

# The Newsletter

Insight, Primesite, Foresight

March 2011 - Issue #9



## Editorial

Oh my goodness! It is nearly April and I have not done the March newsletter...

Things have been really busy this month. Blogs, a practical session, the "Wolf Trip" and a visit to "Focus on Imaging 2011" have all had an impact. I have also tried to do some actual photography. Somewhere in there I attempted to earn a living! No rest for the wicked.

Ah, the Wolf Trip! Thanks to all of you who went to the Anglian Wolf Society. Twenty three members went - more than a quarter of the full membership. It was a great day out. I enjoyed the actual photography and the company. We did some great photography and helped each other to improve our techniques. It was really good talking to the members who were adventuring into 'full Manual mode'. A good time was had by all. Thanks to Caroline, our guide from the AWSoc too. Expect some great wolf pictures in our competitions in future. You can read my trip report on the Blog [ <http://www.marlowcc.org/blog> ].

So to why don't we do more trips? Member Dick Fielding asked this question. In fact after our discussion Dick has organised the "Photographing Hawks" trip. You can see more about the trip and sign up on the club Forum. See the 'Events' thread.

You don't have to be an expert photographer to organise a trip. You need to be enthusiastic about going somewhere to take photos. I am sure that any committee member would help point you in the right direction. So why not have a go?

**Damon Guy**

Email the MCC Secretary  
[mccsec@marlowcc.org](mailto:mccsec@marlowcc.org)

## Use Amazon – help the club



**Help M.C.C make a little money.** If you use Amazon via our search box on the website, you can earn us a little commission.

## Getting started in Black and White

When you make a colour photo you invite a whole complex of emotions, depths and contrasts related to each colour range. Cultural and personal colour associations have a powerful impact on your audience. It adds to the complexity of an image. That is not a bad thing. However, as photographers we are used to reducing our pictures to the simple elements. We want to emphasise the message. To simplify we blur the background, capture essentials by getting in close, or pan to sharply capture the moving object blurring the rest. In fact we use a range of techniques to cut out the non-essential elements – including post-processing. These things all simplify the picture and draw the eye to the main subject. This is also the case with black and white photography.

When the complexity of colour is removed we take another step to focus on the point of the picture. Shape and form in particular can be appreciated more without colour distraction. The contrast between greys lends form and depth to the shot.

Black and white photos convey an inherent beauty through simplicity. I have been staggered recently by the old black and white clips we are seeing from old Elizabeth Taylor movies. Great footage emphasised because her wonderful presence was simplified by the black and white capture.

The simplicity gained by the use of black and white is not just about converting from

colour. Here are some tips to help you to get the best black and white from your photography.



**The picture:**  
Elizabeth Taylor is a charismatic movie star – a truly stellar phenomenon. Her unique presence is emphasised by the simplicity of black & white photography.

*Shoot in colour...* OK, it sounds wrong. However, the modern digital camera is designed to capture everything about a scene. If you switch to B&W camera settings you are telling the camera to take a picture, then throw away some of the captured data. In doing so it uses a program to interpret the camera manufacturers idea of what is a good B&W picture. It will probably not produce the picture you want. So, as in all photography, get the most out of your shots. Shoot in RAW to capture everything. Then you can have full control over what data you want to discard or change in post processing.

*Look for scenes that have contrast...* A good B&W picture has strong areas of black and strong areas of much lighter shades. The picture will also exhibit a wide range of graduations in the greys in-between. Success in B&W is about capturing that contrast which forms the depth in the picture. You will have to visualise that in the colour shot you take. Then, in post-processing you will have to emphasis it with the contrast, gamma and brightness controls – among others.

*Don't convert to Black and White...* This one sounds wrong too. Actually it is the same point as the first one. In post-processing if you “convert to black and white” the application you use will apply an interpreted program. You will lose the control over the conversion. It does depend on the application you use. Some don't offer this option any more. What you want to do is convert to 'Grayscale'. This will

retain all your colour data as grey graduation. It allows you to have full control over what you do next.

*Shoot for shape, form, shadow and pattern...* Of course you do that in all your pictures. In B&W these elements of composition work particularly well. You can really get to the simplicity of the shot through the form of the pictures' subject, rather than say focusing on the emotional and cultural content.

Of course you can shoot or convert anything in B&W. However, the name of the game is 'impact'. Black and white photography is another way to bring out the essential elements you want to focus on in your picture. It is another way to sway your viewer into being impressed with your shot. Like all photography it needs practice and insight. It is, however, a worthwhile pursuit.

**Damon**

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### The Club Website

Wow, it's all happening on the website. See: [www.marlowcc.org](http://www.marlowcc.org) We have had a lot of activity this month. In fact our site is so busy that Google has started listing it near the top of the “Marlow” search results. Try it...

There have been lots of blogs this month, as well as a lot of comments about them. There has been some forum activity too. Make sure you sign up for the “Photographing Hawks Trip” there.



Have you checked out the gallery recently? Some of our competition photos are there. They make great viewing and are a source of inspiration to review.

Do you know what is happening on the website? Be there or be square:

<http://marlowcc.org/>

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It goes without saying that photography is a multi-billion Pound global business. In the UK we have our fair share of photography businesses. Yet, I thought the 'Focus on Imaging' show 2011 at the NEC in Birmingham was really about 'non-camera' kit. There were cameras for sale. One of our members got a great discount on one. However, I was struck by all the other kit. The feeling was perhaps emphasised by the absence of Canon. I have not found a reason for that. However, I did miss them. I wanted to look over a couple of things with a Canon rep there. Sadly I will have to wait for that to happen.

What really struck me were the other things on show. Ask Ray... He bought a camera strap! And, we both bought boxes to store prints. I was particularly interested in the wide range of bags and associated kit. I didn't need a bag. I was interested because there was so much of it and such a wide variety of 'bag' ideas too. It was almost as if the manufacturers had run out of camera or imaging ideas! Aside from bags I saw literally hundreds of other little bits of equipment. It seemed to me most of them would add little if anything to my photography. These sales are probably aimed at maximising revenue, not improving images. Am I just an old fogey?

I spent a long time looking at lights, which was my main interest in going to the show. It surprised me that I could not get a couple of the main players to sell me anything. It seemed truly difficult to buy! Perhaps the photography retailers are thinking deep recession and not customer service these days. Anyway, I did buy a set of Bowens lights in the end. Many of you saw them at the practical the other night. I am delighted with them. And, I got a great discount for my trouble, so, 't'was worth it in the end.

Another area of interest for me is tripods. I was impressed with the developments in

that area - particularly video tripods. I am not interested in video, but some of the substantial equipment provided really solid platforms. They would be excellent for big lenses and heavy cameras. There is also a wide range of tripod heads available now. I spent a long time on the Manfrotto stand and spent no money. If I'd had the money I would have purchased a "405 Geared Head" for my tripod, allowing for really accurate studio work.

You must have noticed the number of photography magazines on the newsstands. It seemed they were all there at the show. Well, you could have spent a small fortune on magazine subscriptions. Other paper products, especially printing paper companies, were also there in force. I learnt a lot about modern photo-paper. I also picked up dozens of leaflets. So I was armed with all sorts of information by the time I left.

I liked the Sigma stand. There was a truly massive lens (1000mm I think) which was so expensive my eyes watered just hearing the price. Apparently governments are buying them for surveillance. Hmmm! I also liked the new Sigma competitor to the 100mm Canon macro lens - the Sigma MACRO 105mm F2.8 EX DG OS HSM. It is a DG lens making it suitable for full frame and cropped sensor cameras. It is also optically stabilised. I think it is certainly worth a look if you want a macro lens and it's a lot cheaper than Canon...



I thought it was a good show. I learnt a lot, but not about imaging. I think next year they need to call it "Focus on non-image kit"!

Damon.

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## Hoppé Portraits - exhibition

Until 30 May 2011 the National Portrait Gallery is showing an exhibition of the work of Emil Otto Hoppé. He was a world class portrait and travel photographer active during the first half of last century. Some of his work is truly brilliant. While he was German born he lived in London for most of his active photography years. He shot some of the most famous people in the years before the Second World War and reflected a whole generation of portraits of that time. His work is both inspiring and excellent classic portraiture. You can find out more here:

<http://www.npg.org.uk:8080/hoppe/index.html>

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## And Finally...

Please think of contributing to this newsletter. Got any good, bad or ugly news? We would love to see it or read it.

### Contributions?



### A good website...

Ever heard of a 365 project? If, like a lot of photographers, you go everywhere with a camera then this is for you. The idea is that you take a photo for every day of the year. Simple? Yes, but a real challenge to actually carry out. This website helps you along the way. It will be a serious way to get practice.

<http://365project.org/>

... Enjoy.

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### ...A quote

I was photographing the D-Day landings when a voice said, 'If you take one more step back, you'll blow us both to smithereens. There's a mine behind you!' It's so easy to forget reality when you are holding a camera to your eye. The rest of

the world doesn't seem to exist.

- [Slim Hewitt](#)

British news photographer and cameraman

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### ...and 3 jokes on photographing kids

*Complement...*

Stranger: "That is beautiful child you have there."

Mother: "That's nothing. You should see his photograph."

*Beauty is in the eye of the beholder...*



*Photographic Studios need to advertise...*

