

LOUTH U3A

Photography Group Newsletter

Special points of interest:

- Next Meeting—Thursday 1st April (see page 4)
- Second April meeting Thursday 15th April (see page 4)

March Meeting Report

The hard-core group of photo-enhancers (see more on this subject further on) met again at their usual haunt on the third Thursday of the month.

The group now has a multi-format card reader at its disposal which works quite happily with the laptops so there should not be any excuse for not being able to load our images off our cameras for editing. Members of the group who want to use it at home are quite welcome to borrow it for short periods.

We started off by discussing printing of images because the subject had come up in conversation during the month. The only reason to want to do home printing would be for one-off's, urgently required prints or for some special format that cannot be had from the variety of local outlets who offer very cheap printing deals.

Most of the session was spent working through the selection of enhancing tools that paint.NET provides. It was quite surprising how some of the images were made to look so much better after a bit of tinkering with them; even those that were thought to be not too bad before we started on them. Even the simple matter of cropping off some of the surrounding border can make a difference. We also got carried away and applied the oil-painting effect to the image of a film star. That was quite realistic too.

As far as setting up the next meeting is concerned, which had been planned as an outside event for April, we had another proposal tabled which will result in there being two meetings a month through the non-winter seasons. The hard-core folk want to carry on meeting every month so that they don't lose their hand at the photo editing; but equally they wanted to go out and do some real photography. This plan of action will also open up the calendar to those of our original members who have not been with us for the last three computer sessions. The most difficult part of enacting this new plan is to pick the timing for the outside trips. For entirely selfish reasons the computer sessions will continue to be held on the 3rd Thursday of the month at the Golf Club, who have been excellent hosts to us. It was decided to make the outside meeting on the first Thursday of the month; usual time of 10:00 to 12:00, various locations to be decided on a monthly basis.

Inside this issue:

Photo Gallery—It's a small world	2
Paint.NET tips from users	3
Getting in really close	3
April Meetings	4

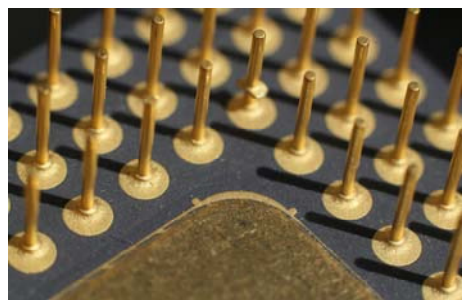
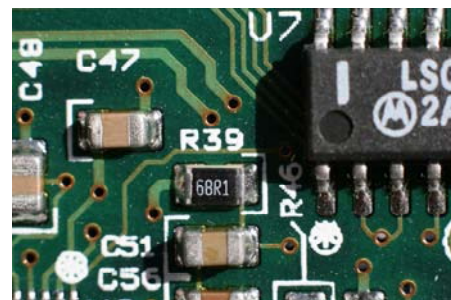
Letter to the editor

DL of Utterly (useless, we can add I would think) writes, address withheld for obvious reasons (by e-mail no less):-

I have one of the first digital cameras that came out and want to upgrade to something a bit more modern. My grandson has been telling me that digital cameras work like computers where everything is done digitally with either a one or a nought (zero). He explained this to me and I think I got the hang of it. Presumably the nought is black and the one is white. I can see how this will work very easily in black and white photography if the nought is black and the one is white. That would be the easiest way to do it because then reasonably darkish areas would be done with small ones while brighter areas would be bigger ones right up to the largest one being used for bright white. Now my grand-daughter has visited me and told me she has just bought a digital colour camera. I find this hard to believe because surely then there would be so many different coloured ones, all of a different size, for each spot on the negative. My son said he would come round and show me his camera because he thinks he knows how it works, but I think he has forgotten where I live now. If anyone in your photography group could spare an hour or two to come round to the home and show me their camera I would be most grateful. We are having an open visiting day on the morning of

continued on page 4

Photo Gallery – It's a small world by Brian Cooper



Paint.NET Tips from users

Two things this month come to mind.

Printing:- At first sight, printing from within paint.NET looks quite promising. When you get to the “Print Pictures” window, either from the print icon, or the File ► Print path or by using the keyboard shortcut CTRL+P, you are presented with what looks like a good choice of options, many of which offer more than one picture per page. However, I could not get more than one picture selected so could only get one picture to print on the 2, 4, 9, or 35 options. Something led me to think that the “Print Pictures” window was familiar, as it turned out to be. It is, in fact, the very same window that comes up if you try to print from Windows Photo Gallery which is part of Windows Vista. In Windows Photo Gallery you can select multiple images to print. I tried it with four images selected and it worked as expected for all multiples of images/page. If you select four images and print them two per page it automatically put them onto two pages. So the method of working is to process your images in paint.NET, save them into a common folder, or copy or move them to one later, then open Windows Photo Gallery and print them from there. Bob S showed us a very nicely printed set of 9 images all on an A4 sheet which he had done using this method.

Updating paint.NET:- Has your copy of paint.NET been updated since you installed it? At the time of writing this (20th March) the current version is 3.5.4. When we found paint.NET it was at version 3.5.2, so updates occur reasonably frequently. Going from 3.5.2 to 3.5.4 are relatively minor updates, quite probably only bug fixes which may never affect you. If it jumps to 3.6 then that's something worth having for sure. The first update to my set-up came down automatically; the second one I found by doing a manual check. The way to do it manually is by following the menu item Utilities ► Check for updates path. It's quite a quick process but paint.NET will have to close to instal the new version so don't have any unsaved files open at the time you choose to do it.

Getting in really close

Taking close-ups is one of my fascinations—hence the photo gallery that fell to me to do again this month. Ten of the twelve images in the gallery are full-frame pictures, i.e. not just bits cropped from larger shots. These files will blow up to A3 size and maybe even beyond before you see the pixels appearing. The two that are not strictly full-frame are only that way because I rotated them (by less than 2°) to get the writing horizontal on the integrated circuits—it looked very naff before the rotation even with that small misalignment of the text.

The usual focussing range of regular lenses spans from infinity down to about half a metre or slightly less. Some lenses can then be put into a macro range which can take you in to say 15 cm., but then the far distance is very restricted, say down to a couple of metres. Long focal length (telephoto) lenses do not focus as close as short (wide angle) ones. Just out of interest, did you know that you can take a picture of yourself literally hand held if you set the zoom to wide angle and hold the camera and point it at yourself at full arm's length, then just press the button. Most of your arm holding the camera should be out of shot so it doesn't look too odd. It's just a bit hit-and-miss on whether you get all of your head and shoulders in the picture. But with digital cameras, what have you lost in trying.

So how is getting really close-up done? In the old days before SLR's and digital cameras it could be done by screwing a supplementary lens to the front of the regular camera lens. The supplementary lenses came in different strengths which let you get in closer as the strength of the lens increased. I had a 1 dioptre lens for my Kodak Retinette 1a. The problem with using this technique is that the viewfinder is not aligned up to work down to these shorter distances. You had to use special marks in the viewfinder to line up the shot and even then a certain amount of guesswork was involved. Remember, this was not a digital camera; the film went off for processing and when it came back you saw how far out you were, and if you really, really wanted the shot you did it again on the next roll of film. The macro setting on modern lenses works by moving some of the lens elements around inside the lens to make it focus closer. Doing this is a bit of a compromise so getting in extremely close is not all that practical using this method.

Getting really close in to the subject is best done with an SLR camera where this type of camera has the advantage of being able to get the lens off and away from the camera body. If you can pull the lens say 25 to 80 mm away from its usual position its focusing range changes dramatically. So a piece of 50mm diameter water pipe about 30mm long is what we're looking for. Fortunately camera makers sell just such bits of kit which they call extension tubes. They are obviously more complicated than just bits of pipe; they need to attach to the camera body and the lens mount securely and accurately, and these days they need to make all the electrical connections between the camera body and the lens for such things as auto-focussing and metering. The tubes do not contain any optical components (lenses) so they do not degrade the performance of the lens, as opposed to the supplementary lens which if it was of poor quality would degrade the performance of the prime lens.

Tubes come in different lengths and you can put more than one tube at a time on the camera. I bought a set of three tubes which have lengths of 12mm, 24mm and 36mm. There are thus 6 lengths that can be made from this set, ranging from 12mm up to 72mm in 12mm steps. The shot of the rodent's teeth was taken using all three.

There are a number of critical issues that need to be dealt with when shooting at these extremes. Camera shake gets magnified as distance falls and there is no way to hand-hold such a shot (as the rodent's teeth). As you will see from the images on the next page, the lens is 72mm further away from the camera body than usual which makes the camera front heavy. My miniature G-clamp tripod (Fig 1) was not strong enough to support all that weight without trembling, hence the grass mats used as a steadying support under the front of

Letter to the Editor (continued from page 1)

1st April and Matron says she will give you my address when you get here.

Ed: It may be too late to volunteer on this one — depends on whether you read it before or after noon today.

Getting in really close—continued from page 3

the lens. The complete set-up used to take the rodent's teeth is shown as Figure 1. It consists of a small table standing on top of another table so that everything is at eye level.

Camera shake can also be introduced by touching the camera to release the shutter. There are two ways round this one. One way is to use the self-timer setting so that the shutter fires 10 seconds after you touch the button, then the camera will not move under your finger pressure on the button. The way I did it was to connect the remote button release cable. Because the release button on digital cameras is just an electrical switch, adding another switch in parallel is easy; and it's easy to make it longer than shown in Figure 1.

Camera shake on an SLR can also be caused by the mirror jumping up as the shot is taken. On SLR type cameras there is a mirror in the optical path between the lens and the view-finder. When you press the button to take a shot, the mirror pops up allowing the light to fall onto the shutter, which then opens for the set duration after which it shuts, then the mirror drops back into its normal lowered position. This is why when using an SLR you lose sight of the scene being taken at the instant the shutter is open. To get over the problem of mirror induced shake there is a camera setting which allows you to lock the mirror in the up position. Taking a picture then becomes a two press job; first press lifts the mirror, second press operates the shutter and then lowers the mirror at the end of the exposure.

One last thing, when taking shots where your eye is not actually looking through the viewfinder when you push the button, there is a chance of getting the exposure wrong. If your eye is not up against the viewfinder light can get in through the eyepiece and mess up the exposure meter reading. To get round this you need to block off the viewfinder eyepiece with the blanking gizmo that comes with the camera for this very purpose.



Fig. 1



Fig. 2

That's the last of the set-up and implementation issues to deal with when shooting at extremely close range. There are optical snags that come into play that I'll deal with next month.

Figs. 2 and 3 show the closeness of the subject to the front of the lens and the three tubes stacked together between the camera body and the lens.



Fig. 3

To be continued, in May

April Meetings

There will be **2** meetings in April and throughout the summer months;

First Thursday — 1st April 10:00 to 12:00 "In and around Fotherby" — an outside photo-shoot gathering — **all are welcome**. We will be walking through the village which is quite long and maybe straying onto a footpath or two. Come in stout footwear and bring a stick if you need it. Meet in the car-park beside Fotherby Church. It's not very big, so car sharing would leave room for others. Bring your camera manuals unless you know absolutely everything about your camera - and charge the battery after the winter break.

Third Thursday — 15th April 10:00 to 12:00 "Hard core photo enhancing" - usual rules, phone me beforehand (previous hard-core folk excepted) to reserve a seat as we have limited space and limited computers. Usual venue.

Newsletter news

The Newsletter is generated as a colour document and will be distributed in colour by e-mail to those members who have, or admit to having, an e-mail address.

Happy snapping,

Brian Cooper

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