The Zoom meeting on Monday 22ⁿᵈ February went well and with around 16-18 members attending "on-line".

Brian introduced the meeting which then followed the Agenda set out in his email of Saturday 20ᵗʰ, and thus the main item was Len's presentation "**Layers and Masks**.

The Presentation: "Layers and Masks" – Len Fenton

Len told us that this presentation was a new one, and wasn't the same as similar ones that he has previously given – and it was based on using the latest version of PhotoShop Elements (which he had recently acquired very cheaply direct from eBay when a "special offer" came up!).

As there won't be an "on-line" version of the presentation, some basic notes were taken of what appeared to be the most significant points discussed (and apologies if any important ones were missed!), as follows:

- "**What are Layers?**

  Basically, "non-destructive" "versions" of the original ("Background") image are created by the user and can then be individually manipulated, and they co-exist with the original one. Layers can be switched ON or OFF, or set to have variable levels of "Transparency" so that some/all versions can be seen in the "final" one, as can the order in which they display in the list shown to the top Right of the editing screen - The main point to note is that any transparency applied affects the whole of that layer.

- "**Creating Layers**"

  A "new layer" tool, 'Place', allows you to do that, and Len demonstrated by starting with a Background image of a decorative plate and creating layer versions of that. He then successively "dragged and dropped" separate layer images of a slice of bread, a lettuce leaf, a tomato and a slice of bacon onto that, and showed how you could place, move and change those, notably w.r.t the transparency.

- "**More Tools**"

  These include the ability to exchange the order in which layers are incorporated, and to change the opacity of a layer.

- "**Merging two Bracketed Exposures**"

  He showed us 2 exposures of the same tree – the first had a "nice blue sky" but under-exposed ground and plants in the foreground, whereas the second had the opposite, i.e., an over-exposed sky, but nicely-exposed foreground and plants. He created one layer of the first shot and used the Magic Wand tool on that to select the Sky and "avoiding" the tree, used the Eraser tool to "rub out" the sky on the second layer, and then changed the transparency allowing the sky from the 1ˢᵗ shot to show over above the tree and foreground of the second layer.

- "**Inserting an object from one shot into another**"

  Using an old Alan Mellors' old shot from a trip to the western deserts in the US many years ago, Len showed how to insert the image of a coach in one layer on top of a high mesa in another one! The work was done mainly on the coach image layer where he created a "mask". The importance of a mask is that any portion can be erased by painting, using a brush tool, with black to erase pixels, or by painting with white to restore them. Painting with any shade of grey will apply a degree of transparency. That thus differs from a normal layer in that any degree of transparency can be applied to any area of the layer rather than the whole layer. He

then reduced the size of the coach, and moved it to the appropriate place
=> coach on top of mesa!

- **"Subtly altering a portrait to enhance it"**

  He showed a portrait of a young woman with blonde hair, but which was quite
  "bland". He then created an 'adjustment' layer where he reduced the saturation to
  "nil" and thus having a 'black content' layer on top of the original. He then added
  the two layers together to produce a more dramatic resulting shot.

- **"Pop Art"**

  This showed how to create an image of an item in full colour while all the rest of
  that image is in 'black & white'. Len opened a picture of a girl with bucket and
  spade on a beach, all in full colour, and then added an adjustment layer, and, again
  using the Hue and Saturation sliders, reduced the saturation to nil. Creating an
  'adjustment layer' automatically produces a 'mask' so that by painting the
  monochrome image of the girl with black, erased the affected pixels and revealed
  the full color of the girl in the layer beneath.

- **"Using the Text Tool"**

  He showed how to create a separate layer and add text to it, and merge it with the
  original, to show the text on top of the latter. Text is always created in its own layer.

Most of the members learnt/relearnt quite a lot about the use of "Layers & Masking" can do
– and **therefore very many thanks to Len for that presentation, and for the interesting and amusing way in
which he delivered it** 😊.

The February Competitions

Brian had already circulated the list of winning entries in both competitions, and had sent them to Eirwen and
Tony as appropriate, and so those shots will soon appear on our website pages as normal.

At the meeting Andrew led discussions in which he "Shared "the Google Photo albums of the two sets of
entries and invited the photographers of the winning shots, and the other members present, to comment.

We discussed the circumstances and locations where the shots had been taken, why they had turned out as
they had, and whether alterations to framing, lighting, subsequent cropping etc., might or might not have
"improved" the end results – as such that was very thought-provoking and entertaining.

After that, in response to a suggestion from Malcolm Barwick, Brian commented on how members might be
asked to submit their photos and votes directly into Google Photo Album, and that is a suggestion which will
be presented at a future Club meeting for further discussion.

The 22nd March presentation

John will give a presentation on "Creating Albums on Google Photos" and Brian will reprise his relevant and
January presentation about resizing images that are either too large or two small.

NB: the Committee aims to develop a meeting programme where the themes and presentations are decided
in advance on a3 month rolling basis, and so those for the next months should be announced quite soon.

The March Competitions
The March themed-competition will be for shots of "**Selfies and Portraits**", and Brian gave a short
presentation *(which Tony has now put on our webpages)* on that subject, with examples taken from:

- **Examples of Selfies:**
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UzY6Sp9k-og
- **Examples of portraits:**
  https://www.borrowlenses.com/blog/portrait-photography-tips

Thus you might want take a look to those shots and "brush up" on your familiarity with relevant subjects like:

- Choice of equipment, including correct choice of lens/focal length (something "slightly longer" than "normal" is generally advised for portraits)

- Composition, direction of the lighting, choice of aperture, and possibly the use of filters

- Getting down low for kids &/or animals so that you are on their level.

- Aim for authentic facial expressions, and shoot portraits "at angle" instead of "full-face"

- Use the "Rule of Thirds" (or maybe the Fibonacci Spiral?) to place the face at the most attractive part of the frame

- Maybe using "fill-in" flash as opposed to "full-on" flash, &/or using a reflector to direct the light where required

- Use of multiple images &/or reflections in mirrors (etc,)

- Creating "funny faces" by distorting parts of an image using Apps like "Fast Stretch"

- *NB: an ePhotozine email on the same subjects followed distribution of these Notes.*

The "Shot of the Month" competition continues "as normal", of course.

The timeline for competition entries and voting has been brought forward to enable entries, and notably the winning ones, to be reviewed and discussed at the following meeting – **which will be the 22nd March**

Therefore:
- The deadline for all **entries** will be: **midnight on Saturday 13th March**
- The deadline for **voting** will be: **midnight on Saturday 20th March**

A Scottish Tale! – Brian!
Brian rounded out the meeting by recounting a story of the of the Grandfather of his wife (Anna) who visited the Pebbles Hydro resort in Peebles in Scotland many years ago, and where a photo was taken of that gentleman, in full formal Highland dress. Brian then showed how he recreated that shot, but of his son standing in the same spot a couple of years ago!

Monthly meeting Diary Dates for 2021 - the 4th Monday of each month *(at least for the immediate future!)*

As you all know, the Hu3a meeting programme for 2021 is currently very "fluid" due to the ongoing pandemic and restrictions. However, for at least the next few months, the Committee aims to continue with **Zoom meetings on the 4th Monday of each month** until opportunities for face-to-face meetings at the Baptist Church *(or maybe elsewhere &/or as "photo-shoots??")* become much clearer and more stable.

Well, that's all for the moment, and so all the best and hope to see you all on
MONDAY 22nd MARCH at the next ZOOM Virtual Meeting!

Brian

And on behalf of the other members of the Steering Committee: Andrew Longhurst, Judy Peddie & John Allen!

NB: you can now see these Notes on-line at https://u3asites.org.uk/hillingdon/page/61662, where you will also find those from previous meetings, and there is also much information & guidance there on many aspects of photography, learning how to use your camera, image processing and printing, etc.!