

The Image – Monthly NEWSLETTER

The Abertawe Photographic Society –

Based near the heart of Swansea, Abertawe Photographic Society is an established, friendly and welcoming club, who's members both amateur and professional all share a common interest, in all aspects of photography.

Whether you are a complete beginner or a seasoned snapper, interested in digital techniques or 35mm film, there is a warm welcome by a likeminded group of people sharing in the search for the perfect image.

By sharing, not only our enthusiasm but also our skills, techniques and knowledge, we all grow as a club and by trying new things we all get the opportunity to stretch our boundaries. All members are encouraged to take part in club events.

The Society meets every Tuesday at:
Greenhill Community Centre
Chapel Street, Dyfatty,
Swansea.SA1 1NB.

This Month's Events: June

5th June Mannheim Plate (Swansea CC)

6th June Open

13th June Hand-In for Portrait Competition

20th June Open

27th June Portrait Competition

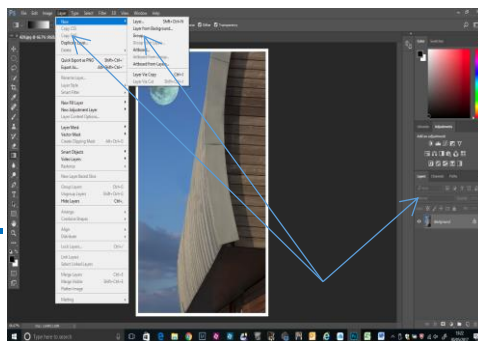
The 'Gateway' to Photoshop

Although I rate myself fairly proficient in computer programs Photoshop has always been not the easiest to use. As a program used not just by photographers, but also Graphic Designers and Artists, it has to have an enormous amount of functionality. This enormous amount of functionality greatly adds to its difficulty of use. I would hazard a guess that the average photographer only uses about 10% of its functionality.

So having said that, I wanted to get to know Photoshop in attempting to improve my photographs in post-editing, and Photoshop was always the route I wanted to take instead of many other programs out there. I knew that there had to be one aspect of Photoshop that would be the 'gateway' to its functionality and ease of use. What do I mean by that? Well, one tool or function within Photoshop would allow me to use it easier and allow use of other tools such as Dodging and Burning, Gradients, etc., etc. I had a good idea what this function was, but I had to learn how to use it.

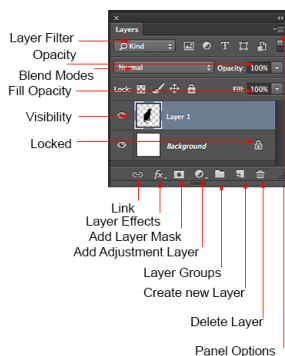
I'm talking of course about Filters and Masks, yes, those two things about Photoshop that people find mystical and afraid to use. In fact, when you learn more about them, then the more you find out that they are your 'best friends' and the 'gateway' to using more tools and functions that you ever thought you could achieve.

Layers can easily be found on the top of the Menu Panel, this brings up the Layers box shown in the bottom right, alternatively click on Window and from the subsequent drop-down window click on Layers, or just press F7, and again the Layers box will appear.



Before we carry on much further let's take a look at the various functions within the Layers Box. Understanding, all the elements available in the Layers window, and how to use them, will enable you to eventually work within Photoshop with confidence and control. Photoshop's layers Panel is a powerful tool that allows you do many special things to your layered compositions. As I mentioned earlier it is the 'Gateway' to using Photoshop and better images through post-editing. Next we will look at the Photoshop layers pallet.

If you have you ever wondered what all the parts of a layers panel do? I have shown below a screen dump of the Layers Panel with the meaning and an explanation of each.



Layer Filter: This enables you to hide layers based on different things. Makes it easier to find the layers that you want to work with.

Opacity: 0 = transparent 100 = fully opaque. Press number keys on keyboard to instantly set to multiples of 10, or adjust the slider for an exact amount of transparency on each layer.

Blend Modes: Change these to change the way that the selected layer blends with the layers underneath it. Great for compositing and special effects. (With the move tool selected, press *Shift+* or *Shift-* to cycle through blending modes.

Fill opacity: Adjusts the amount of opacity of the pixels only, but any layer styles are unaffected and remain 100% opaque.

Visibility: If the eye is showing that layer is visible. Click on the eye and the layer will still be there but invisible until you click on the eye again.

Locked: The padlock means that something is locked in the layer. (Also click in the 4 icons in the "lock" next to fill opacity to make certain things editable of locked). Here are the different things that can be locked / unlocked.

Lock all: If the box is checked the layer is totally protected from any editing.

Lock Position: You can make any changes except for moving the image.

Lock Image pixels: You cannot draw on this layer if checked.

Lock transparent: You can paint on this layer but not where it is transparent.

Useful tools at the bottom of the panel:

Link: Enabled you to link layers. These will all move together unless unlinked.

Layer Effects (Styles): Special effects applied to your image layer. Noted by the little f. Each effect will be listed. Multiple effects may be used at once.

Add Layer Mask: This is the button to press to add a layer mask to the currently selected layer; allows you to paint away parts of your layer without damaging your original image.

Add Adjustment Layer: The best way to apply image adjustments. There can change the color or tone of an image. All layers are affected underneath an adjustment layer (Unless clipped). This is a good option to using Image>Adjustments because adjustment layers are non-destructive and re editable.

Layer Groups: This is a good organizational tool, which puts layers into a folder. You can choose multiple layers and press *Ctrl + G* to put them in a group, or create a group by clicking this icon. Layers can be dragged in or out of groups in the Layers panel.

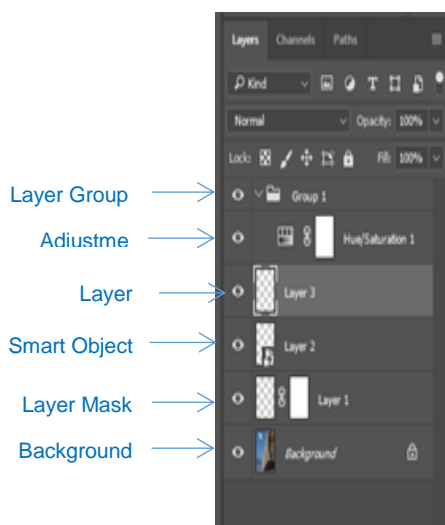
Create New Layer: Press this icon to create a new layer. Drag an existing layer into this icon to create a duplicate of that layer,

Delete Layer: Drag a layer into this icon to remove it. Or select the layer and then press this icon to get the same result.

Panel Options: This will open a drop down menu that provides a number of options, many that aren't listed anywhere else.

Types of Layers

There are various types of layers in Photoshop and are shown below. They are usually indicated by icons, here is what they all do.



Layer Group: This puts layers into a folder. Layers can be dragged in or out of groups in the Layers panel.

Adjustment Layer: An adjustment layer is changing the color or tone of all the layers underneath it. To only affect the layer directly underneath it (and ignore the other underlying layers): Move your pointer on the line between the adjustment layer and the layer directly beneath it, hold down Alt/Option. You will see a symbol appear. Click to limit the adjustment. (clip to layer) do the same thing again to toggle this option off.

Smart Object: A special type of layer that is actually a container that can hold; multiple (or 1) layers, vectors for Illustrator, raw files, video, 3D or many other types of objects.

Layer Mask: Allows you to paint on the mask to show and reveal portions of the image.

Background: Always locked, cannot be moved or have layer effects applied to it. The little icon of the padlock on the right indicates it is locked, but can be changed into a regular layer by simply double clicking on the thumbnail.

Special Types of Layers

There are two different types of layers that have appeared in newer versions of Photoshop. These used to only be in Photoshop Extended. With Photoshop CC, there is no longer a separate Extended version, all the features are now included with every copy of Photoshop.

Shortcuts to Layers and Tips:

Here are some useful tips for working with Photoshop Layers (NB: if using an Apple substitute Cmd for Ctrl and Option for Alt):

Click to select a layer

Ctrl + click to select multiple layers

Drag your cursor through the eye icons to turn the visibility on or off on multiple layers

Ctrl + J to copy a layer

Ctrl + J to copy a selection to a new layer

Ctrl + Shift + J to Move a selection to a new layer

Click the padlock icon on the background to convert it to a regular layer

Ctrl + G to Move all the selected layers into a new group

Ctrl + Alt + Shift + E to create a new merged layer above all the other layers

Hold Alt while adding a mask to create an inverted layer mask

You can drag elements from the layers panel into other documents

Hold down Alt and click the pane between two layers to clip the contents of the top layer into the transparency of the layer underneath it

Choose the move tool "V key" Press Shift + "+" to cycle through all the blending modes. Shift + "-" to cycle in reverse.

Working with Layers

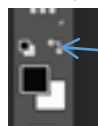
Having learnt what all the icons, controls, etc. are for let's now look at working with layers.

Having opened your image you can now create a mask by either of the actions explained at the beginning.



As you will see from the image above, the Layer is selected, signified by the highlighted area, or lighter grey around it.

From here you can make various adjustments such as lightening or darkening an area. You can do this by clicking on the arrow on the right hand side of the box with Normal in it, a drop down menu appears and approximately halfway down click on Overlay. Next select the Brush icon, adjust the opacity to approximately 15%, which you will find under the Menu Bar. Follow this selecting either Black (to darken) or White (to lighten) on this icon.



Click on arrow to change from Black to White

Adjust your brush to a suitable size and work away on the area you wish to adjust.

As well as Layers there are **Layer Masks**, which allow you to perform further activities such as colour popping, adding effects and many more image manipulations. In fact there are many applications that can be worked out using this process, from simply changing levels on selected areas, (over or underexposed areas),

Using Layer Masks is an easy way to alter and improve an image. Using this tool you can simply alter sections of an image while keeping the rest of the image as it was taken, to adding filter effects to small areas, or simply removing or adding colour to portions of the image.

To add a Layer mask, here are some simple steps to follow:

Step 1. - Open up your image and duplicate it, **Ctrl + J** or with **Layer/ Duplicate Layer**. (Press ok to finish the process). With this new layer highlighted you must change its appearance so that it differs from the original e.g. Darken the sky, change to B&W, introduce a filter effect etc.

Step 2. - To bring the original image back into view in places you need to use a mask. Create a layer mask on our adjusted layer by clicking on the 'layer mask' icon next to the fx key at the bottom of the layers palette. You should then have a white page next to the image in the Layer palette.

Step 3. - To use the mask you must select the brush tool and the areas you paint on in black reveal the hidden layer underneath, the more you paint with black the more you reveal! If you go too far and want to conceal more of the underneath layer all you need to do is swap the black paint to white on the tool bar and paint the toned layer back in.

Tips:

*When masking edges or detail zoom in close with the magnifier or **Ctrl and + or -** and use a smaller brush for precision!*

Use less flow and opacity to gradually paint through to the next level.

*Holding down **Alt** when clicking on the layer mask icon will place the original image in view.*

X on the keyboard swaps colours, from foreground to background.

I hope that will help you in opening your 'Gateway' to Photoshop.

Photo Opportunities in 2017

Thanks to Mike Clatworthy who sent this list in of Photo Opportunities in various parts of the country during 2017:

June 24th & 25th - Severn Valley Railway 1940's weekend
June 25th - Pembrey race track, British Rally Cross Championship
July 1st & 2nd - Severn Valley Railway 1940's weekend
July 1st & 2nd - Swansea Airshow
July 15th - BRAC Wales British Sprint Championship
July 15th & 16th - Black Country Museum 1940's weekend
July 14th to 16th - Farnborough Airshow
August 5th - BTRDA Clubman's Rally Cross
August 10th to 13th - Bristol Balloon fiesta
October 28th & 29th - Ragged Victorians at SS Great Britain (Bristol)
September 2nd & 3rd - NGRRC Championship Motorcycle Racing
September 5th to 7th & 10th to 12th - Flying Scotsman on The West Somerset Railway (not running on Friday 8th)
September 23rd & 24th - MSA British Rally Cross Championship

..... and finally

The quickest way to make money at photography is to sell your camera.

(Now who could be sitting on a small fortune?)