

**Newsletter for Week Ending  
17th December 2022**

*Collage produced using Pixlr Smartphone App*

**Another Year Almost Over!**

Well it's fast approaching the end of another year and time, I guess, to reflect on what has happened during this year.

It really doesn't seem 12 months ago that I was penning the final newsletter of 2021 and reflecting on the horrible 12 months that we all had to endure throughout the year with the Covid 19 outbreak.

Thankfully my wife and I only caught the disease after our 3<sup>rd</sup> vaccination and so the effects were nothing more than the symptoms of a heavy cold. I know some other friends who weren't so lucky!

My own health was thrown into question in the early part of the year after my diagnosis of prostate cancer and an anxious wait to find out the degree to which it has established itself. I want to take this opportunity to once again thank those of you who offered spiritual support during that period – it really did mean a lot to me.

As it happened my younger brother was also diagnosed roughly at the same time however his was a little more progressed and he elected to go for radiotherapy sessions rather than surgery. He seems to have made a good recovery after a short spell of hot flushes due to the hormone therapy needed after his treatment. I'm still on active surveillance and no further investigations due until March of next year.

My breathlessness remains and despite several investigations with no conclusion being reached and it would appear that because of the backlog of patients wanting treatment it might be quite a while before any further investigations are completed.

Ironically I did contact several private hospitals with a view to proceeding with my own funded investigations but of the 4 local hospitals that I emailed I didn't get a single response!

My wife and I tried to set aside a half day each week to do some local countryside walks which would be between 5 and 8 miles in length with a break somewhere in the middle for a coffee and muffin (got to have some incentive – right!). We managed several weeks before it seemed like every time we wanted to go on our walk it was pouring with rain. I don't think we can do anything now until the New Year.

My wife's sister has just had the diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease after several investigative brain scans. Due to the medication she has to now take she can no longer drive so that has put an even greater barrier to her going out to meet up with friends etc. She will be coming down to us for a 10 day break to give her husband some respite and go skiing.

### **Season's Greetings with a little help from Photoshop.**



*A little Photoshop Magic to create this Snow Globe*



*A more basic alternative*

*By using a few images, a layer mask and some basic mask editing it was fairly easy to combine them to make a photo-realistic image of the snow globe.*

So I tried to make my own version from an existing snow globe from my Christmas decorations.



*The Christmas decoration*



*my attempt to make the snow globe picture*

Ah well, it was worth the trying as it does involve the use of layer masks and the spherise operation to make it work. I think I would have to shoot the globe in a white tent to overcome the room wall reflections on the glass globe as you can see the walls reflected on the glass surface.

Actually after I started work on this project we had our first snow of the winter and it would have been nice to get out and shoot some more snow scenes for my library. There are two small churches, like the one in the stock image, nearby which would have made the globe a little more personal however we had to go out to town for some shopping. We took the bus, something that we would never do ordinarily, as the roads were quite bad with the snow fall and my car doesn't drive all that well as it is too heavy with too much power available causing wheel slip at the lightest throttle. (Why did I ever get rid of my 4 wheel drive for a sports saloon????)



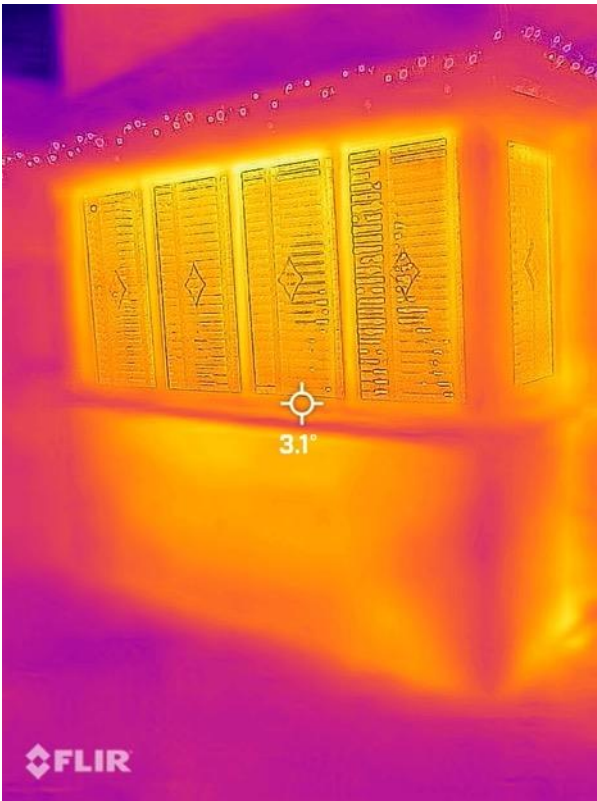
*The snow made a nice backdrop to Christmas lights in the garden! (iPhone 12 image)*

### **FLIR Thermal Imaging camera.**

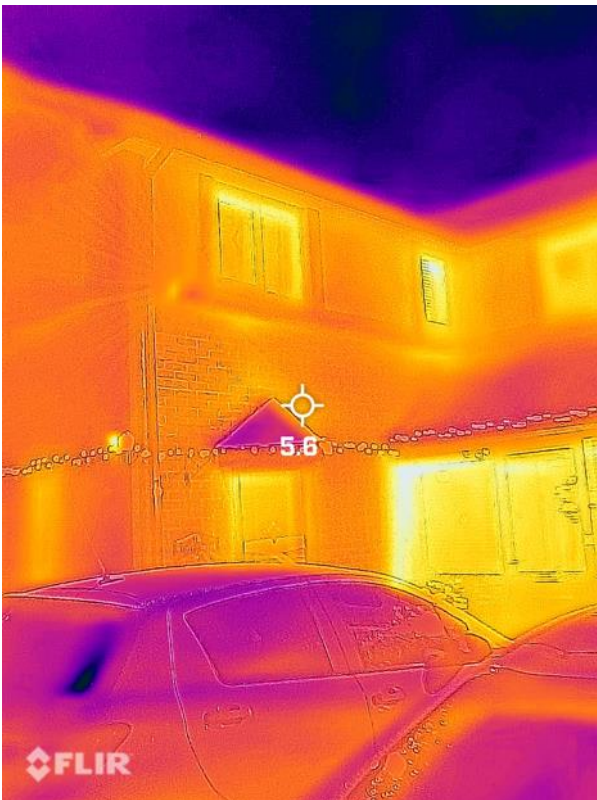


The FLIR One Pro thermal imaging camera can measure and graphically indicate temperatures from 4°F and 248°F (-20° to 120°C) and in conjunction with the normal imaging camera can give a perfect placement of the heat map displayed on the attached smartphone

I saw one of these units advertised as brand new and unopened in a local cash generator store so I decided to purchase it.



One of the first thermal heat maps I captured was of my lounge bay window. With outside temperatures of just 1C (34F) I could see the heat loss from the large double radiator in the bay window. With 1 inch double glazed panes there is still some heat transfer through the uPVC frames however there was an even more dramatic heat loss through the cavity insulated brickwork. I suspected as much as the tradesperson we had in to build the brickwork prior to the installation of the uPVC window frame seemed to be unconcerned about the cavity wall insulation that he should have been installing as he built up the cavity wall. Obviously the blockwork wasn't a thermal grade and even though I have fitted a reflective panel behind the radiator it still loses heat.



Moving onto the large double glazed porch I quickly identified a massive heat loss where the uPVC frame meets with the house wall (bright yellow on the image) You can also see the orange brickwork indicating that some heat is escaping through the supposedly insulated cavity wall. The house is 32 years old so probably built before more stringent thermal insulation regulations came into force, particularly smaller windows.

The camera is also invaluable for tracing heating pipe runs, overheating electrical sockets and lighting fittings. I am looking forward to investigating what this device will help us reduce our heating losses, especially as heating costs have more than doubled in 6 months.

## Improving Your Flash Pictures at Christmas



If the children around the Christmas tree always turn out like this when you use flash then the following technique may help you achieve better pictures this time.

As you can see the flash is the predominant light source and has completely overpowered both the ambient light and the small lights on the tree.



By selecting manual mode and setting the exposure for the ambient light level and then using the flash gun pointed at the ceiling to produce a softer overall light the flash adds to the picture rather than dominating it.

With a bridge camera flash synchronisation works at any shutter speed however with mirrorless cameras the manual shutter speed must be less than  $1/250$  sec (typically  $1/60$  sec) to avoid synchronisation failures.

This of course assumes that you have an separate flash gun mounted in the hot shoe and it was easy to point the head towards the ceiling. The usual flash settings can be used for this technique. If you can't bounce the flash then you can move the subjects further away from the tree so that the inverse square law comes into force and reduces the flash light that will then be available to overpower the less powerful tree lights.

Lots of people take photos of family standing in front of a nicely decorated Christmas tree, and why not? The glittering ornaments and colourful lights glowing on the tree makes for a great background!

Photos like this can look fantastic, and have the potential of resulting in some memorable shots, but there's some techniques you can use that will improve these types of shots.

Balancing the ambient light from your Christmas tree lights with your digital camera's flash is where the secret of getting great images lies.

When you take photos of your subjects in front of a Christmas tree with your camera, and flash, set to the "Auto" mode, the ambient light, and in particular the Christmas tree lights, never really get a chance to build up an exposure on the camera's sensor. Instead the light from the flash sets the main exposure in the photograph—the resulting image will have good exposure of the subjects, but resulting in barely visible Christmas tree lights. These types of photos could look much better if you could just balance the light from your flash with the light coming from the Christmas tree lights. So our plan is that we are going to reduce the effect of the flash with this technique.

To prevent the flash from overpowering the lights on the Christmas tree and effectively washing them out, you need to give the tree lights more time to register on the camera's sensor, and this "time" needs to take place before the flash is firing.

This really isn't that hard to do - when you think about it as flash light is almost instantaneous, especially when compared to the shutter speeds of a camera.

To get a good photo of your subject in front of a Christmas tree, you just need to capture the ambient light from the tree lights when the flash isn't firing, and then add a touch of "fill-flash" or "bounce flash" on your subjects.

In practical terms, this means you need to reduce the shutter speed, open up the aperture or raise the ISO on your camera to allow the ambient light to register in the image and then manage the output from your flash.

When using TTL flash mode, which is the most common flash mode for bridge cameras, mirrorless and DSLRs, you can adjust the camera shutter speed, lens aperture, and ISO to control how the ambient light registers on the sensor, and the flash settings won't be affected (within reason as lens aperture can affect the result).

When adjusting any of these settings to get the desired amount of ambient light, you would then manually adjust the flash exposure compensation (FEC) to control the light from your flash if you are using "fill flash" or "bounce flash".

Some camera models also have "slow" flash sync modes that can be used to capture a balanced exposure of both the subject and background ambient light.

The main difference between the two modes is that in "slow sync or first curtain" mode the flash fires when the shutter first opens, and in "slow rear-curtain or second curtain sync" mode the flash fires just before the shutter closes. Both have pros and cons and also other uses however I have found that using this technique results in more images where people have blinked after the flash has fired in the first curtain sync mode or moved because they think the exposure is over after the flash fires. For this reason I recommend the manual exposure mode to set the ambient light exposure and then bounce flash, if possible, to create the final look to the image.

## A Change of Seasons



The same local scene captured with 2 months apart 21<sup>st</sup> October and the 15<sup>th</sup> December 2022 and from high 'teens Celsius to just 1 degree what an incredible transformation! I want to put together a video capturing the same scenes through the various seasons with a vertical "wipe" running through the change from one season to the next to unveil the new appearance. Careful note of camera lens settings and tripod placement will be needed to ensure the best line up from shot to shot. Should be quite interesting project for 2023.



## What would Christmas be without a shot of a robin, or two?



*A winter visitor captured with the Panasonic GF-1 and 14-42mm lens*

## An Old Asahi Pentax Camera Club Image



I was looking through my archives for an image that I took for a camera club (that I used to belong to), contest, when I came across this image!

This is a digital camera copy of a 10 x 8 inch print that I made on Agfa Portriga Rapid paper which had an ivory lustre finish.

If I date this image correctly it was when I was 23 years old and was a self - portrait taken in the studio at a local college of further education where I was a part-time evening lecturer in photography.

As was the case in those days I used to do my own B&W film processing and printing in my mother's attic that I converted into a makeshift studio/darkroom.



So this was the actual image that I was looking for and I believe it was taken on my Rollicflex twin lens reflex 6 x 6cm square camera. This was one of the students in one of my classes and again it was printed on my favourite portrait paper the Agfa Portriga Rapid. It would be a simple 3 light set up hair light, key light and fill light. They were all photoflood tungsten filament lights which ran extremely bright and very hot and didn't last all that long either. Black and white really can add an extra dimension and requires a little more lighting skill.

Those were really great times and I really enjoyed the challenges of teaching black and white photography to adults, many of which were almost twice my age then! I think I did this for about two years before the class sizes diminished to the point where the college principal decided that the class was unviable and was subsequently cancelled. Luckily I was still working at the college as the visual aids technician so I still had access to the better enlarger at the college than I had at home. Developing film and making prints there also caused less hassle than rolls of film hanging up to dry at home so it was still a good option until I left the college to join Kodak in 1975. Later, when I was "made redundant" in 2009, when Holt Hosiery (Part of Damart Group) moved all UK & French production to Tunisia, I did apply for another night school photography teaching post at another larger college however all the teaching posts required a PGCE ( Post Graduate teaching qualification). This basically closed the door for me as it would mean funding my own training program (costing £9200) and taking a year to two years to gain the extra certificate. Having taught for hundreds of hours in Kodak training schools in the UK and abroad I was a little disappointed that actual experience doesn't count – only paper certificates do!!

## Godox Flash Compatibility



As winter has arrived here in the northern hemisphere quite a few of you may be thinking about taking pictures using flash.

On camera flash has its place but nothing competes like getting the flash off the camera to give better modelling and coverage.

For on-camera flash if you want to take advantage of the TTL (through the lens) flash metering then you need a compatible flash unit for your camera.

For Panasonic it can be Panasonic or Olympus OEM flashes or you can use third party flashes, like Godox, which have the requisite camera protocol.

For Panasonic cameras the flash unit needs to have the “O” designation like the TT3500

If your camera is a Canon it need the “C” designation, “F” for Fuji and “S” for Sony.

If you want to use the flash off the camera you can use either a compatible flash extension cord or, for further distance, you need to use a TTL compatible wireless transmitter.

Godox produce two types, a basic transmitter and one with more “pro” features. In my example system above the X-Pro transmitter which has the “O” designation to match the Panasonic camera.

For the off camera flash it really doesn’t matter what the type of Godox flash unit is (Nikon, Canon, Panasonic, Fuji or Sony) as the transmitter “talks” to the flash unit using Godox’s own protocol.

I frequently use a mix of the flash types with my photography as I use both Canon and Panasonic transmitters and in most cases everything works fine.

Some features may not be fully implemented, like automatic zoom and 1’st and second curtain synch as these are specific camera protocols and only available using the correct compatible units.

The real beauty of the Godox system is that it is wi-fi and not infra-red so line of sight isn't a pre-requisite to using the off camera flash units.

The units do support manual mode with optical S1 or S2 triggering modes so they can be used with traditional optical wireless triggered devices if you want to use these as hair light or background fill lights etc.

*Just a note here that with Panasonic bridge cameras, because of the in the lens shutter, there are no shutter speed restrictions for synchronisation like there is with DSLR or mirrorless cameras.*

*The whole range of shutter speeds can be used and there is no need to use the hi-speed synch modes which provide a series of low power continuous flash exposures to illuminate the subject as the slit in the shutter blind moves up in front of the sensor.*



*The alternative "basic" flash trigger the X1*

This X1 trigger can set up all the groups and channels that you might need with external flash units and be able to set TTL or manual exposure to all or any individual groups and channels.

It is a little more involved to do this compared to the visual LCD set up of the X-PRO trigger system. Unless you have two or more flash units the X1 or X2 are probably the best bet.

Watch out if you are buying Godox flash units as the TT series are hot shoe TTL compatible units whereas the V series are wi-fi controlled from the X1/X2 or XPro transmitters and cannot be used as master units in the hot shoe of your camera unlike the TT series units

## It's So Cold Outside!

As I write this the overnight temperature here in the northwest of England has been around  $-9^{\circ}\text{C}$  and after last Saturday's snow fall most of it remains as day time temperatures have not risen above  $1^{\circ}\text{C}$ . This cold spell is said to last for another 3 days, until Sunday, so a little experimentation using just a small LED wand light to take a few Christmas decorations for stock images.





The LED candle shot was an interesting shot. With a totally dark room and a white card behind the candles just a small led light about 2 metres away to give some ambient light whilst the main exposure was 6 seconds at F8 and ISO 200 to emphasise the light from the realistic LED flame effect candles. A Black circular cut out applied in post editing.



In closing out this very last newsletter for 2022 I would just like to take this opportunity to thank you for your continued readership and for your kind words of encouragement from many of the articles that I have posted.

A lot of people will be facing severe hardship and challenging days ahead around the world as a result of either climate change, economic downturn, war or just bad luck. To those I wish them well and hope that there is a solution out there for them and very soon.

May I wish you and your family all the very best for 2023 and let's hope the year ahead is a more peaceful one.

Remember to dust off your cameras and smartphones to capture some family memories this Christmas and if you feel brave enough why not send me a few for publishing in the first newsletter of 2023.

So until then,

All the very best.

**From Graham**