

## TECHNIQUES ▶ Reader shooting school

Every issue we arrange for a pro photographer to take one of our readers out for a one-on-one masterclass

### READER SHOOTING SCHOOL

## IMPROVE MY DSLR SKILLS

### Meet the reader

Our Hull-based reader is treated to a three-day shoot in Hampshire



#### Nigel Dalton

By day Nigel is an Industrial Packaging Advisor, but his passion for photography is what really gets

him excited and he's currently doing a BTEC Diploma in photography. The experienced shooter prefers to use a Canon EOS 5D Mark II and Canon 24-105mm, but over the three days also employed a range of other equipment to bag his shots including: Lightroom LR4, Photoshop CS5, Canon 100mm L IS USM Macro, Canon 35mm L f1.4, Canon 16-35mm L wide angle zoom, a tripod, cable release, and ND grads for his dawn and dusk shots.

# Back to nature

We team avid reader Nigel Dalton with photography veteran Gary Fooks on his New Forest-based course

**Set within the autumnal backdrop of Hampshire's majestic New Forest, seasoned pro Gary Fooks conducts another of his successful photography courses, but this time he's joined by lucky Digital Photographer reader Nigel Dalton.**

Gary's photography courses ([www.fotocourses.co.uk](http://www.fotocourses.co.uk)) are extremely popular with all levels of shooter, and are designed for those looking for a hands-on approach to learning. This particular three-day nature photography course is aimed at improving landscape skills and composition, while shooting a range of stunning vistas, flora and fauna. Groups are kept small so all levels can feel at home and also so Gary can provide one-to-one tuition and cater the course to individual needs. "On this course I teach a complete understanding of camera functions and offer a better understanding of compositional techniques," explains Gary. "We give all course participants extensive notes

on camera techniques, composition and Photoshop to reinforce the techniques taught on the courses."

Nigel, based in Hull, was particularly keen to experience one of Gary's courses as he enjoys taking landscape photos, mainly when out walking with his wife, Sue. "I also like taking macro images in the garden and so I was thrilled to have the opportunity to go to the New Forest," enthuses Nigel. "It is somewhere I've never been before, and was also a get chance to get an independent critique of my work and to learn new skills."

Always keen to keep busy, Gary has a range of courses coming up for 2013, from one-to-one classes to Dorset Landscape courses, from days at Goodwood Motor racing events to courses abroad in Paris, Venice and the USA, and not forgetting the New Forest courses which our reader experienced. For more details visit [www.fotocourses.co.uk](http://www.fotocourses.co.uk). ▶▶



## Behind the scenes

Gary guides Nigel to shoot stronger images in the New Forest



### ◀ FUN WITH FUNGI

Nigel expressed an interest early on during the course to take some macro shots of toadstools, and thanks to Gary's expert knowledge of the forest the pro quickly found suitable subjects for our reader to frame. Nigel took his time to set up the shot and was keen to experiment with shooting angles and distances. Coupling his Canon 100mm L IS USM Macro lens with an extender, Nigel was able to zoom in tight for close up compositions and worked with various depths of field to vary the effect achieved. After cataloguing dozens of stunning images of the assortment of fungi, Nigel took a photo of a group of toadstools that thanks to a well-placed fly became his favourite image taken on the course.



### ▶ FINER DETAILS

One of the most appealing aspects of nature photography is that it can encompass a vast range of subjects, from littering autumn trees to a collection of dew-kissed toadstools, from a trickling stream to the minuscule detailing of moss-covered bark. Nigel showed his strength for nature photography by collecting images of a range of subjects, including the finer details.



### ▲ STABLE SHOTS

Gary is keen to get across points to his students on his Fotocourses, including the importance of keeping the composition simple, looking for the bigger picture, taking time to move around a location, spending time making sure the exposure is spot on and using a tripod. Nigel not only used a tripod to ensure his images were sharp, but went the extra mile in choosing to fire the shutter with a tethered shutter release.



### ◀ CLOSE UP AND PERSONAL

On this rare occasion Nigel chose to break his usual shooting method preference of tripod, shutter release and LiveView and opted for handheld shooting using the viewfinder as the light was soft and even, and the subject so low to the ground.

### ▲ CAPTURING AUTUMN'S COLOURS

Spoilt with so much choice of autumnal flora and fauna in the New Forest, Gary helped to guide Nigel, who although is experienced in photographing Yorkshire's beautiful vistas, found the Hampshire landscape a new challenge.



### ▲ SUNRISE AT BEAULIEU

Nigel's comment: "I looked for a foreground feature and eventually found this large muddy puddle. I found an interesting angle and was pleased to discover there was a decent cloud reflection coming back at me so I set up and waited for the right moment and captured it"

## Meet the pro

Photographer extraordinaire behind Fotocourses



### Gary Fooks

Seasoned expert Gary Fooks has been practising the art of photography for 35 years

and has been a dedicated tutor for nearly two decades. His relaxed yet hands-on approach to teaching has not only guaranteed spaces on his course fill up fast, but also secured bookings for repeat customers who love to come back again and again. Based in Hampshire, he conducts several courses a year that take advantage of the natural beauty on his doorstep, but he also travels far and wide to introduce novices to different climes.

[www.fotocourses.co.uk](http://www.fotocourses.co.uk)





#### ◀◀ AUTUMN IN LYNDHURST

**Nigel's comment:** "Taken in Denny Wood, we found this to be a great location for big trees, space, carpets of leaves and fungi. I saw the beam of light hitting the side of the tree and also the shadow area caused by the tree canopy and thought it would make a good autumnal subject"

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#### ▼ BEACH HUTS AT CALSHOT

**Nigel's comment:** "Gary suggested the location of the most colourful huts and I set up at an angle to maximise the impact of colour. The weather was starting to turn as you can see from the clouds, but there was strong contrast light coming from the left to highlight the fronts well"



#### ◀◀ SALISBURY CATHEDRAL CLOISTERS

**Nigel's comment:** "Gary was showing me fill flash techniques around the cloisters. When we'd finished I knew that I wanted to try this shot tight in to get the grain of the wood. I like the angle of shot and also the look of hope on their faces"

#### ◀◀◀ THE BRIDGE ON RHINEFIELD ORNAMENTAL DRIVE

**Nigel's comment:** "We were just walking towards some ponies and I saw the golden light fall on the centre behind the bridge, with the reflection in the river. Together I thought what a lovely image and I like the way it's turned out"

### How Nigel felt the course went

#### How did you find the course?

I can find nothing bad to say about the course. The content was aimed at a wide spectrum of skill and experience levels and I got what I expected from looking at the website. The number of locations we went to, to see different subject matter could only be gained by in-depth local knowledge which Gary clearly had so we could pack a lot into the day.

#### How did you find Gary's approach to tutoring?

Gary gave one-to-one time with everyone during the course and at each location he pointed out features and helped improve what we were trying to take or visualise.

#### What new skills and techniques have you come away with?

Composition is important to me and I sometimes have difficulty in recognising what I've got to work with – I can see there's a shot there but how to make best use of space, lighting and depth of field sometimes takes me a while to clarify. I was also looking to get a better insight into fill-in flash and Gary did a great job in the Cathedral to help me sort that out.

#### What is the main thing you feel you learnt over the three days?

If you think that there's a shot there, look more closely and you'll see it... eventually!

#### After experiencing the course for DP do you think you'd go on another of Gary's courses?

Absolutely. I like his style and the effort that he puts in to making sure that everyone is happy with what they've been able to achieve. All in all it was top notch value for money, good accommodation, very pleasant company and at least one good sunrise, a sunset and some fungi.

DP



# TECHNIQUES ▶ Reader shooting school

## ▶ MY FUNGI

**Nigel's comment:** "I had told Gary that I wanted to photograph fungi and was fortunate to find a number of individual specimens as well as a couple of clumps. This one was in good even light and when I set the shot up in Live View, I had the bonus of a small fly landing on top. It was definitely the highlight of my week!"

**Gary's critique:** "Nigel's composition is well thought out, whilst colours, sharpness and exposure are all spot on. I like the minimal use of depth of field which has isolated the insect form the background and foreground, culminating in a stunning image"



## Gary tells us his thoughts on Nigel and the course

### How did Nigel improve over the three-day course?

Nigel is a very accomplished photographer who took some great images during the course. He has a methodical approach to picture taking which ensures quality images. I think he gained the most from the time we spent looking at ways he could adjust his compositions to give them impact.

### What was the main noticeable difference in his images from when he started the course?

I think Nigel was of a high standard to start with but I think his images were composed better by the end.

### What new techniques did he pick up on and use the most?

I think his use of depth of field to isolate parts of an image on his

close ups, was enhanced. We played around with depth of field a lot on some of the images.

### What aspects of photography do you think he could do to improve upon next?

Nigel has a good photographic eye but composition can always be improved – that counts for everyone, including me. I'd advise him not to rush into a shot, take time to see the image. It was a pleasure to have Nigel on the course as his experience added to the group collective.

### What was your overall opinion of the images he took?

His selection of images is very, very good and stand up for themselves. They also give a good flavour of the course locations.

