

PictureMaker



Mashonaland Photographic Society



2023 Issue 1
January

Rain and all it Brings...



Cover image: "Lightning before Christmas" by Christo Smith,
Umhlanga, KZN, South Africa

In this issue....

Editor's Blurb

From the President's Viewfinder

Guest showcase

Blast from the past...

Showcase top Jan 2023 MPS entries

Set Subject categories for 2023

Set subject March 2023 inspiration

Gadgets & Gizmos

Monthly Montage

Monthly meeting:

22 Feb 2023 at 6pm

Venue: Meditation Centre

6 Borrowdale Lane,

Opposite Borrowdale Trauma Centre

ANNUAL SUBS 2023 are due
\$25 per member payable at the
next meeting

Set Subject: March 2023

"Rocks, Stones or Pebbles"

Colour, no manipulation

Deadline: 12 noon 6 March 2023

MPS Contacts:

Nige Westwood – President

westwood@zol.co.zw 0772 309 841

Caro Dean – Membership

thedeans@zol.co.zw 0783 138 150

Nige Westwood

Competition Entries Collator

mpsphotos@hotmail.com

0772 309 841 / 2884222

Bridget Henderson – PictureMaker

Editor

bridget99.h@gmail.com

0772 240346

Editor's Blurb:

Bridget Henderson



Hello, hello. A new look PictureMaker this month as Chris Sheppard has passed on the editorship baton after 10 years of unfailing dedication. The assimilation of content, design, construction and publication has been carried out primarily by Chris for the last 100 issues or more. This has been a monumental effort and largely a thankless task, for which I am only appreciating the time, dedication and perseverance involved, now that I have had to give it a bash! "Thank you Chris" seems meagre but it is genuine. Your shoes are too big to fill and your eloquence is remarkable!! Thanks too go to Nige Westwood for continuing steerage of our MPS ship and to Caro Dean for her valuable input during Chris' reign.

Taking on this mantle required a bit of background research and this has been a humbling experience. MPS has a very significant history dating back to its inception in 1939, a little of which I have mentioned in the sector "Blast from the past..." . Nige sent me all the PictureMaker issues that he has on hard drive and I perused multiple issues in the Archives (now that visit was quite an experience!). The bottom line is that there is so much information, both educational and inspirational, written and published in these MPS newsletters that have been issued regularly for the last 69 years. It is well worth spending time looking through material past to this end.

This issue of PictureMaker incorporates a few new sections being "Guest Showcase" and "Gadgets and Gizmos" . The intention is to include similar features in most, but perhaps not all, future issues, subject matter depending, to bolster the education and inspiration of our members.

Seeing as this issue is based around the January set subject of "Rain and all it Brings" , I chose to showcase a guest photographer who specializes in the genre of landscape photography and in particular lighting images. I have been following Christo for quite a while on Instagram and am always impressed with his dramatic images. I messaged him on Instagram and asked straight out if he would be interested in appearing in PictureMaker, not knowing him from a bar of soap. He immediately responded "yes" and with much enthusiasm agreed to showcase his images . I am very grateful to him for his time in penning his words and allowing us to publish his dramatic pictures. I have attached his social media handles for others to follow and I strongly recommend you have a look at his work and "buy him a coffee". He has given a thorough account of his photography journey thus far as well as many helpful hints on his chosen genre of photography . Amazing images, inspirational stuff! Thank you Christo.

Enjoy!

From the President's Viewfinder – January 2023



Welcome to 2023 and another year with the Mashonaland Photographic Society. It's always a positive start to open with good news and this is that PictureMaker will continue to be published! I had reconciled myself to the fact that after so many years we had finally reached the end of the road with no enthusiasm to continue and then up stepped Bridget to grasp the baton. Thank you, thank you, thank you. After last month's meeting, she, Chris Sheppard and I (unfortunately Caro couldn't make the meeting) met to chart the way forward of our in-house monthly magazine, looking at different ideas which will continue to make it not only a worthwhile monthly record of Society meetings/activities but a useful training aid to all and especially our newer members.

Discussion around the history of PictureMaker was such that I put out an appeal to members for past issues and on Jim's suggestion Bridget headed down to the National Archives to explore their records. Bingo. Their oldest edition is 1954 and it would seem that they received copies up until 1993. What happened then? Thanks to Kim Rennie, Jenny Don (a past editor of PictureMaker) and my own records, we also have copies from 2009 up until the present. In these old copies there's an incredible amount of Society history, technical detail and a wonderful record of how the members' pictures have developed over the years and much material for Bridget to pick from for inclusion in future editions. The Society horizon looks brighter already! Don't forget that articles from members relating to their own interests, trips and photographic ideas / comments are always welcome and don't be shy in coming forward with whatever you think would interest the members. Bridget, we wish you well with your new challenge.

As members will recall, I was somewhat unexpectedly away for the month of January settling my sister into a care home in Malta. Somewhat optimistically I had taken my camera with me thinking that for relaxation I would get in long walks in the English countryside or the busy streets of Valetta but no such luck. I am still trying to figure out just where January did go! There were only two occasions when I was able to get the camera out of its bag, one a National Championship go-kart meeting in Malta in which my Grandson was entered and a pheasant shoot on my last day in the UK to which my son had been invited to participate. The only lens I had taken was my nifty fifty being that I was due to collect a Sigma long job which happened sooner than I had anticipated. On both outings the weather looked somewhat dubious and being that the Sigma model was not weather sealed I opted for the '50'. I recall some of the comments that were made after the President's Platter last year which featured this very lens and I have to say that I was suitably impressed with my efforts which I finally got to review some days ago. Sure, you don't have the reach, but used creatively and as recommended in so many You tube training videos, yes, you can get great pictures. (I think I impressed my son sufficiently that he is now going to buy one himself!) It certainly cuts down on the amount of 'stuff' you have to carry around and makes a day out with your kit infinitely more pleasant. Try it!

Going forward? I hope that we, as the Committee, can come up with ideas to stimulate your enthusiasm to become more active in the Society and attend regular monthly sessions. We have finalised the list of set subjects and once you view same in the first issue of PictureMaker, invite you to come up with ideas as to what you would wish to see happening around the particular month's set topic. An outing, training session or a talk by an expert at the monthly meetings? Your ideas are important to us and we look forward to hearing from you re suggestions. Photographers love to get together to talk and do photography so let's do just that and enjoy our passion.

Meanwhile and in photography,

Nige

Guest Showcase:



Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/christosmithphotography/>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/magicsmith/>

First and foremost: I am absolutely honoured and humbled to be featured in your publication. It's always an absolute pleasure to be asked to contribute to any sort of publication.

My passion for photography started around 18 years ago, and ever since my first camera, I haven't stopped clicking away.

My passion eventually grew into a profession, and I spent years photographing corporate events, corporate headshots and different portraiture, family shoots, engagement shoots, boudoir and real estate photography. I was also one of the official boxing photographers for Boxing South Africa and spent years shooting boxing tournaments.

I've also had many personal projects over the years, including a project that I've been busy with for the past 12 years, which is all about people's secrets, and I've also explored shooting bodyscapes from different people.

My first love, however, is landscape photography, and in particular, lightning photography. The weather has always fascinated me, and my dream is to chase tornadoes in the USA, and take my chances at getting some good shots there. One day when I'm big I hope to realise this dream. We are, however, incredibly fortunate in Southern Africa to have a very high rate of electrical thunderstorms. We are amongst the countries with the most active thunderstorms in the world, and this definitely allows me some great opportunities to capture the magnificence of lightning and thunderstorms.

I grew up and spent most of my life in Johannesburg, and the Highveld thunderstorms are unlike anything in the world. The thunderstorms I've witnessed and captured are simply incredible and nothing I've ever witnessed compares to a good Highveld thunderstorm.

Two years ago I made the move to Umhlanga Rocks in KwaZulu-Natal, and here I have been blessed with incredible sunrises and sunsets, the magic of the ocean, but also a good few thunderstorms.

So, to get into some of the technical stuff...

I use Canon. I had a client many years ago that had his own Canon franchise, and he was able to organise some stuff for me at cost price. Naturally, I stuck with Canon over the years and have had many different Canon bodies.

Currently, I use three different bodies. My normal "go to" which I always keep in the boot of my car (with a sturdy and heavy Manfrotto tripod) is a Canon 6D MK II.

I've previously owned two 6D MK I bodies, which handle low light and noise incredibly well (better than the 6D MK II in my opinion), but the touch screen and other functionality of the 6D MK II makes it a great little camera.

I also use my Canon 1 DX a lot, this body is phenomenal under low light conditions. I also have a 7D MK II, as a back up, which I specifically keep because it works well with an 8mm f/3.5 fisheye lens which only fits on crop frames.

My go to lens for landscapes and lightning is the Canon 16–35mm f/2.8. Its a machine. However, I would be remiss if I didn't mention the Canon 17–40mm F4 which I've also used, which I find is incredibly sharp.

I also often use a Sigma 24–70 f/2.8 as well as a Sigma 70–200 f/2.8.

I shoot most of my lightning shots using Bulb Mode. I know a few phenomenal photographers who set an exposure time for the scene, and keep with it on Manual mode with the same settings, and it's a great way to shoot a thunderstorm, however for me, Bulb gives me more control and it also let's me participate in taking the photos. I kind of get a feel for the storm, and I open and close the shutter as I need to. I almost feel like I'm engaging with the storm. If there is a close by and particularly bright strike, I'll close the shutter quickly to avoid over exposure, or if the strikes are further away I would keep the shutter open for longer which often captures interesting movement within the clouds. I always use a remote shutter release which is physically attached to the camera via a cable. I find that the infra red remote shutter releases aren't quite as accurate, especially in rainy conditions.



For focusing, I generally choose a single point which is around a third to a half way through the scene, and most often I'd be shooting at night, so I'd focus on a light from a house or streetlight or even a ship at sea. I'll leave that as my focus point once its set.

I generally shoot on F11, ISO 100. If the storm is far away, I'll open the aperture to 5.6, or if the storm is right overhead, I'll close the aperture more. I often switch apertures as the storm moves too. It takes a bit of practice and experience to get the right exposure, but as Henri Cartier-Bresson said; "Your first 10 000 photos are your worst."

A few of the biggest challenges I face when I photograph storms in particular, are heavy winds, and of course rain.

A sturdy, and preferably heavy, tripod is your friend. The heavier, the better. It needs to hold your camera body and lens up, and compete with winds which can get quite severe. Any camera shake at all will show up immediately with long exposures.

I also shoot with a lens hood on, and generally with light rain I am able to shoot through the rain as long as no water drops end up on the lens glass itself. As soon as any droplets land on the glass, I keep a light cloth handy to gently wipe the drops off so that I can continue. The emphasis is on the word "gently", as I don't want to cause the camera to move at all as that will interfere when I stack the photos. Of course I can align the photos in the editing process, but its an extra step which can be avoided and may affect the outcome negatively.

I have shot through some heavy rain as most professional Canon Cameras and lenses are mostly weather sealed, but its always a risk. Again, the trick is to do your utmost not to allow any rain drops onto the glass of the lens...

OK, this is where an important point needs to be raised: safety...

If you're shooting in a thunderstorm, it means that there is a chance you could get struck by lightning. Lightning, and the storms which produce them, are unpredictable and can be severe. Always be very careful and know that you are literally putting your life at risk. I have almost been struck many times, and have had structures that I've been standing underneath or next to which have been struck by lightning. I've had a few close calls, and they definitely add to the thrill of the endeavour, but nature is powerful and you can never ever take your own safety for granted.

Furthermore, you're often shooting at night and in the dark. There is a human element of danger you need to be aware of too. People take chances, and if you're standing somewhere with expensive camera equipment, you are already in danger. I never shoot with a friend or any accompanying person because storms come quickly and I'm always ready to pounce and get to a vantage point quickly, so there is no time to wait for anyone to come with me, but ideally whenever possible, take a friend with you. Being alone makes it riskier. Luckily I am not a small guy, and I use this to my advantage. I also always stay aware to eliminate any element of surprise to try and ward off any naughty people. I have however been chased once, luckily I got away unscathed.

Thunderstorms come from different directions depending on the storm cells and where they're coming from. I tend to keep a look out for different vantage points which will give me different views in different directions depending on where the storm is. Knowing your area is always an advantage. Its not the easiest thing to capture lightning and frame a composition. Again, lightning is unpredictable and often won't conform to your ideas of framing the shot nicely. The better you know the area that you're in, the better your chances of getting a good frame and composition is.

I rarely take photos of storms during the day, and if so, I try and focus on the clouds structure. Shooting lightning during the day is tricky, and I've never used a lightning trigger, so cannot talk about their efficacy. I also haven't really shot lightning with ND filters. I believe that they can work for lightning, but I've used them more to get movement in clouds or water by being able to do longer exposures during the day.

For day time lightning that I have managed to capture, I close the aperture to its smallest capability, and take many photos concurrently with the longest shutter speed as possible without overexposing the shot. Sometimes the storms get pretty dark, so I sometimes get a shutter speed of a second or more which is quite significant in the day time. You just have to keep shooting and hope for the best. The darker and larger the storm, the greater your chances are. If its still quite bright, you barely see the lightning strikes anyway, never mind being able to capture them effectively.





After I've taken the photos, I generally stack them to create a composite image which showcases the different strikes that I managed to capture.

Often I'll exclude a few shots if I feel it better serves the overall composition. Sometimes less is more, other times, more is more. I suppose it depends on what I'm going for at the time, and of course, what I managed to capture. I use various software to stack and edit the photos. Normally either Starstack or Photoshop for stacking. I also use DXO Photolab for general light editing. I never add or fabricate anything which I didn't capture, or change anything drastically. I mostly stack what was captured, edit out the hot pixels or any dirt or dust which may show up from the sensor, and then do basic light adjustments to bring the image to life.

This brings me to another point: when I take photos, I take photos for myself. As a photographer that has spent years making clients happy, and often to the detriment of what I thought would be better in a respective image, I made a conscious decision to shoot for myself and no one else, a couple of years ago. I rarely take a good photo, but I'm always trying to do what I can to get closer to taking a good photo, but I never try and please anyone. I also don't belong to any photography clubs as I am quite introverted, and don't seek any sort of approval or validation from other photographers. I respect that everyone has their opinions, and that's OK. At the end of the day, people need to shoot for their target market. Most of the time, that target is the general public or their client, and if the public or client responds well, then you're accomplishing what you set out to do. I have a few photographer friends that I respect, and because I look up to them and their capabilities as photographers, I used to approach them for critique and help.

There are many Social Media photography groups out there, and every single person has their own ideas and opinions. I have never been one to try and impress other photographers, because they aren't the ones paying the bills. By the same token, too many beginners think they know everything and won't take valuable advice from the photographers who are genuinely trying to help.

My entire outlook is simple: "Do what makes you happy, and always do your very best". Life is not a spectator sport, so if you want to get good at something, go out and do your best. Seek out those who can help you, but be particular with who that is. Not everyone is on the same page, and that is what makes the arts so interesting. Have fun and keep it fun. If you take it too seriously, you'll soon lose the passion.

Again, I do my best, always, and that's all.

Photography is an incredible medium which allows you to express yourself through capturing what you see, and showcasing how you see it. I find it fascinating to see different photographers' visions through their images, and you can learn so much about them. The angles they see things from, the way they frame and compose their images, the colours (or lack of) that they show, how they capture light etc... It truly is fascinating. And, I find, the better you get, the more you're able to bring your visions to life through your lens, but also, your vision evolves as your skills grow. It truly is something that you need to dedicate time and effort to.



Everyone has a cell phone and can take a quick snap, which I welcome with arms wide open, because it allows me to create something which will stand out above whatever snap someone else may take. The more people there are taking photos, the more it pushes me to better myself and stand out above the rest.

I don't know if I've accomplished that, but every time I take a photo, I do my utmost to shoot something that will show the world how I see things, and hopefully it stands out enough to resonate with someone enough for them to be able to enjoy it.

We live in a beautiful world, and I find people lose the beauty because of the hardships we all face on a daily basis, so I try and remind people that there is beauty out there constantly, and to focus on that beauty.

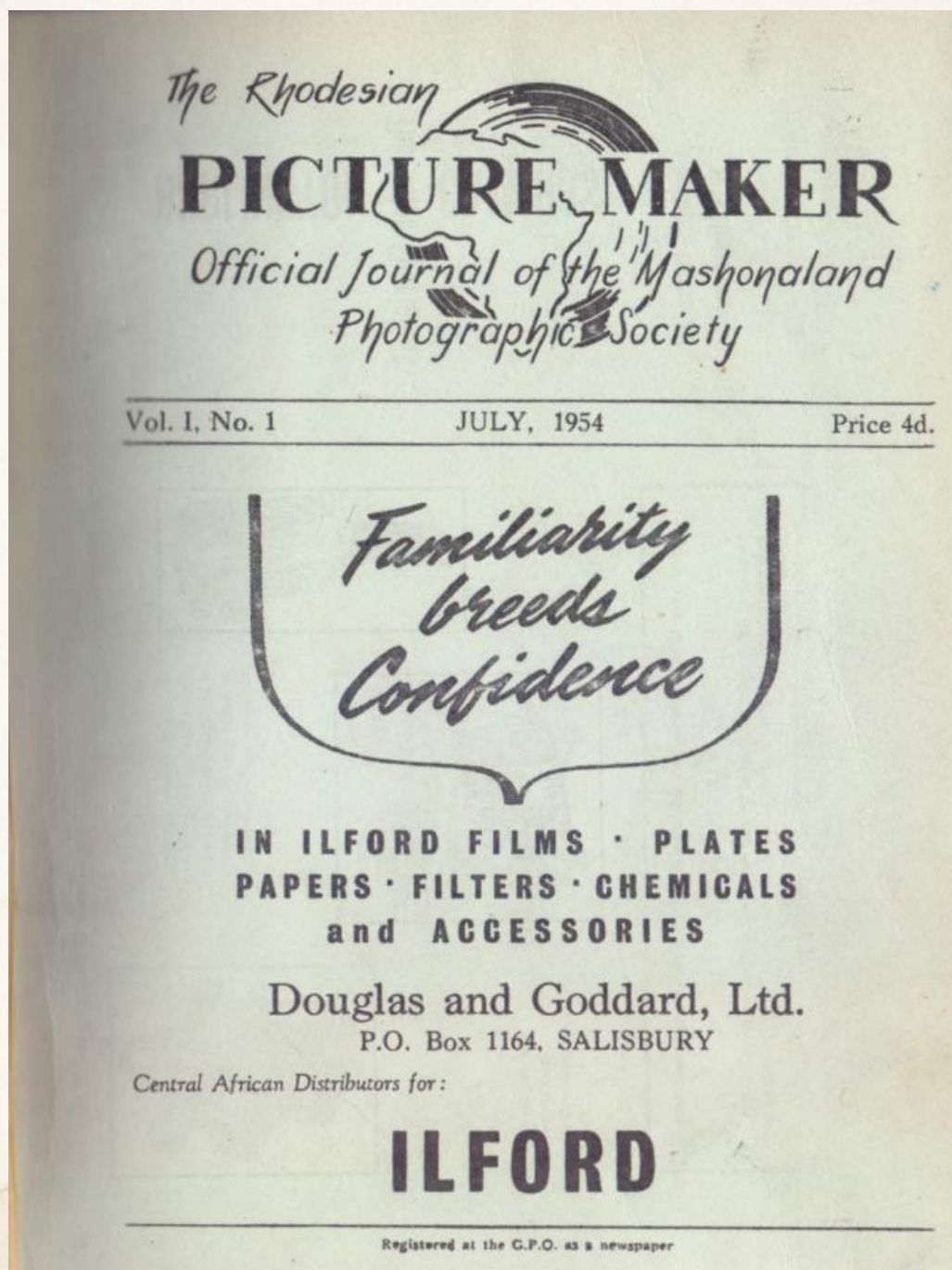
As I always say: Keep looking for the beauty. It's there...



Blast from the Past...

The Mashonaland Photographic Society was formed in 1939, just before the start of the second world war. It has been meeting regularly ever since. At its peak there were about 200 members and three or four meetings were held every month to accommodate everyone. These meetings each covered a separate discipline: print colour, print monochrome, transparencies and cine.

Jim Dryberg, our longest serving member (since 1978 — definitely a medal-worthy accomplishment!) mentioned that PictureMaker was registered as a newspaper and issues were filed in the National Archives. Following a quick trip there and with the help of some very willing researchers, the first printed edition ever of PictureMaker, named then The Rhodesian Picturemaker, printed in July 1954, was unearthed. Below are scans of the first few pages. Interestingly, Strachans has been a very long standing ally and the legacy continues with Dave Dell still being an active member.



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The Rhodesian
P I C T U R E M A K E R

The official journal of the
Mashonaland Photographic Society.

VOL I.

July, 1954.

No. 1.

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Advertisements.

All enquiries regarding advertising space in this magazine should be addressed to the Advertisement Manager, P.O. Box 2038, Salisbury.

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Editor Viewer.

It is with some pride that we splash into print in this first issue of our new magazine.

It is a small beginning perhaps, but certainly (I hope) an improvement on the previous monthly bulletin which, for a number of years, served its purpose in advising members of forthcoming meetings and programmes. It was criticised, however, for not doing more than that and Messrs Davidson, Allen and Mangin got together and devised the present booklet.

It was intended to open on a much larger and grander scale by having the magazine printed, but costs were prohibitive. We accordingly pulled our heads out of the clouds and decided that even we must crawl before we can walk.

We are confident that this magazine will grow and as we are dependent on advertising to pay the bills, readers will be helping in a big way by supporting our advertisers.

We are also hoping that members will assist by sending in the "meat" regularly and that pride in their own magazine will spur them on to renewed efforts in journalism. Even if you feel that you haven't any literary leanings send in your story and we will put it into shape for you. Stories of how you photographed those wild animals in the Game Reserve, or what your mother-in-law did with your super-duper tripod when you let baby's milk burn, are all stories that we can use in one of our issues.

We look forward to the future with confidence and hope that springs eternal in the breast of...

Your... EDITOR.

On this note Dave Dell has made mention that he has about 100 old cameras, between 40 to 60 years old for sale to anyone who would like to buy them, either individually or perhaps for a collection...

January 2023 MPS competition results

“Rain and all it Brings”



1st place SET SUBJECT

“Real Zesa” Bridget Henderson

Camera: Canon R 5

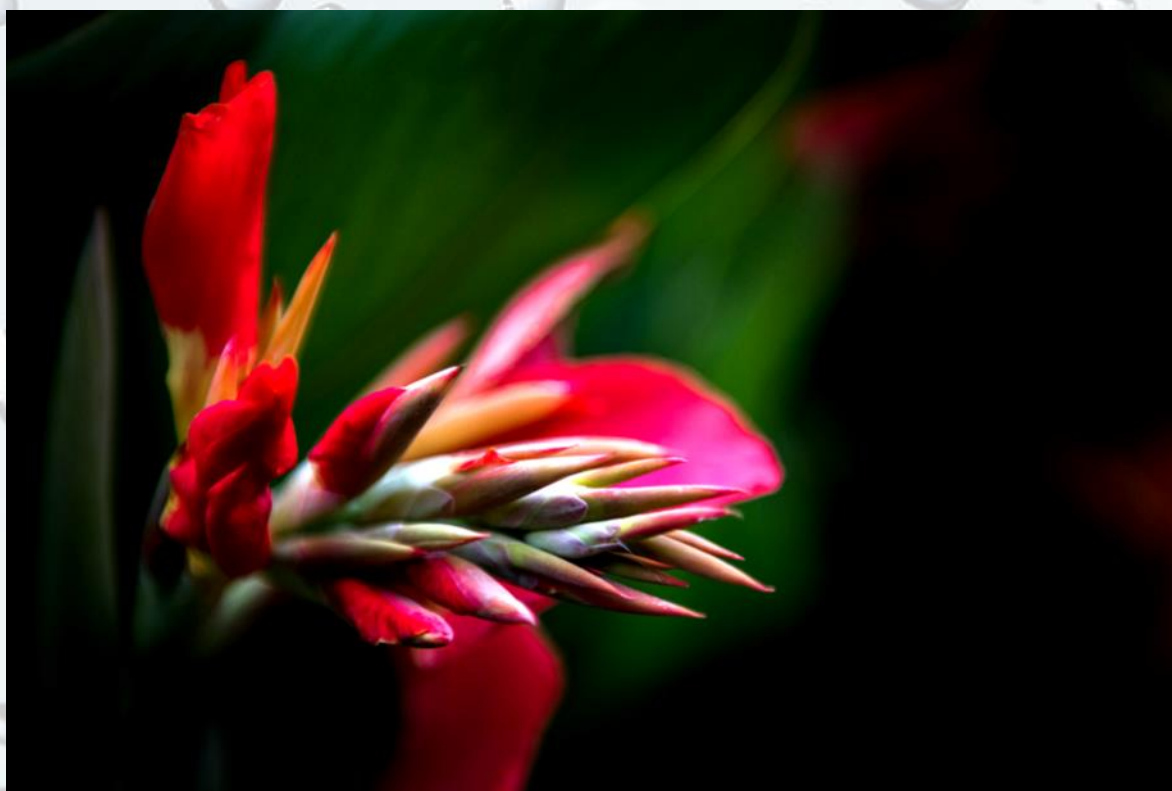
ISO: 100

Lens: Canon RF 24-105mm f/4 L

Aperture: f/22

Focal length: 40mm

Shutter speed: 5 sec



1st place OPEN CATEGORY

“Canna Blossom” Catriona Borman

Camera: Nikon D 810

ISO: 600

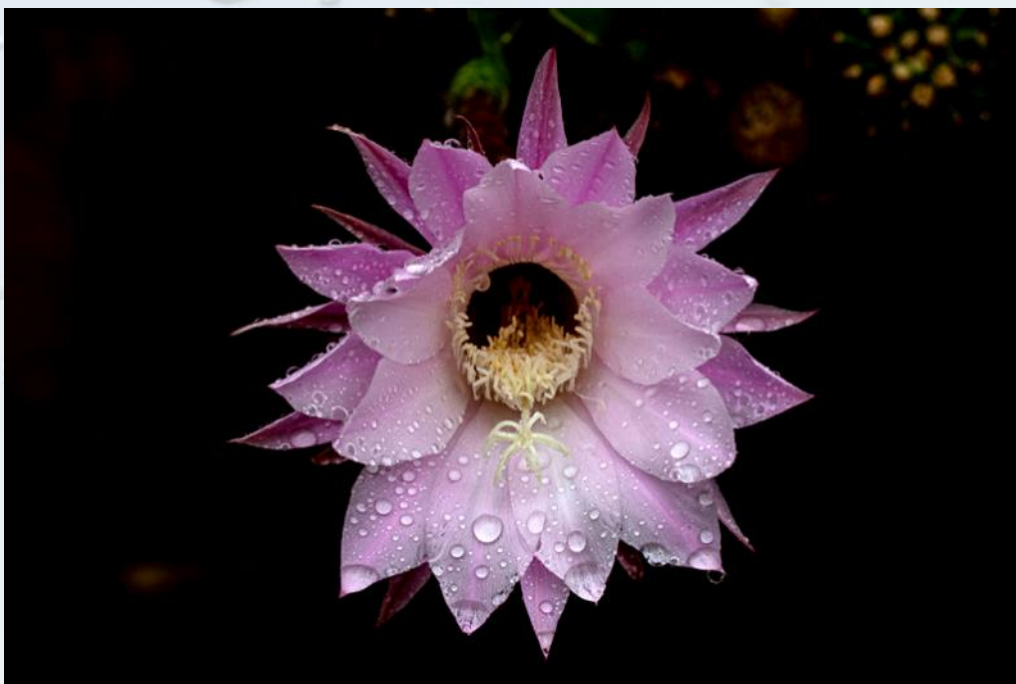
Lens: 24-70mm

Aperture: f/2.8

Focal length: 60mm

Shutter speed: 1/1600 sec

January 2023 MPS competition results cont...

“Rain and all it Brings”**2nd place SET SUBJECT****“Rain Drenched” Chris Sheppard**

Camera: Canon EOS 5 D IV

ISO: 100

Lens: EF 100mm f/2.8 L Macro

Aperture: f/7.1

Focal length: 100mm

Shutter speed: 1/100 sec

**2nd place OPEN****“Flames of Fire” Suzanne Hoffman**

Camera: Canon EOS 700 D

ISO: 800

Lens: Canon EF 75-300mm f/4-5.6

Aperture: f/18

Shutter speed: 1/200 sec

January 2023 MPS competition results cont...

“Rain and all it Brings”**3rd place SET SUBJECT****“Rainswept Meadow”****Catriona Borman**

Camera: Nikon D 810

ISO: 800

Lens: 24-70mm

Aperture: f/8

Focal length: 24mm

Shutter speed: 1/800 sec

**3rd place OPEN****“Looking to the New Year”****Phillip Hoffman**

Camera: Canon 750 D

Lens: Canon EF 75-300mm f/4-5.6

Focal length: 300mm

ISO: 500

Aperture: f/5.6

Shutter speed: 1/320 sec

Important MPS Dates and Set Subjects 2023



JANUARY

Rain and all it Brings

CLOSED

FEBRUARY

Inmate from a Tiny World

CLOSED

Meeting date: 22 February

MARCH

Rocks, Pebbles or Stones

In colour, no manipulation

Deadline: Noon Mon 6th March

Check out your surrounding terra-firma /river beds, etc.

Meeting date: 29 March

APRIL

Sunbursts or Streetlight Burst

In colour, manipulation allowed

Deadline: Mon 3rd April

Let's see all those 'bursts' of light. Sunrise/Set, day or night. Just catch it where and when you can!

Meeting date: 26 April

MAY: Two trophy events

President's Platter : Candlelight & Shadows

Colour or B&W, manipulation allowed

Deadline: Mon 8th May

All paid-up MPS members may enter this Set Subject. No 'Open' in May. Depict a sultry, romantic mood.

Best Picture of 2022

Deadline: Mon 8th May

For Members who entered from Jan–Nov inclusive in 2022, your best 3 entries. Indicate month entered for each entry. Minor editing allowed to improve entries from 2022 in line with judges' comments. Manipulation allowed.

Meeting date: 31 May

JUNE

Tree Bark or Driftwood

Colour or B&W, no manipulation

Deadline: Mon 5th June

Contrast, Tones and Texture.

Meeting date: 28 June

Important MPS Dates and Set Subjects 2023 cont...

JULY

From the Knees Down

In colour, no manipulation

Deadline: Mon 3rd July

Out and about or set it up at home: tying laces, dog walk etc

Meeting date: 26 July

AUGUST

Sharing

In colour or B&W, no manipulation

Deadline: Tues 1st August

People (all ages) or animals. A twosome. A hug, kids and cones, pups with toys. At the waterhole. Catch those special candid moments

Meeting date: 23 August



SEPTEMBER

Happy Yellow

In colour! Manipulation allowed

Deadline: Mon 4th September

Your subject choice as an Abstract – or not.

Meeting date: 27 September

OCTOBER

That Sporting Moment

In colour, manipulation allowed

Deadline: Mon 2nd October

Capture the moment with fast or slow shutter and/or panning

Meeting date: 25 October

NOVEMBER

Shooting Through

In colour, manipulation allowed

Deadline: Mon 6th November

Through a tunnel, tube, glass, grass, flower bed, whatever! Near or distant subject focused

Meeting date: 29 November

Workshops/Outings 2023:

There is nothing set in stone as yet but there are a few suggestions as follows:

- * Chris suggested a workshop with a simple set-up with Candlelight and model to assist member—perhaps March?
- * Astrophotography outing to Mauhuradonha – May
- * Gosha Park outing—potentially June
- * Propose selecting a sporting event and then doing an on site training session— Aug/Sept

Any other suggestions are welcome. To be discussed at next meeting.

Set Subject Inspiration

“Rocks, Pebbles or Stones”

In colour, no manipulation

Deadline: Noon Monday 6 March

There is so much more to rocks, pebbles and stones than just being static objects in the landscape. The key to a great image in this category is composition (be sure to make the stone subject the key element of the picture), texture and light. Stones in any form have been here for eons of time and so surely have a story to tell. Our landscape is abundant with rocky outcrops of granite, including many balancing rock features, dyke protrusions from the Rift Valley, gneiss rocks, dolerite, marbles and quartz. If you haven't got any great stone images in your photo library then a quick afternoon trip out to Ngomakurira or Epworth balancing rocks will give you ample opportunity to garner some material. Zimbabwe also yields a plethora of precious and semi-precious stones/gems for those of you that didn't get enough of a “macro” fix last month!

1. Gear Choices

For landscape scenes no special kit is needed – just a good eye for the best view-point and artistic flare to determine the best composition. Use a tripod to be sure of a rock (excuse the pun) solid view, especially when shooting patterns on the ground, as it can be harder to hold the camera rigid when you're pointing downwards.

A standard or wide angle lens is ideal for magnitude shots and a macro lens will be handy when shooting gem stones or going for images showcasing detailed texture.





2. Lighting

Shoot in overcast light if you want less contrast, but this can reduce the impact of the photo. Sunlight casts shadows making the patterns of rugged rocks become almost 3D. Warm light is usually the winning formula for landscape rock images.

When shooting gems or minerals be sure to use diffuse light to eliminate burn-outs and black-outs.

3. Textures and patterns

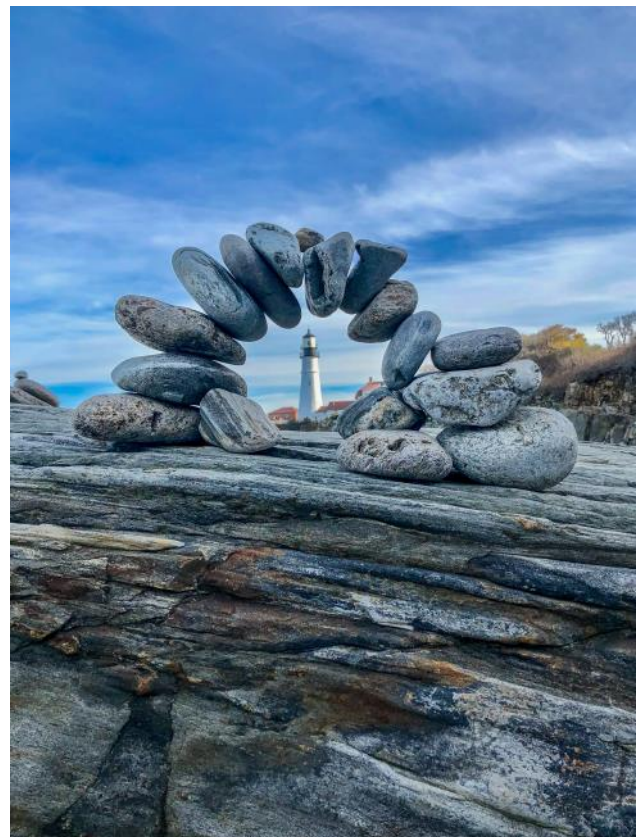
Some of the best patterns can be seen in strata, layers of rock that have been formed by layer upon layer of rock or soil millions of years ago. These layers have become exposed by erosion from the sea or natural earth movement or from being cut away to make roads.

Look for rocks covered in lichen and worn pebbles in riverbeds.



4. Wet rocks or stones

Wet rock surfaces are often more vibrant. Stones and water compliment each other as subject matter.





There are some useful gadgets that relate to our January subject matter, being stormy landscape photography, that perhaps may be of interest to add to your equipment box for future use in this genre as well as your trusty sturdy tripod. The items are relatively affordable and although not available in Zim itself, can easily be procured from outside our borders. I had an incredibly frustrating experience at Vic Falls recently with an awesome electric storm happening over the gorge at dusk. The opportunity was God-given but I unfortunately could not capture it because my finger was just not fast enough for the random timing of the lightning strikes and it was too light for bulb aperture. This frustration may have been alleviated by having a lightning trigger and/or a ND filter on hand.

Lightning activated shutter release (LASR) or lightning trigger and intervalometer:

A lightning burst can appear as fast as a quarter of a second. Therefore, it's impossible to take a lightning photo when just using your camera's own shutter, especially during daytime storms. This is because your hands react too slowly to capture the event and your shutter speed needs to be fast. You generally need a shorter exposure and narrower aperture to avoid blowing out the image. With a lightning trigger, you can automatically activate your camera to take the shot as the trigger detects a lightning burst. When it's dark, try shooting repeated longer exposures with an intervalometer, which will continually set off your camera's shutter at regular intervals. These gadgets can be used for remote shooting, time lapse, High Dynamic Range (HDR) photography, video recording and lightning photography.

There are quite a few "lightning triggers" out there, ranging in price from about \$260 for the Miops Smart + to \$120 for the Pluto. These prices are approximate and are without import fees, transport etc to Zim.

Miops Smart +



Pluto



Neutral density (ND) filter:

A neutral density filter prevents overexposure by reducing the amount of light that passes through the lens and thus you can keep the shutter open for a bit longer when trying to photograph sporadic lightning during the day. ND filters come in varying strengths and the product you need to use depends on how much light is present and how long your exposure will be. They are available in fixed or variable form and are made by a multitude of manufacturers. You will need a minimum of a 6 to 10 stop filter for lightning photography. They are also useful to have on hand for long exposure "slow water" or cloud photography. Expect to pay \$25 to \$130 if you are sourcing externally depending on the number of stops, lens diameter and quality of the glass.



