpretative, it's all fakery. As I politely enquired of my visitor, would she criticise a painting for being not real?

The 'is photography art' debate is as old as, well, photography itself. You'd think we'd be over it by now but, only two years ago, it was occupying columns of space in *The Guardian*, Jonathan Jones writing his case for 'Why photography is not art' and Sean O'Hagan responding with his article, 'Photography is art and always has been'. As photographers, we don't always help. The tendency to describe a photo as 'SOOC - straight out of camera', or the posting of a photo on social media declaring that it was grabbed during a spare 5 minutes at lunchtime, makes

LANDSCAPE AND SEASCAPE



Kraken, before and after editing in Lightroom

photography seem far too easy, the province of opportunistic snap shots rather than considered creativity. We might like to dismiss those examples as belonging to the selfie generation rather than serious photographers but all too often when I visit galleries I see signs declaring that the photographer does not use post-production. No doubt he/she is responding to comments such as the one I fielded as a steward, but it's surely the wrong response.

I should declare at this point, slightly tongue in cheek, that I don't do a lot of post-production work myself. Of course, I shoot RAW, so I must process my files. To do anything else would be to leave the completion of my art to the whims of an algorithm. But I am an outdoor photographer because I love being outdoors. I don't like sitting at my computer, no matter how large the glass

of wine sitting next to it. I use on-camera filters and every other technique I know to make the image I capture in camera as close as possible to the final artwork. Thus, the most crucial moment for me is when I click the shutter, but developing my RAW files must inevitably be a vital part of the process and numerous decisions are made at that stage that affect the final photograph. For my storm picture, *Kraken*, I have done little more than adjust exposure, contrast and white balance in Lightroom, but I hope you'll agree that it's made all the difference in the world. I can't imagine shooting only JPEGs or letting the default settings in Lightroom determine how my image looks; to declare that as a badge of honour would, frankly, be absurd.

Sometimes, the tail wags the dog; my knowledge of what I can achieve in post-production



Breaking wave



Leviathan

influences how I capture the image on location. My picture, *Still Morning*, is actually 21 exposures, a stitch of seven vertical shots, each of which is itself a combination of three bracketed exposures. The HDRs and the final stitch were all achieved in Lightroom and I took the shots knowing what I was going to do with them later. No fakery, just getting the best quality picture I could. But, here's the question: if I had decided that I needed some rocks in the foreground, would it be so very wrong for me to paint them in afterwards? If my purpose is not to create an accurate record of the place for a travel brochure but, rather, to create an artwork with emotional resonance, does it really matter?

Landscape photography is, arguably, one of the genres that struggles most to be recognised as art; for example, there were relatively few landscapes at this year's prestigious Photo London event. So it might seem a little perverse that I have deliberately shifted my photography towards the fine art genre. Until about 18 months ago, I had been making traditional landscapes that show a recognisable place, the sort of picture that local commercial clients, such as estate agents and property developers, will

buy for their brochures and websites. As far as I know, I was the only landscape photographer in my town, so there was a reasonable demand for those kinds of photograph, at least as good as it's likely to get in a place that has no tourism. But I felt I was getting stale and needed a new direction. After all, if I were in it for the money, I'd still be in my first career as a solicitor! So I decided to shift my image-making from traditional landscapes to fine art photography and, as I was finding myself more and more drawn back to the coast where I grew up, the ocean would be my subject.

The term 'fine art' is, in some ways, slightly unfortunate as it suggests a hierarchy. I don't see it that way – it's just a different genre. I think fine art photography describes images created to be hung on walls as art; my commercial clients would find no use for my new photographs. My aim is no longer to document a recognisable place but to convey an emotion. To that end, most of my recent work excludes all landmarks and I try to avoid titles that reference specific places. Of course, concentrating on the sea makes that easier.

It's been an interesting process, challenging at



Still morning

times. One of the hard things was to prune my website, deleting the more traditional images. This involved 'killing' more than a few 'darlings'. My pictures of the Northern Lights were some of the last to go, but go they did, and my website is better for it. Somewhat easier was learning to turn my back on traditional compositions. No longer for me were the leading lines and foreground interest I used to seek. Simplicity became the key to everything; if the aim is to exclude everything that can be excluded, foreground is often the first to go. Thus, I was not, in fact, tempted to add rocks to *Still Morning* but, if there had been any there, I would have been tempted to remove them.

One of the difficulties with landscape photography these days is there are so many talented landscape photographers and so few places left in the world that haven't already been captured. If we just look for the traditional holy grails such as good foreground interest and golden hour light, we may come away with a stunning photograph that is rather like the equally beautiful photographs taken by everyone else. Perhaps this is why I have found it fairly easy to move away from that sort of photography. I recently returned from two weeks in Iceland. Although we travelled into some

of the most remote parts of the country, it's becoming increasingly difficult to find a place that hasn't already been beautifully captured in pixels by someone else. If we can no longer find difference in location alone, we have to dig deeper, to experiment and take risks. The best pictures I brought home from my trip were abstracts taken in an abandoned herring factory. I hadn't expected that – but the unexpected is very much part of the pleasure of this new direction of mine.

Fine art photographers exhibit frequently and I am no exception. It's an expensive business and not every exhibition sells well, although I have been very lucky with my exhibitions this year. But I cannot over emphasise the satisfaction of seeing a picture right through to exhibition. I don't really feel a photograph is finished until it has been printed, framed and exhibited. That is now the end goal with every image I make. I love the whole process of choosing the right paper, the ideal frame. There is nothing so satisfying as having a physical artwork. Viewing on a screen is just not the same.

When selling fine art prints, limited editions are the norm and, unless you are a really big name, the edition size needs to be small. Mine are now

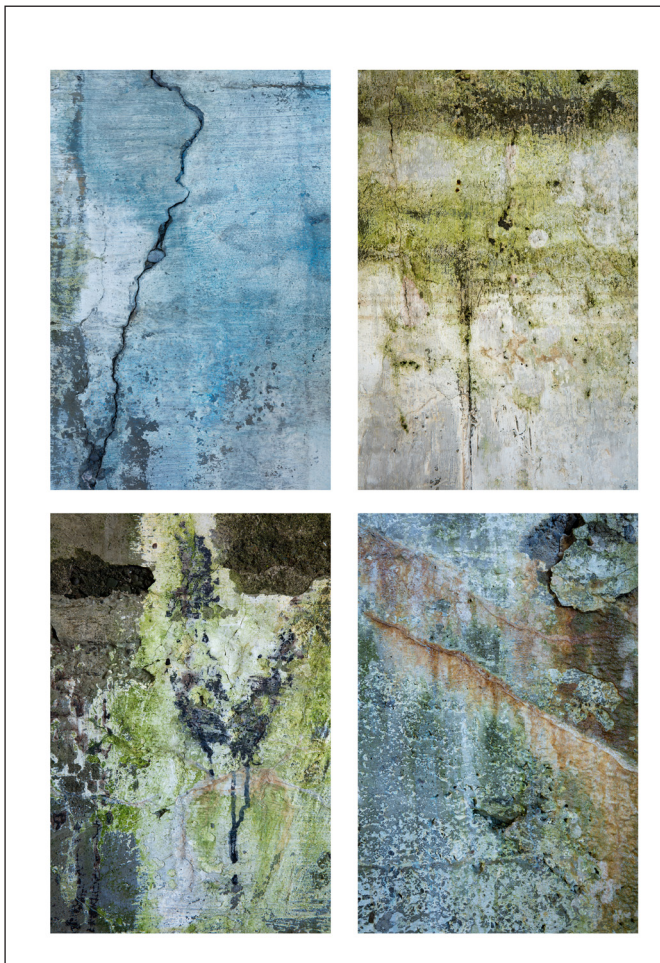


Waves

typically available in two sizes, each size limited to 12 prints. Choosing the right price point is perhaps the biggest challenge. You need to be

willing to risk losing the odd sale in order to avoid putting off serious collectors who might be inclined to think that if the photographer doesn't value their own work, why should they? Once you start selling in galleries, who typically take 50%, you can't sell framed prints for peanuts without making a serious loss, and the gallery won't want to know you if you price your work too cheaply anyway. In the end, I'd rather sell one print for £600 than 10 for £60.

Getting established takes time and it's an ongoing process. I am pleased to say that I sell more now than I ever did as a traditional landscaper. This year my website has started to be noticed 'over the pond' which is good news as Americans have long been much more accepting of photography as art. But, most importantly, I am far more satisfied with my own work. I've had the most creative year of my life so far and can't wait to see what next year will bring. Fielding the odd negative comment at exhibitions about photography and art is, in the end, a very small price to pay.



A selection from *Traces*, captured in an abandoned herring factory in Iceland

Rachael Talibart is a fine art coastal photographer and co-founder of f11 Workshops, providing day workshops and tours in Surrey, East and West Sussex.

Learn more at www.rachaeltalibart.com and www.f11workshops.com.



Plaza de Espana, Seville, Spain

Travel Snapper



Twenty years ago, a group of friends took advantage of an offer in a newspaper. JIM BUCKLEY LRPS tells the story of what happened next.

It started with a chance conversation: "Did you see those vouchers in the newspaper?" Free tickets on Eurostar to Brussels: just too good to miss! So several couples agreed we'd travel together and have a few days sightseeing. Well, that was twenty years ago and the six of us are still doing it. And we remain friends, as one of them says, because we go for only four or five days once a year.

Our favourite destinations are European cities - Berlin, Rome, Genoa, Nice, Budapest - because there is always so much

to photograph. My images are therefore mainly of the town and its buildings. But, with five companions who want to see everything on offer without frustrating delays while I search out the best viewpoint for my shot, I need to work quickly and grab the snap when I can. The light is usually not ideal; I don't have time to think carefully about the settings, and there's rarely a chance to visit that particular monument or area again. So, it's a matter of 'grabbing' it now.

Last year, our nineteenth trip, was to Dresden where

reminders of the devastation from the still controversial 1944 bombing are ever present in museums, photographs and even rubble remaining in the main square by the wonderful cathedral, the Frauenkirche.

Reconstruction was slow until the reunification of Germany, but the city is now stunningly pristine - indeed some see it as 'Disney baroque' - and a travel snapper's paradise. Inside, the church is breathtakingly beautiful and requires some time of quiet contemplation to appreciate the exquisite decoration.

I must confess to being a bit partial to panoramas, which I feel often help to capture the essence of a place. And after having climbed the Frauenkirche's massive dome, I was able to combine several images to make my panorama of the Elbe.

So that we can reminisce about our travels and plan the following year's trip we meet up for dinner and show our pictures. Twenty years ago we were sharing prints from colour negative film but now we are digital and I make slideshows. Originally I used ProShow and now the excellent Apple iMovie (which contrary to its name doesn't have to contain videos), and Fotomagico, which has become a very sophisticated program. I play the shows on a smart TV from a wireless link to my iPad. How things have changed!

I also keep our family and friends at home in touch by using a photo blog. I've never understood why Apple scrapped its iWeb, but good old Adobe offers the Slate, now called Spark, for free - well worth a try, I reckon, as long as you've got wifi. And if you like sending postcards using your own photos, the Touchnote application is brilliant. You can



Steps to the Old town, Cannes, France

compose offline and send from your iPad when you visit a cafe with wifi.

Putting together a slideshow

after our trips means combining shots of the six of us (sometimes with the aid of a flexible, portable mini-tripod fixed to the back of a hotel chair) with



Elbe Panorama, Dresden, Germany

TRAVEL SNAPPER

scenes of the destination. I also feel that it adds so much flavour to include close ups of street names, market stalls, shop windows and doors and archways. Mixing these in the show maintains interest.

Over the past twenty years I've graduated through Canon SLR film cameras to the 7D. But

hauling it around Dresden with three lenses convinced me that it was time to slim the kit bag down, and I went mirrorless with the Fuji X-T10 and just the 18-55mm f/2.8-4 upmarket kit lens. Suddenly I seemed to be transported back fifty years in size to the days of my Vito B. The weight drops dramatically without the mirror, making it a

lightweight travel and general purpose camera. With a suitable bag and some bits, it's a third of the weight to carry. I must admit that the camera took some getting used to, with a multiplicity of functions, but this year I threw caution to the wind and took it on a trip to Seville, our twentieth city. Sixteen mega pixels is more than enough for



Mezquita, Cordoba



Sri Lankan Fishermen

my travel photos, and reduces the computer storage burden. Image quality is first class and the electronic viewfinder, with its comprehensive shooting information, is a real joy to use. As soon as you put your eye to the viewfinder, it springs to life, clearly showing the depth of field and other useful information. The Fuji also does well at night and I usually carry it with me to, hoping to get those atmospheric after dark images.

Seville, with its Royal Tobacco Factory, the inspiration for Bizet's Carmen, demands plenty

of memory cards, with photo opportunities at every turn. The Plaza Espana is a wonderful architectural space, built for the 1929 International exhibition.

And while harsh sunlight can be a problem when you don't have a choice of when to shoot, it does ensure vibrant colours from the ceramics which have been recently renovated.

Córdoba, less than an hour away by train, has the magnificent mosque, the Mezquita. Our group wandered in different directions around this beautiful structure, so I

had more time to compose my shots. But it is a popular tourist draw and patience is sometimes needed. It's quite dark so I was shooting at ISO 1600 at 1/60th. I knew what I wanted, but each time I was ready to press the shutter someone walked into the frame. Eventually my companions decided it was time to go, so I compromised with just one tourist and removed her in post processing. I wonder how many other photographers cursed me for occupying one spot for so long!

For me, travel and photography complement each other perfectly, and we are fortunate that we also enjoy other holidays. Sri Lanka had long been on my list, and it was exciting to finally book our trip. It was an experimental escorted tour by the travel company, to northern areas of the country, as it emerged from decades of vicious, divisive and costly civil war, so perhaps not surprisingly we were only six. I was desperate to see elephants in the wild and my wish came more than true when a teenager charged our vehicle giving me just enough time to get the shot before the panicking guide accelerated away.

Lush, wet and hot, this area is a fascinating destination if you are prepared to put up with long, uncomfortable journeys to reach the remote parts. The people are delightful.

And what does the future hold for our original group? We're already planning our twenty-first destination - Sorrento, on the Italian coast - so there will be no shortage of opportunities for this Travel Snapper.

A similar version of this article has appeared in the magazine of the Travel Group, Travel Log.



Compositing a seascape



IAN THOMPSON ARPS guides us through the creation of a seascape that isn't all it seems.

I am a lover of heavy sea and weather drama, so I always keep an eye on the isobars on the weather charts. When the 'venetian blind' covers the forecaster's chart, I start planning where to go to catch the best scene. On this occasion, Porthcawl in South Wales was chosen. Upon arrival at dawn, there was a howling, force nine gale and the rain was pretty much horizontal. Despite the poor light on offer, luck was my lady, and during the 90 minutes I spent leaning into the wind, I got a 30 second sun-break in the clouds during which I rattled off a dozen shots with my weighted-down, tripod-mounted-camera. My vision was to depict the weight and power of the water, rather than its intrinsic movement. I judged that if I got some nice sharp images, the rest would follow, so my 70-200 zoom was set at f/5.6 and shutter at 1/500 sec. Despite the general awesome nature of the biblical-storm environment, no single shot said it all and thus the outing, in fact, presented the golden opportunity for making the picture I was hoping for. The result was the image at the top of the page.

There are those in the photographic world who eschew heavy editing when it comes to landscape pictures. My view is that - to be successful - the final image has to imbue emotion in the observer, and in my humble opinion, employing any means to achieve that goal is legal. Here I must state that my chosen tack with landscape compositing is to try to make my pictures from contemporaneous frames; i.e. all taken from the same spot within a reasonably narrow timeframe. Sure, it would certainly be possible to cobble together the most believable scene from pixels gathered from all over the world but then you would never be able to take someone to that spot and show them roughly what you saw.

I feel the need always to be able to do this, hence my self-imposed 'rule'.

So, we start off by selecting the first frame which - as is always the case with RAW images - looks really flat, albeit having caught a nice squeak of light and a good wave approaching. There was next to no colour in this picture. The conditions were flat-lit; the sea was a churned up mush with lots of white foam; all the rocks are dirty grey and the sky was *Farrow and Ball* 'slate'. This shouted at me that here is a prime candidate for a mono conversion, so that was the very first adjustment applied, and this was done in Adobe Camera Raw (ACR). Tweaking the colour sliders in the B/W conversion layer control set has very little effect on an image that's almost monochrome to start with, so it was pretty much left at default with perhaps a small backing off of the red and yellow sliders to give some contrast in the rear of the wave.

This isn't too bad an image in its own right but I felt it was lacking something in the left foreground, and didn't really make use of the lighthouse on the harbour wall. So, I chose from the set another couple of frames to try and put that right. The first was picked so that the position (not movement!) of the water introduced dynamism to the foreground. The same mono conversion as the original image was applied to it in ACR. Note that it has a 'wash' onto the sea-break, but nothing else of interest.

This image was added as a new layer and a mask applied, to provide easy selective removal of the bits I didn't want. The mask, in combination with original frame is starting to have a good feel.

I needed the next image to give some idea of the power being dissipated over the sea wall. One of the frames showed a lot of spray backlit by the sun being blown over the wall, so this was chosen and the same treatment was applied as for the 'wash' and added as another layer with attached mask.

Note that I haven't been too careful with producing smooth edges on this masked image: this layer 'hides' below the previous masks and as long as the topmost layer has its edges smoothed, those hidden below aren't really important.

These frames when merged together - for me, anyhow - show pretty much everything that I wanted to say about the scene: power and scale from separate frames have been brought together into one place. So now all I had to do was make it a little bit more moody and interesting. I started by applying a curves adjustment layer and tweaking it for a modest increase in contrast, but also squeezing the black and white points in towards the edges of the histogram. I did this first by visual reference to the image on the screen, and second by using the info panel to inspect the screen whitest and blackest points to make sure that everything stayed inside the clipping boundaries.

At this point I felt that there was a lot going on around the edges of the frame, particularly with the bright region on the top left. So, I decided to employ the age-old trick of forcing the viewer's gaze into the centre - a vignette. It would be easy to overdo this, though



The original RAW image



Converted to black and white



The wash came from this shot



The masked wash



The original shot and the wash



The spray came from this shot



The masked spray

COMPOSITING A SEASCAPE

- subtlety is the key. There are a multitude of methods to produce a vignette but my favourite, very controllable way is to duplicate the merged image layer, bring it to the top of the layer stack, and use the rectangular selection tool to select a rectangle some way in from the edge of the frame.

Then, after right-clicking the section and choosing a feathering amount of 250 pixels. Of course, the amount of feathering will depend upon the overall image size but you get the idea. I then deleted the section of the image inside the selection (either with Ctrl-X (PC) or clicking 'cut' on the edit menu). In the image of the vignette frame, the lower layers are turned off so you can see the effect of the cut-out.

The blend mode of this 'frame' layer is then changed to 'multiply' from the drop down box in the layers panel. Turning on the other layers reveals that the edges of the image are now darkened with a nice graduation defined by the feathering and smoothing of the selection 'refine edge' process. Of course, you can fiddle with this sort of thing until the cows come home and maybe this isn't the easiest way to vignette something, but the nice thing about it is that you can produce odd-shaped vignettes very easily by modifying the selection profile prior to cutting out.

As with all constructed images, it's always difficult to know where to stop - I leave things alone for a day or so and try to see the picture with fresh eyes when I re-visit it. I will admit to being sorely tempted to apply another little 'tweak' here and there but do my best to resist, if for nothing other than the sake of my sanity!

The finished image (I hope) transmits the raw power of the day, even if it was delivered in separate doses over a couple of minutes!

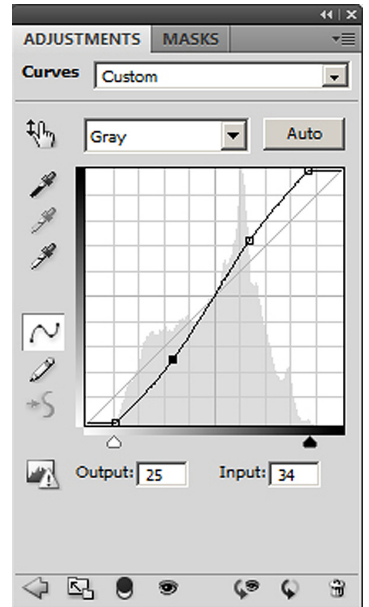
From the starting image.....



.....to the finished composite - in just ten steps.



All of the key elements combined



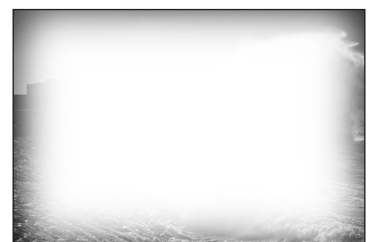
The curves adjustment



The image after the curves adjustment



The vignette marquee



The vignette frame



BLUE DASHER

ANN HEALEY ARPS

Travelling around Costa Rica on a two week photographic workshop in frequent monsoon-like downpours presented a difficulty or two. It certainly made photographing, and sometimes just locating, the country's native wildlife very challenging, particularly since I am well-known for my love of insect photography! But the difficulty of even seeing small creatures in such conditions made me doubly determined to seize any opportunity that became available.

As the party walked round the La Selva Biological Station, our final destination on the trip, the heavens opened and we rushed for shelter underneath a canopy. From there, we took it in turns to photograph a nightjar mother and chicks, sheltering from the downpour in their nest in the undergrowth. When the rain finally eased, we hurried to an annex containing meeting rooms that had four open sides. I saw a dragonfly land on a long grass with his back to me and I took a couple of shots of it before it flew off but it had its back to me and was really too far away, despite using my Canon 7D Mark II with a 100-400mm IS II lens.

Our tour guide was well aware of my interest and after a few minutes, he called me over and pointed to a long rush-like grass in front of him, upon which sat the same dragonfly I had seen moments before. I steadied myself under the awning against the side of the building and was able to get this shot with its wings outstretched, I imagine attempting to dry off, looking straight at me.

Other than cropping in and putting a vignette around the image, all I have done is sharpen it and use Nik Detail Extractor selectively.



Original version



Revised version

REFLECTIONS ON A WAR MEMORIAL

NEAL HIGHAM

The legs gave way one afternoon, as they often do, whilst taking images in my local town centre, Tamworth. I sat down in a busy market square, happily snapping away at the glorious colours and shapes of the bustling market. After a few minutes of rest, I was about to rise to my unsteady feet when, I spotted a huge monument adorned with three even larger anchors. I must have passed through this area hundreds of times in the past, being aware that something was there, but too distracted by colourful tents, stalls, shop displays *et al.*

I had two immediate emotions. I was ashamed that I had never really paid attention to this beautiful and evocative monument, and saddened that its importance and art was lost amongst its surroundings. I rose to my feet and made my way to the memorial and learned that it is a memorial to three unsung heroes of World War II, who gave their lives recovering a code-book from a sinking U-boat. The code-book was the vital missing code which cracked the Enigma machine. That selfless act of heroism saved countless lives during the war.

I immediately challenged myself to produce something thought provoking and fitting with the history behind the (in my opinion) lost memorial. The image I created hopefully is an enigma and one that provokes thought and discussion. To have been asked to write it, I have succeeded on at least one level.

I originally posted the image in the 'For discussion' section of the Digital Imaging Group forum, and got amazing suggestions and feedback leading to a revised image. In a way I still favour the original version as, for me, it captured the emotion I felt. I like them both, but then I am biased!

From a purely technical point of view, this was a steep learning curve for me. I know what I wanted to achieve but the 'how' eluded me. I turned to Google, and researched the effects I wanted. There is a wealth of information out there in the form of tutorials and videos, all for free.

I quickly learned how to create a mirrored image, how to distort that image and to manipulate that distortion to my taste. I won't go into specifics but, suffice it to say, the creative possibilities are endless. If you imagine it, you can deliver it. For me, this whole exercise was about stretching myself, but with the specific aim of enhancing and promoting a great piece of art. I hope I have achieved that.

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