

U3A Digital Photo Group – 28th October 2019 Meeting Notes

General

We had a good turnout, and this is what happened during the meeting:

- My presentation on “Autofocus & How it works (& why it sometimes doesn’t ☹)” - as attached in updated form in both “.pptx” and “.pdf” formats so that you can take a (or another) look at it to learn/remind yourself of what autofocus is about, and how you can make it work better.
- Tony Kemp outlined, and we discussed, his suggestion for a meeting where an experienced photography judge reviews and critiques (“gently”!) Members’ photos, and what he is already doing to make that possible.
- Reviewed and voted on the entries for the “Autumn” Prints Competition
- Reviewed, discussed & voted on the entries for the “Your Shot of the Month” Competition
- Discussed planned future presentation themes, and how preparing those can be greatly facilitated and enhanced by seeking out relevant content on the internet.
- Briefly discussed whether to have a meeting on Thurs 19th Dec this year (it was agreed that we will), and highlighted that, whilst the proposed meeting dates next year pose fewer issues than this year, we still have to decide if/when/where to have meetings in May and December 2020.

“Autofocus & How it works (& why it sometimes doesn’t! ☹)”

I’ve been interested in finding out more about how digital camera autofocus “mechanisms” work, and so preparing this presentation was a bit of a personal “voyage of discovery”.

In the presentation I talked about:

- What is “autofocus” (“AF”)?
- The design techniques used to achieve AF, the 2 major basic designs (“Phase detection” & “contrast detection”) of image sensors and how they operate - and the pro’s & con’s of each!
- How those 2 design techniques are coming together in the “hybrid sensors” widely found in some modern “mirrorless” cameras, and the technology that make that possible.
- How the numbers of “AF points” on sensors has grown over time from around 3 to, nowadays, often around 50-60, and even nearly 400 in some “high end” cameras – and how the increased numbers of such points leads to vastly improved AF focusing speed and accuracy.
- The camera AF settings which determine what part of the “picture” is “selected” as that on which to focus, how that affects whether or not the actual image is, *or is not*, “in focus”, and also how to adjust the AF to make it work “better” for you.

NB: If you look at nothing else in the presentation, please look at Slides 11-17 as they may help you understand why your shots of various subjects have not always come out as expected because of “something” that the camera AF system did, or did not, do!

- A little info on which companies make digital camera sensors – and why you may be surprised to know which other company may have made the sensor in your Nikon, Fuji, Olympus, Pentax or Panasonic camera.
- Some brief info on phone camera sensors as they are based on the same underlying design techniques as camera sensors, but how these are now becoming very sophisticated.
- On the last slide (21) I give hyperlinks to on-line resources (notably on YouTube) explaining how the AF in particular models of digital camera/camera phone work and how to adjust it.
I selected the cameras & phones using info from members’ “Your Shot of the Month” images - please look at that slide if you want to find out more about how the AF in your own camera works and how to adjust it.

- In addition, Len has since provided information about the new “**Post Focus**” capability which has been implemented on some Panasonic LUMIX DMC-series mirrorless cameras (-**GH4**, -**GH4R**, -**G7**, -**GX8** – **FZ330**, -**TZ80**, & -**TZ100** models) by new firmware.

It allows you to take a photo and *then* decide what section is in focus *after the event* – see here if you have one of those cameras and want to know more about this previously almost unimaginable facility <https://blog.parkcameras.com/2017/01/post-focus-explained-understanding.html> !

Unfortunately, that was a lot of ground to cover in one session, and so, as a result, it was probably rather too long and complicated for some members, and for that I apologise. However, understanding a little more about how your camera or phone AF works could result in significant improvements to your images and thus your “hit rate” of good shots.

Future Meeting Themes & Presentations

As mentioned above, Tony Kemp proposed a unique opportunity for us to have a qualified, independent photography judge visit us to critique our photos. This is something members have asked for before and after a show of hands, it was clear this was a very popular proposal and that we should proceed.

A quick discussion confirmed the proposal to be:

- a) Members can choose to either take part and submit photos or just listen to the feedback on others
- b) Members would submit 2 photos each to make a total of about 30 or so in total
- c) Photos will be displayed electronically (as opposed to print form) and Tony offered to do all the compilation work needed for this, and then to submit them to the judge prior to the meeting so that she has adequate time to review them before making her comments at the that meeting
- d) Photos will not be themed so that members can choose shots they would want feedback on
- e) We can decide if we want our photos to be anonymous or not, but if anyone wants to be anonymous then we will all have to be.
- f) We will review all the proposals and timescales at the November meeting.
- g) We should then aim for an early 2020 meeting, say January for this session, as November & December are already planned.

As regards the **November** meeting, Brian has volunteered to give a presentation on “smartphone photography” - it will be very different to the “Photography using an iPhone” presentation he gave at the October 2018 meeting, and will include what he has since found on out from various magazine articles, on-line and so on.

The **December** meeting (on Thursday 19th, not Monday 21st!) will, as usual, be more a social occasion than a “pure photography” event – and we might include some videos of the funny/stupid antics that other photographers get up to when trying to “take the shot of a lifetime” 😊.

Nevertheless, we still need volunteers to take on and give presentations in 2020 on new themes and techniques, as well as revisiting ones previously covered but adding new information and links to useful online videos and the like.

The October Prints Competition “Autumn”

Voting on the 12 entries resulted in the following:

1st - Andrew Longhurst “Toadstools on a Log”

2nd Equal (x3)

- Brian Hillier “Bracket Fungi”

- Margaret Mayes “Autumn Leaves”

- Andrew Longhurst “Gate to a Field”

NB: there were a lot of shots of fungi – hope no-one tried eating any!

As usual the Winning Members should send the image files for those shots to the email address hillingdonu3a.pictures@gmail.com - giving the:

Competition name – “Autumn”, the photo position number and the “photo name” (AS ABOVE, PLEASE!!), and, of course, their own name; and image file sizes should be NO LARGER than 1Mb.

(please DO NOT send/copy them to me).

NB: I have sent a message to the above email address so that Eirwen knows what to expect to receive from the Winners – and clearly identified the 3 shots that were placed “2nd Equal. They should then be on our webpages a few days after the WCH meeting on 11th November – see here in due course:

<https://u3asites.org.uk/hillingdon/page/93256>

“YOUR Shot of the Month, ANYTHING goes” – October Competition

We had a very good entry of 24 shots, and, after the review and voting, the Winners were:

- 1) Freda Longhurst “Cats Dental”
- 2) Len Fenton “2 Kittens”
- 3) Jothy Rainbow “Face” (a Kew Gardens sculpture)
- 4) Malcolm Barwick “Toadstool”

I will forward those 4 images to Tony Kemp for our “Your Shot of the Month” web pages for October and so you should soon be able to see them here <https://u3asites.org.uk/hillingdon/page/86648>

NB: Due to the severe restriction on how many photos U3A Hillingdon is allowed to have on its website (only 1000), Tony has had to archive many earlier ones to a Google Drive location – but I hope we can arrange for the members to have easy access to that in the future.

Monthly meeting Diary Dates for 2019 - the 4th Monday of each month

(EXCEPT for some on Thursdays as indicated below)

Mon 25th Nov, *Thrs* 19th Dec

PS: We would very much appreciate “Apologies” emails/phone calls if you can’t attend any of the meetings!

All the best and see you on **MONDAY 25th November at the Church**

John

And on behalf of the other members of the Steering Committee: Judy Peddie, Len Fenton and Brian Hillier!

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