

SPS Newsletter

Welcome

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Well November is dashing along already and we've had Halloween, Bonfire Night and the US Presidential Elections to entertain us. And as ever, November is the month of Remembrance. 106 years ago the guns fell silent as the Great War ended after seeing c.9 million lives lost with a further c.27 million injured. And this year saw the 80th Anniversary of the D-Day Landings in Normandy, which marked the start of the end of World War II. And still today not only do we remember the past but we also reflect on those areas of our world that continue to experience conflict and loss.

I don't know whether any of you have been past St Alphege Church in Solihull recently and seen the huge cascade of hand-knitted woollen poppies adorning the side of the Church. If not, pop along and see it. I have a personal interest in it as my Mum's friend knitted c.300 of the poppies and my Mum sewed the black centres on to them. Suffice it to say that in the middle of the Summer our lounge was full of little woollen poppies!

What awareness events have caught my eye this month? Well 7th November saw the Christmas Lights in London turned on and 12th November was 'Odd Socks Day', marking standing up to bullying by wearing odd socks. 15th November sees the annual 'Children in Need', 23rd November 'Dr Who Day' and 29th November 'Black Friday'. Celebrating one of the Saints of our great island, 30th November is St Andrew's Day and 17th-23rd November is 'Road Safety Week'. And my favourite this month has to be 'World Toilet Day' on 19th November, although it's unclear exactly what this supports ... but I suppose please dispose of your waste appropriately!

So how did my Diabetes UK's 62 Miles in October Challenge go I hear you ask? Well, despite walking most of it in the rain (I can't believe how damp and wet on the whole October has been), I only managed to complete 46.17 miles as I caught Covid and that put paid to my walking. I am pleased to say I am recovered from it.

I just can't believe that Christmas is coming up so fast. Everywhere I look I see Christmas, I am sure it comes earlier every year even though the day never changes! And just to add to your worries I bring glad tidings that it is only 40 sleeps until the Big Man in the Red Suit comes visiting! And talking of Christmas don't forget our Society's Christmas Meal at The Woodman, Shirley, on 9th December. If you are interested in going please contact Sue Pearmain.

As ever I am always looking for material for the Newsletter so don't be shy and send me something to put in. It could be about somewhere interesting you have been to, a joke, poem, images, where you went to on holiday and what you thought about it. Anything goes and is very welcome. Email me at: 172elizabeth@gmail.com.

With my very best wishes

Liz xx

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02

Through the Lens

I came across the following and thought it was quite true and you might enjoy it too:

*Life is like a camera
Focus on the good times
Develop from the negatives
and if things don't work out
take another shot*

And here's a few more interesting things about November:

- **2nd Nov 1936** - The world's first regular TV service was started by the British Broadcasting Corporation. The transmitter in North London had a 25-mile radius and it's estimated that 100 television owners tuned in.
- **5th Nov 1605** - Guy Fawkes is arrested beneath the House of Parliament as a plot to blow up England's King James I is uncovered.
- **22nd Nov 1963** - President John F. Kennedy is shot and killed in Dallas, Texas.
- **26th Nov 1922** - Archaeologist Howard Carter and his sponsor the Earl of Caernavon make a hole in the door and gaze into the tomb of Tutankhamun.
- **Nov 1644** - England's oldest newspaper is published, The Oxford Gazette (which later became the London Gazette).

03

UK Tree of the Year

Recently I was reading about a tree in the Scottish Highlands, known as the Skipinnish Oak, which could be 1,000 years old. Native woodland experts had no idea the tree existed until a gathering in 2009. The band 'Skipinnish' which had played at the event knew of the tree and led the conservationists to where it was hidden in a non-native Sitka spruce plantation on Achnacarry Estate. In a public vote in a Woodland Trust competition the Oak won, beating 11 other contenders. Skipinnish, who play traditional and contemporary Scottish music, is composing a new song in honour of the Oak. Runner-up in the competition was the Darwin Oak in Shrewsbury whilst in third place was the 1,000 year old Bowthorpe Oak in Lincolnshire.



This got me thinking about trees and how essential they are to our planet as well as being interesting subjects to photograph. There is so much detail and texture in a tree and its structure is fascinating. To-date The Woodland Trust have planted over 68.5 million trees since they began in 1972, saved 1,186 woods, and revived 38,000 hectares of ancient woodland back to life. And I discovered the best trees to attract birds and wildlife are: crab apple; rowan; silver birch; wild cherry; blackthorn; holly; English oak; hawthorn; hazel; field maple. So next time you are looking for new trees for the garden why not plant one of these.



Trees are also said to help mental health and promote well-being and there is a lot to be said for 'hugging' a tree. Have you ever tried it? I have and it was a very pleasant experience, although I must admit I did it when no-one else was around ...!

I was lucky enough to go to Epping Forest earlier this year. If you have never been there do try and visit it as the Forest is home to some very ancient trees and has an important place in our history. You can visit Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge, and explore the remains of two large Iron Age forts. It is the burial place of the last Anglo Saxon King of England, Harold II, and was also the place where King Henry VIII spent the day hunting waiting to hear the news that Ann Boleyn had been executed. At over 6,000 acres the Forest is the largest public open space in south Essex and London. But it is the paths and experience of walking in the Forest amongst the ancient trees and woodland that is such an experience. As I walked through the woods I could not help but wonder if the path I was on was one that Henry VIII's horse's hooves had gone along and what it would have looked like as an area many years ago and the stories of history these old trees could tell.



Trees are amazing and here are some fantastic facts about them:

- Trees have been around on Earth for at least 370 million years.
- Trees provide food, shelter, fuel and building materials.
- Some types of tree can live for thousands of years.
- Trees act like the lungs of our planet, turning carbon dioxide into oxygen.
- Trees work together to ward off predators. They release chemical signals to deter pests, warn other trees about a threat, and attract predators that feed on the pests.
- There are 422 times more trees on Earth than there are people.
- Trees can communicate with each other via an underground network of soil fungi – they can even send nutrients, water and unused carbon to each other!
- Leaves are lots of colours, including red, yellow, purple and orange, not just green. Chlorophyll makes leaves green and dominates until they get less sunshine, when the other colours start to take over.
- There are over 60,000 species of trees on Earth.
- Trees release chemicals called phytoncides, and research has shown that breathing these in can reduce blood pressure, lower anxiety levels and make us feel happier.



What kind of tree fits into your hand?

A Palm Tree!



What sound does a tree make?

It barks!



Talking of trees I was delighted to hear the update on the seeds taken from the felled 'Sycamore Gap' tree in Northumberland. The tree is showing signs of regrowth. Growing from the base of the stump are 25 new shoots. While it's early days, the National Trust and Northumberland National Park Authority is hopeful that if left to grow, the new shoots could develop significant new growth to form as 'new' trees around the original stump. Their aim is to leave all of the shoots to grow for a few years to see how they develop. In time they will be able to decide how to manage the tree, as a coppiced stool or considering whether to reduce to a single tree at some point in the future. They will also protect the root zone to avoid any compaction, fencing the site to ensure the tree roots are protected.

Public concern for the tree has led to the National Trust and Northumberland National Park Authority announcing that from the saved seedlings which have been nurtured and grown there will be a number of initiatives designed to mark the legacy of the tree and engage communities at a local and national level. They have announced 'Trees of Hope', an initiative where 49 Sycamore Gap saplings (one to represent each foot of the tree's height at the time it was felled) grown from its saved seeds will be gifted to communities around the country. People from the UK are invited to apply for a tree to plant in public, accessible spaces, which have emotional connections with people and communities. They have presented one of the saplings to King Charles to be planted in the public accessible Windsor Great Park. If you would like to learn more about how to apply for a sapling then look on the National Trust's website for more information.



Where do Woodlice go on holiday?

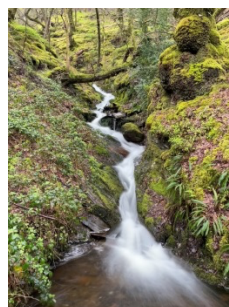
A Palm Tree!

04

Chasing Waterfalls

With the amount of rain we have been having and seeing the floods on the TV and nearer home in the fields made me think of waterfalls and how full and gushing they must be at the moment. And, therefore, what a great topic for some photography they might make.

We are not that far from the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park (still the Brecon Beacons to me!) so I thought I would tell you about 4 waterfalls there which you might want to go visit with your cameras. Sgwd yr Eira in the south of the National Park offers the chance to walk behind the giant wall of water and feel its force. Sgwd yr Eira is part of the Four Falls Trail, a waymarked 5.5 mile circular walk that follows the River Melthe and Heposte taking in Sgwd y Clun-Gwyn, Sqwd Isaf Clun-Gwyn and Sgwd y Pannwr. And I bet you have guessed by now that 'Sqwd' in Welsh means 'waterfall'.





Some other impressive waterfalls further afield are High Force in County Durham and Aysgarth Falls in North Yorkshire. I love visiting waterfalls and have been lucky enough to go to many both in the UK and abroad. I have to say I think the most impressive fall of water I have ever seen is Niagara Falls in the USA/Canada. Words cannot describe seeing the torrent of water falling and a trip on the 'Maid of the Mist' is a must (although it can be a little wet!). And it never ceases to amaze me how the water just keeps flowing down a waterfall, where is it all coming from day and night, never ending. Do you have a favourite waterfall or know of one local to us that is worth a visit, if so send me a note and I will share it with our members.



Why did the cranberries turn red in November?

Because they saw the salad dressing!

05

The Colour Indian Yellow

The story of Indian Yellow begins in 15th Century India. The colour was known as *piuri*, *purree*, or *gogilī* – the latter being an Indian form of the Persian term for 'cow-earth', which gives a clue as to the pigment's roots. The colour was found to have an unusual orange-yellow tone and an impressive optical luminescence that resisted fading and seemed to brighten in sunlight. It subsequently became a popular choice for painting Rajput-style miniatures and frescos, dyeing cotton cloth (calicoes) and colouring the walls of houses.

The origins and components of Indian yellow were largely unknown at the time. For years, soft yellow lumps had been arriving unquestioned in sealed packages at the London docks from Calcutta in India, some addressed to the famous artists' materials supplier, Messrs Winsor & Newton. The dirty yellow balls would be washed and purified, and the greenish and yellow phases separated. The precise ingredients of these pieces of pigment were unidentified, but they gave off a strong odour of ammonia and were suspected of containing snake urine, ox bile or, according to a more popular theory, camel urine.

In 1883 explorer, botanist and director of Kew Gardens, Sir Joseph Hooker, tried to get to the bottom of the matter. He authorised an investigation into the mystery, writing a letter addressed to the Indian Department of Revenue and Agriculture to inquire into the pigment's source. Months later, he received a reply from a T N Mukharji, an author and public servant. Mukharji described that in Mirzapur, Bengal, he had witnessed a group of cowherds (*gwalas*) feeding their cattle a restricted diet of mango leaves and water. The cows were malnourished and incredibly dehydrated, and this meant that their urine would turn a very bright shade of yellow. Curiously, mango leaves are known to contain the toxin urushiol, which is also found in poison ivy, and Mukharji noted that the cows 'looked very unhealthy'. Their urine was said to have been collected and boiled into the consistency of a syrup before being strained and dried, producing a dirty yellow sediment that was then rolled and packaged off to London.



What is the most knowledgeable month?

Know-vember!

Mukharji's study was published in the Royal Society of Arts Journal. Not long after, Indian Yellow disappeared from the market, rumoured to be as a result of animal cruelty protests that led to a law forbidding further production. Hooker subsequently had a sample of the pigment examined by the chemist Carl Gräbe.

In 2002 writer Victoria Finlay retraced the steps of Mukharji to Mirzapur, and recounts her mission in an enlightening account that can be found in the chapter on yellow in her book *Colour: Travels Through the Paintbox*. Unfortunately, though, Finlay's travels led to no evidence of the pigment. It was as recently as 2018 that success was obtained on the matter: a publication investigating the original chemical analysis by Carl Gräbe confirmed the animal origin of the sample. It identified the source as cow urine, based on a key indicator – the presence of hippuric acid.

Indian Yellow was employed by many of the Old Masters and later leading artists. The pigment reached Europe during the 16th and 17th Centuries and was popularised by Dutch painters including Jan Vermeer. JMW Turner used it in paintings such as *The Angel Standing in the Sun* (1846), and later the Scottish Colourists adopted it in oil form. One of Indian Yellow's most famous users, however, was Van Gogh, who famously painted a luminous Indian yellow moon in his 1889 masterpiece, *The Starry Night*. But this was to be one of the last sightings of the colour. In the early 20th century the use of Indian Yellow was outlawed in Bengal, and the pigment disappeared from the market in mysterious circumstances.



What comes at the end of November?

The letter R!

06

Out and About

I am sure you will find plenty of places to go to this over the Autumn/Winter but in case you are stuck for some ideas how about the following:

Heart of England Forest

Still on the subject of trees, I thought I would mention 'The Heart of England Forest'. It is a charity endeavour that is trying to reverse centuries of woodland decline by creating and conserving a huge broadleaf forest for the benefit of the environment, wildlife and people. A place of enduring natural beauty protected and secured for generations to come the Forest is more than just trees, it is home to an incredible array of habitats, including new tree planting, mature and ancient woodland, grassland, heathland, farmland, and wetland, that enable animals, plants, and people to thrive.



The Forest covers a mosaic of habitats across over 7,000 acres of land in Warwickshire and Worcestershire, including 4,685 acres of new woodland and over 600 acres of mature and ancient woodland. The plan is to secure 30,000 acres for the Forest, and already it is the largest new native broadleaf woodland in England. So far, more than 2 million trees have been planted, creating a huge carbon sink and helping to mitigate climate change.

The Forest stretches up the Warwickshire / Worcestershire border, from the present-day borders of Shakespeare's Forest of Arden, across the ancient Forest of Feckenham, and down to the edge of the Vale of Evesham – the north Cotswolds to south Birmingham.



There are 58 miles of public and permissive footpaths for people to explore the woodlands and spend time in nature. Walking routes can be found in two areas of the Forest - Dorsington (between Stratford-upon-Avon and Evesham) and Spernal (between Alcester and Redditch). There are also numerous car parks to use for the Forest.

To find out more about the Forest and how to visit it take a look at their website www.heartofenglandforest.org.

And if you are interested in some other events around the country some of these may tempt you:

16-17th November – Melton Mowbray Chocfest

25th-26th November – Hull Victorian Christmas Market

9th November – 5th January – Longleat Festival of Light

21st November-5th January – Winter Wonderland opens in London

If you have any suggestions of places for people to visit do please let me know and I will put them into the Newsletter.

07

Competition Corner

October Competition

The first correct answer emailed to me was from Mick Schilling. Well done Mick.

What goes up in the sky when the rain comes down?

Answer: A Umbrella

November Competition

Here's this month's little teaser.

If a band is playing music and a thunderstorm hits who is most likely to get hit by lightning?

So get your thinking caps on and send me your answer by email to:
172elizabeth@gmail.com

Closing Date for Entries: 30th November 2024.

08

Photography Podium

People Competition 2024



Wasn't the recent People Competition good. With 67 Digitals and 25 Prints entered it was a tough job for our judge and I didn't envy him. I enjoyed seeing all the placed winners but in the Digitals I thought Kevin's image was really good. It was so simple in one way but very evocative, as I had to imagine where the lady was and what was around her and also what was she thinking about as she descended those steps? I always think a good image is one that makes you think and causes a reaction in you. And the Prints, well I just loved 'Old Warrior', the detail in the image and the look in his eyes ...

Digitals

	Group 1		Group 2		Group 3	
First	John	Dave Cornish	Sign of the Times	Jeannette Strange	Longing for an Escalator	Kevin Watts
Second	Save our Steel	Mark Taft	She Comes with a Generous Dowry	Tony Dyson	Street Life	David Steele
Third	Me and my Dog	Mark Taft	Athabasca Falls	Dave Ward	Photographers in the Mist	Jane Roby

Group 1



John



Save Our Street

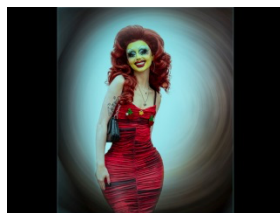


Me and My Dog

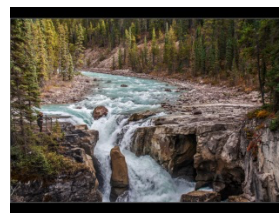
Group 2



Sign of the Times



She Comes with a Generous Dowry



Athabasca Falls

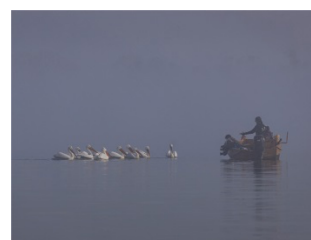
Group 3



Longing for an Escalator



Street Life

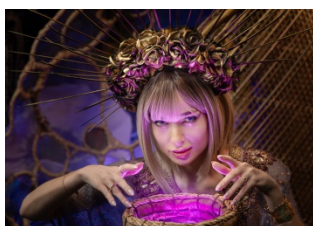


Photographers in the Mist

Prints

	Group 1		Group 2		Group 3	
First	<i>Mystic Peg</i>	Dave Cornish	<i>The Beggar</i>	Dave Ward	<i>The Gun Trader</i>	Jenny Ladbrooke
Second	<i>River Mite at Dalegarth</i>	Ann Ashford	<i>Prepping the Bridegroom</i>	Hazel Lane	<i>Bethany</i>	Jolanta Bujalska Axon
Third	<i>Old Warrior</i>	Dave Cornish	<i>Thinking About It!</i>	Michael Prince	<i>Home by the Range</i>	Jolanta Bujalska Axon

Group 1



Mystic Peg



River Mite at Dalegarth



Old Warrior

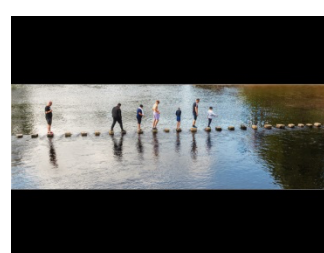
Group 2



The Beggar



Prepping the Bridegroom



Thinking About It



Group 3



The Gunman



Bethany



Home By the Range

09

External Recognition

If any of you enter any competitions and get any external recognitions then please drop me a line so that I can add it into the Newsletter. It's great to see what everyone is up to and the accolades they receive.



See you next in December 2024!