

From the Editor....

As I scribble notes for this our next newsletter, I see the date is already August. Blimey it was March just a few days ago. Our new syllabus for 2021/2022 will soon be upon us but before I try to whet your appetites for what's in store, we need to round off with news of some of our summer's activities.

The Summer PDI Challenge

The success of our 2020/2021 Season's themed PDI competition (a replacement for our normal Print Competitions) led to a decision by the Committee to run a Summer PDI Challenge where the themes would be Light, Spring and finally Water. This competition was judged by our own three qualified judges, Jon Allanson, Rob Hockney and Noel Patterson with a format which offered an opportunity to have some interaction via the chat button on Zoom. The club's judges did raise an eyebrow or two when members chose to interpret the themes in, shall we say, a loose way. The theme 'Water' took off to new heights of highly tenuous interpretations.

However, this summer competition was enthusiastically supported by many members and provided plenty of Zoom entertainment on three Tuesday nights during what is normally a summer break.

The overall winner was Ean Davies.

Ean has kindly offered three of his winning images and a few words to go with them.



Theme 'Light' *A Foggy Dawn in Macclesfield Forest by Ean Davies*

Foggy Morning – I always think fog creates a certain atmosphere, especially in a forest. On a particularly

foggy morning, I trekked into Macc Forest and was hoping for some good views. This shot, with the sun low and appearing just behind a tall bare tree, standing above its neighbours, was just one of many taken that morning. I like the contrast between the bare branches, backlit by the sun, which are quite sharp and the shorter trees, which are lost in the murk.



Theme 'Song Titles'

I'm Still Standing by Ean Davies

This study of a solitary dead tree in a field above Poynton Coppice has long interested me and I have tried many times to capture it. When the snow fell at the start of this year, I knew this would be a great subject. The contrast of the dead branches and the freshly fallen snow works well, I think, and renders the image as almost pure monochrome with just a hint of colour in the tree trunk and in the grass just visible through the snow. I found it quite hard to shoot images with a song title in mind and, instead, waded through the archive for images that suggested well-known songs. The fact that this long-dead tree is "still standing" leapt out at me.



Theme 'Water'

Padley Gorge by Ean Davies

Padley Gorge is well known for its display of colour in the Autumn. I took a lot of colour shots on this trip, but the river was in full flood, so I spent some time trying to capture a few monochrome shots that showed the speed and volume of the water. This was a relatively close-up shot with a shutter speed just long enough to show some movement but without creating a complete blur. I enjoy the variety of moods that can be created by photographing water, just by selecting different shutter speeds. A little faster or a little slower and the image here would be very different.

Street Photography Workshop, Manchester, 26 June 2021 by Andrew Huggett.

Our workshop in Manchester was on a busy Saturday afternoon with strong directional sunlight. There were 5 of us, if you include Dave Boam who led the group. It was great to finally meet up with other members in real life – I have only recently become a member of the society during the 'Zoom era'.

At first I was very nervous about pointing a camera at complete strangers but as the afternoon progressed, I became bolder. It helped that we were a small group – although we remained spaced apart for much of the time. Being part of a group was a tremendous confidence booster. I am not sure how I would feel shooting on my own. After a couple of hours, we met-up indoors, out of the bright sunshine, for a coffee to review our images. Later, Dave created a private Facebook group to compare and critique each other's images.

I decided the slightly wide-angle lens on my compact camera would not suit my shooting style as I would have had to crop my images considerably in post-production. So, I took my smallest camera as I thought it would also be more discreet than a larger camera with a zoom lens.



I like this image because it catches both subjects posed in mid-footfall and the background was relatively uncluttered. It's necessary to pre-set focus with a smaller aperture to give an acceptably sharp image as you have to react very quickly. With street photography finding a plain background can be challenging – you can't rely on autofocus with a wide-open aperture to blur background and using a larger telephoto lens would make you too visible.

It was a hugely enjoyable afternoon and many thanks to Dave for organising the workshop.

Q&A

A new section for our newsletter where the Editor asks the questions. In this issue, our President, for 2021/2022/2023, Noel Patterson responds to a few questions.

Q *How and when did you get involved in photography?*

Noel As a child, I was the one with the family camera. The moment at university when I first saw an image appear on the paper in the darkroom I was hooked. I have had a couple of permanent darkrooms over the years and while it's great these days to get the instant image on the back of your camera, there was something uniquely satisfying working with film.

Q *Why does photography work for you? What is it about the hobby you find most satisfying?*

Noel I like trying to capture movement in a still image, showing what the eye does not see because it is happening quickly in a flurry of movement, focusing on shape and facial expression. Sport photography takes me behind the scenes in sport – a fascinating world. I am currently enjoying watching some of the Olympic gymnasts and athletes I have photographed over the years.

Q *What gear do you use and how did you make those choices?*

Noel Nikon D5, D750, 50mm, 28-300, 70-200, 300mm. I have a simple philosophy when it comes to kit, I buy new equipment when the gear I have will not do what

I want it to do and there is a better option. The choice of Nikon was driven by their superior performance in low light/high ISO. This is a major consideration since I often find myself shooting indoors at fast shutter speeds.

The change up from the D750 to the D5 was for better high ISO performance and the faster 12 frames per second burst mode. Mirrorless would offer some advantages but I have not been tempted yet since I can still do what I need with the kit I have.

Q What are your preferred genres and what drew do you to them?

Noel Sport, sport oh and sport. In the absence of sport, fast action nature has entertained me this year (thanks Bruce). As with many things in life I got into sports photography via a happy accident, photographing fencing for my son's business. I do like the fact that a game will start at a set time, and some action will occur in front of you come what may, you're not dependant on great light, or the animal you're waiting for coming along. It is rare to come away from a sports shoot and not have half a dozen shots that I would be happy to enter in a club competition.

Q Can you describe the moment when you know you've nailed a top image?

Noel In sports photography they say if you see it through the viewfinder you missed the shot. Often action is continuous so there is not always time to review shots other than to check technical settings. You know when some great action happened in front of you but you can never be sure what you caught; many things out of your control can spoil an image. The moment of seeing a great image is often when you review the images back home or after the game and think that could be good. It is a feeling of great satisfaction that you managed to pull everything together, particularly if you are trying to use a particular technique like slow shutter speed panning or positioned yourself for a particular angle and it worked out.

Q How would you like to progress your photography?

Noel I think I have reached a good standard with straight sports shots and covered a lot of sports, so I think the challenge ahead will be to make more creative images. I enjoy post processing and trying to pull the most out of an image. I have made some creative shots in the past. Visualising what to create and then executing it to an acceptable standard is appealing. But it's not easy; things may well get worse before they get better on competition nights!

Q If you had to choose one photo to show your newsletter readers what would it be and why this one?

Noel My current favourite is always my best recent image and right now it's a shot of an Osprey fishing, taken in the dark at 4.40am, making the most of the High ISO and burst rate of the D5 and finished in post processing.



Osprey at Dawn by Noel Patterson

The New Season is almost upon us...

Unless Covid 19 lockdown measures reassert themselves, we will be meeting almost every Tuesday from the first week in September 2021 until the end of July 2022. We meet at the Poynton Civic Centre in their Council Chamber room. As many of you know, the second Tuesday in every month, our room is booked, so we will run Zoom meetings on those evenings. I have done my best to produce a varied syllabus for the coming 12 months with many speakers new to North Cheshire. On Zoom nights we have talks from leading photographers, as far afield as New Zealand, Spain, Mexico, California and even Scotland. For more detail please go to our website.

Come and Join Us

Are you interested? then please send your email to membership-secretary@ncps.org.uk and we will get in touch with you. Alternatively if you would like to receive this newsletter then send your email to guest@ncps.org.uk.

And that's yer lot for now

Bruce...