Hot Chocolate !

Hi everybody.

I hope you are all keeping well. In these difficult times it is hard for us to get out and about to take photographs...... So what else can we do?

Some of us have turned to checking our old stock of images (A good idea for spring cleaning the hard drives), some of us have been out in the garden and trying a bit of macro where possible, some have had a go at still life,and some have managed to get out for local walks and taken shots then. Whatever you have been having a go at, it has been great to see the images presented to Facebook.

In addition we have managed to stage a few events via the internet (Skype and Zoom) which, despite occasional technological difficulties , I believe have been quite successful.

The recent "Lock down" competition was a successful event and we hope to arrange some more. We had 36 images covering a wide range of genres and I think provided members with a sense of what our hobby can do for us in these hard times.

Although Richard found it difficult to judge the images and by his own admission , his choices were affected by his own feelings for what he liked, he made a sterling effort and picked up on valid points that many judges would also have raised as issues.

The successful members of the evening were,

Paul Reynolds for Abandoned,

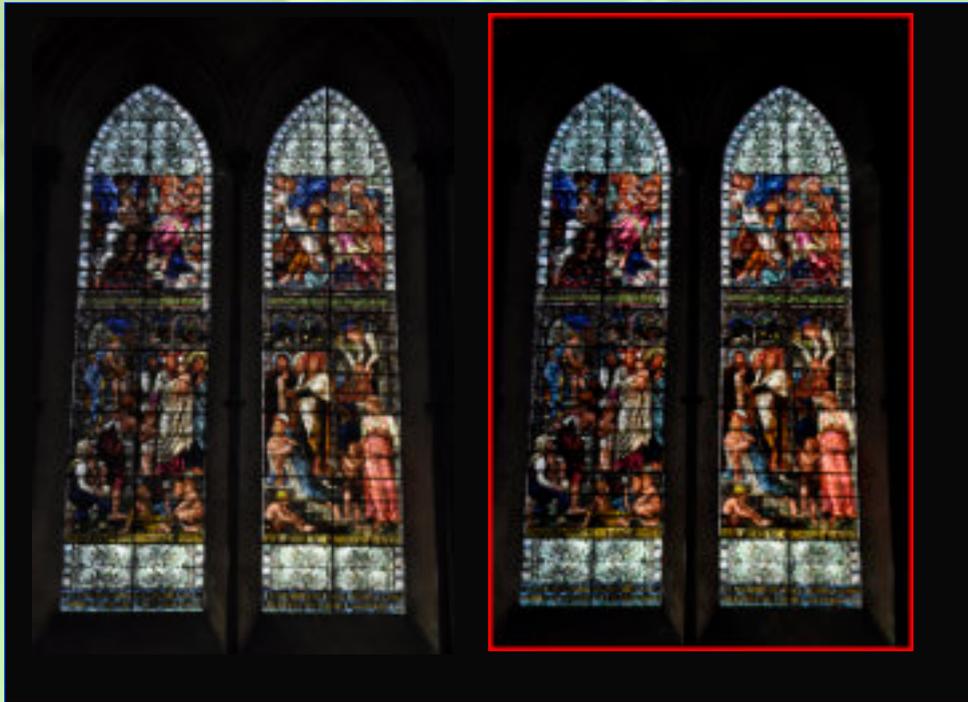Tony Stamp for Stonechat

Graham Orgill for Tulip

Tulip

Stonechat

Abandoned

Watching the Border

When we produce digital images for showing in competitions or otherwise we should be mindful of the fact that the display screen is usually black. This means that any image that has a very dark background may lose its boundaries and therefore detract from the image's photographic impact.

One of the ways around this is to use a border effect (BUT NOT TOO BIG!!)

In the example used above the black background surrounding the windows would merely blend into the background of the display screen whereas putting a border around allows the image to stand proud of the screen and not lose intended definition at the edges. (I used a 50 pixel red border for demonstration)

There are a few ways to add your border; some being easier than others , but find your own way.

Most people have Photoshop , and provided it is a fairly modern format they should all work the same.

First of all, open your image. This will open your 'Background' layer which is usually locked . Click on the padlock to unlock this layer to make it 'layer 0'.

Next we select *Image >>> Canvas size*. I usually select pixels for DPIs and enter the size of border wanted. Check that the 'relative' box is checked and the 'anchor' is centred as in the image; and select OK.


This will place a border around your image , which at the moment has no colour.

Next we will add colour by selecting a 'New fill layer' and 'Solid Colour' from the drop menu .
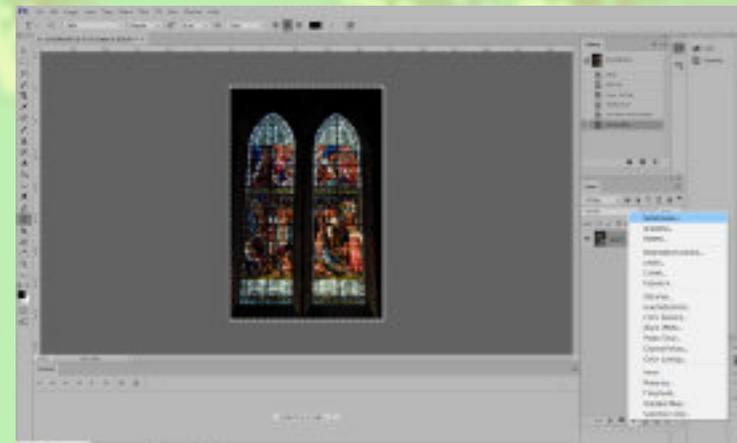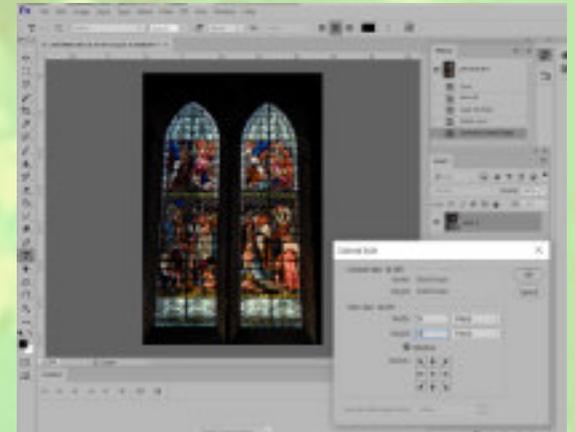
This will present you with the colour panel. Choose your colour!

You should now have a red screen (or whichever colour you chose) over your image. Go to your layers panel and click and drag the 'Colour fill' layer down below the image layer......... Et voila!
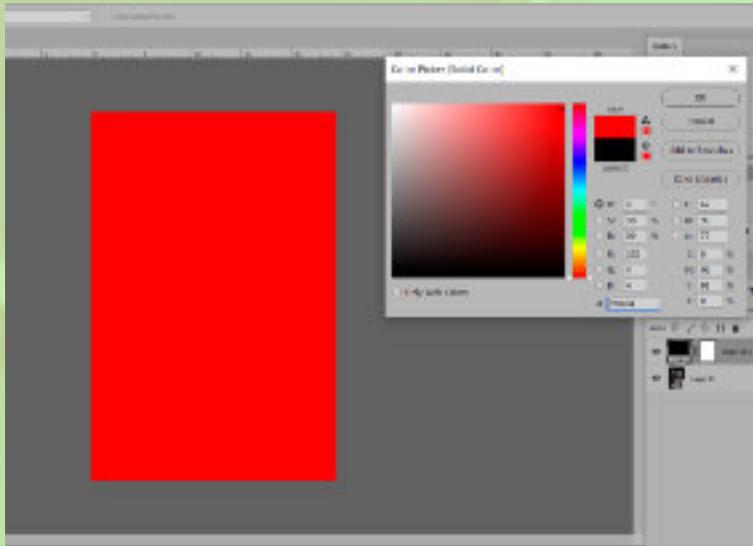

If you would like to change the colour , simply click on the fill layer (the coloured bit) to get your colour swatch back and choose a new colour. You can also use the dropper to select a colour from within your image.

Another way to create a narrow border around your image is as follows:-

Open your image, as before and unlock the layer to make a live layer. With this layer selected choose the *fx* symbol at the bottom of your layers panel and from the drop menu choose 'Stroke'. Ensure that in the 'Layer Style' you select

>   Position – Inside
>   Blend – Normal
>   Colour – Opens Swatch

Select your colour as before and then determine the size by moving the Size slider to and fro. Again from with the colour swatch you can use the dropper to select a colour from your image.
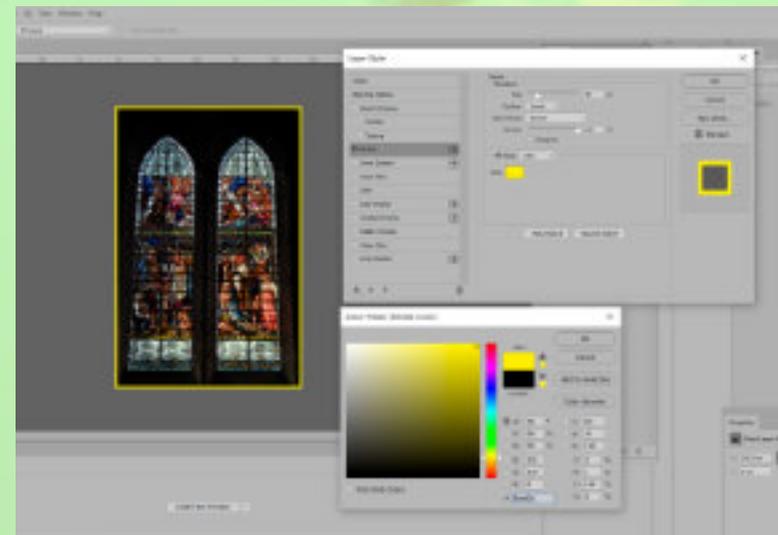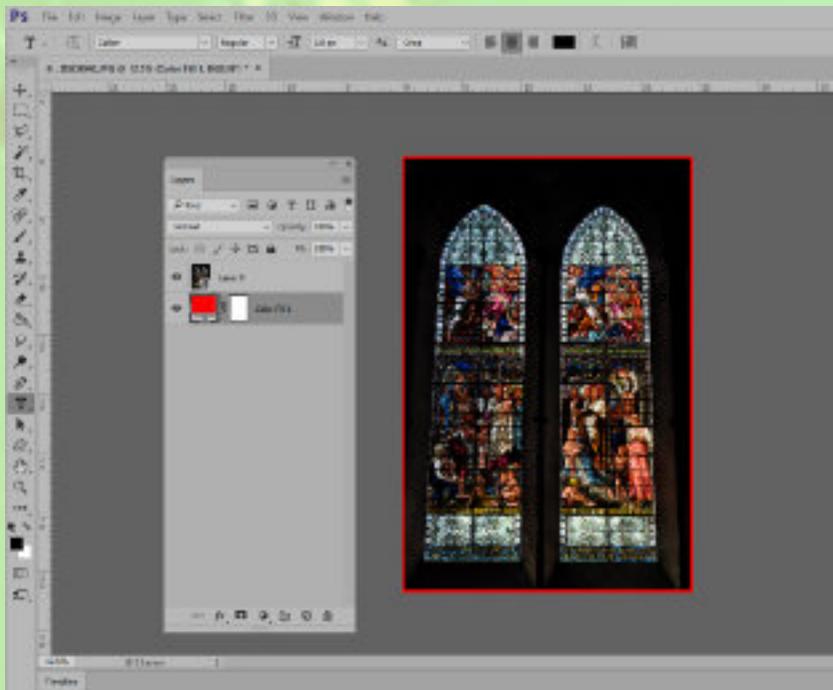
When you are happy resize your image in the usual way for presentation.

Busy doing nothing

It's wet , it's windy, can't get out .... What can I do? I need something for the 'lock down' competition.

I recently saw a documentary which had a camel train in one of its shots and they were in silhouette.... Inspiration!!

This is what I entered into the competition; created in my garage (Camels made a mess though!).

First of all I needed some camel pictures. So I traced some images from the grand-kids colouring books, cut them out and painted them black. They were then attached to wire so that they could be stood up.

The next task was to create the desert. Fortunately we had a bag of golden sand from the children's sandpit (My wife and I were going to use it in the garden to create a beach since we can't go away this year...) which was piled onto a board on my bench in the garage and shaped using hands and a hair drier to create the dune effects.

The camels were then placed in the sand and photographed with a plain background.

Now to add the magic of computer software.

1. Remove background

2. Add Cornish sunset

3. Shadows

4. Flip

5. Resize

I have used similar techniques to produce other images just for fun. It helps you to become more familiar with your photo software and stops you getting bored on a wet day.

Let's make it a better day.

I picked up on Facebook a comment re changing a to a better sky. As Dave T said, there are some great videos on YouTube ...... But perhaps this may be of use to some of our newer members (assuming you have PS. If not please let me know). Please note this is one of the ways that I use in my work flow.


First of all Open the image and duplicate the Background Copy to make a work copy. Switch off original Background

Next I will find a suitable sky image and copy this to a new layer. Decide where your virtual horizon will be in your image and pull a ruler down from your top horizontal bar to your horizon.
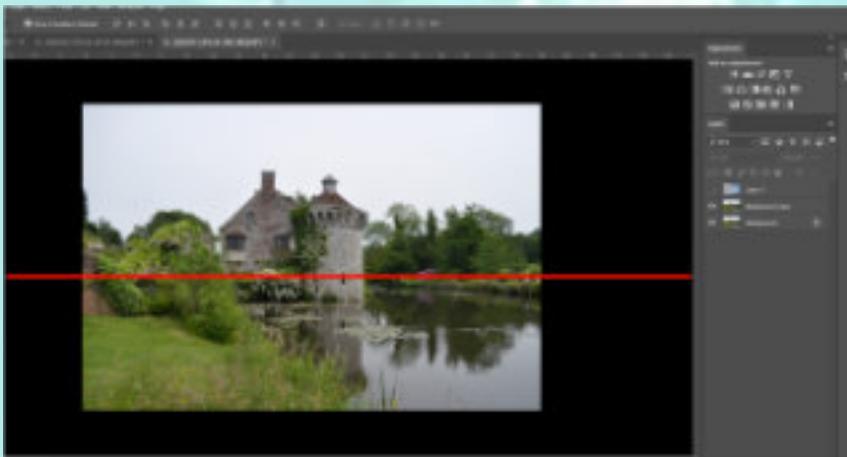

Switch off the working image and duplicate the cloud layer. Then using the square marquee selection tool I select the portion of the cloud image below the ruler (horizon) and hit delete, followed by Deselect > Edit > Transform > Flip Vertical. This should give you a reflected sky.
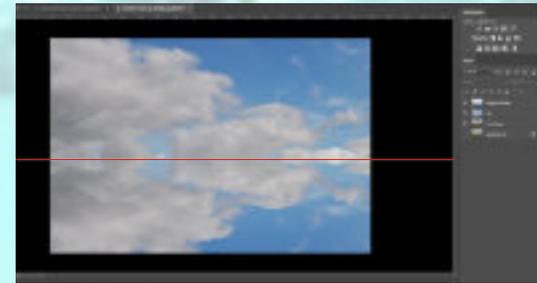
Move the working copy above your sky layers and switch the skies off; and zoom in (especially if you have trees , so that you can see the finer branches) and Select > Layer > Layer Style > Blending Options.

Since our skies tend to be in the blue light spectrum (even grey ones) select the Blend If to Blue. Gradually move the little white slider to the left and you should see your area of sky start to disappear. As the bulk of your sky goes hit Alt + Click on the slider. This will allow it to split and you can make finer adjustments by moving the left hand portion in the same direction to hopefully remove any 'halos'. (Just play around until you are satisfied.) Switch your skies back on and you should find that you have replaced the sky and have a reflection as well. You may wish to tweak the sky layers, brightness, contrast etc
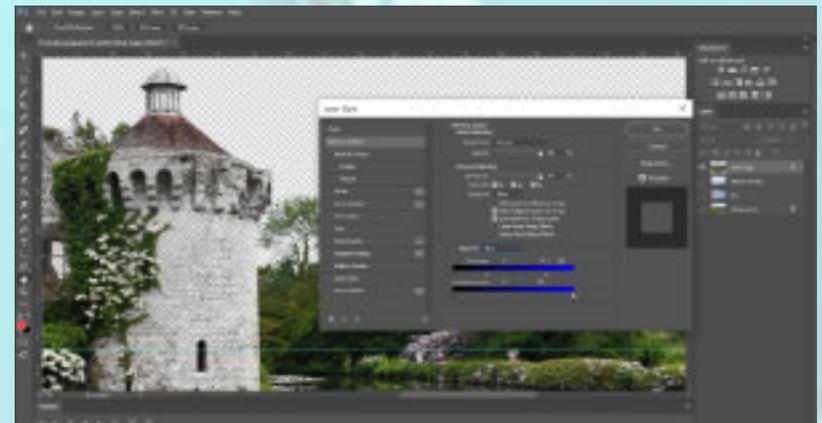
And … we're on the home straight .....

You may notice that your skies are showing through some parts of the image that you do not wish them to. This is because using the blend if will act on the highlights within your image that have any of the blue spectrum in and cause wiped out sections.

We will now switch on our background and make a copy and place it above the clouds layers. Now hold Alt and click on the add layer mask icon. This will place a black mask in this layer. Make sure that your paint swatch is set to white & black and select the paint brush and paint white over the highlight areas that were affected.
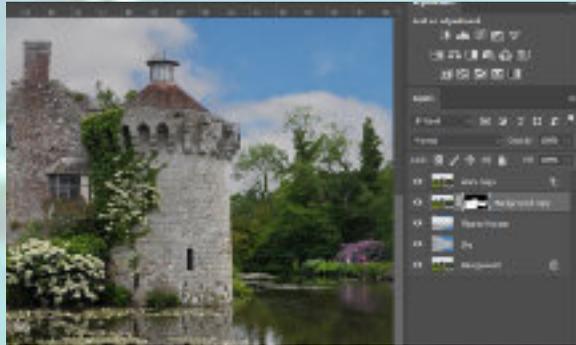
When you are happy save the image in the usual way. I will normally save as a jpeg then reopen it and make any final adjustments like cropping etc.

After

Before

I hope that this has been of use to newer members. When I first did this, I made a right pigs ear of it, but by repeating it with several different sky replacements it became easier. There are other ways of doing this, but you find out what suits you and your software best. I also use Affinity Photo and I know that Dave Tucker uses ON1. If you would like to contact me for any help I can hopefully point you in the right direction....... But do check out YouTube (and have pen and paper at the ready)

Keep your photography alive while our actions are restricted and try new ideas new techniques etc. Its amazing what still life and creativity can be achieved in a garage or quiet room.

Whatever you try or do; let me have a brief explanation and some shots and we'll put it in the next SNAPSHOT

Contact: robalbutt@hotmail.co.uk