

Newsletter

InFocus at DVCC

January 2026



Learn, Develop, Share, Support

1951-2026

The coming year!

This year we mark the 75th Anniversary of Dearne Valley Camera Club and we will be organising a series of activities and events leading up to the actual anniversary which is the 29th October*. (Date is tracked back from article in the SY Times dated Nov 3rd 1951)

Its interesting to compare the activities of the original DVCC (then called Wath Camera Club) and ourselves to see what if anything has changed - it would appear that on the whole nothing has changed. Of that first meeting, the South Yorkshire Times said:

“Over 20 members were present at Monday’s inaugural meeting ...Several topics for future meetings were talked over; among them suggestions for talks on types of cameras, use of cameras, choice of subjects, types and films and plates, development, the making of print and enlargements and colour work. The probability of periodic competitions was also mooted. For their meeting on November 12th members have each been asked to take along their cameras for an informal talk on cameras and how to get the best out of them”

The fact that not a lot has changed in 75 years is perhaps not surprising given that the concepts and principles of photography have not changed, nor has the desire of photographers to capture that all elusive “perfect” photograph, likewise I don’t think that the joy some photographers have in sharing skills and experiences has diminished since those days.

Perhaps the only thing that has really changed is the pace of technological advances. But again in 1951 advances in cameras and developing techniques would have been key points of discussion, and Im sure someone would have said “it was better in my days” !

Perhaps some of you remember using these cameras that were popular in 1951 :)

- **Polaroid Model 95**
 - This iconic device solved the long-standing issue of film development time, allowing users to take and print a photograph within seconds. This marked a major step forward in consumer technology and convenience.
- **Wrayflex I**
 - A British attempt at a 35mm SLR, this camera used two mirrors instead of a pentaprism, resulting in a reversed image in the viewfinder. It featured a focal plane shutter with speeds from ½ sec to 1/1000th sec and took 24x32mm images, yielding 40 images per film.

- **Zorki 1**

- Manufactured by KMZ in the USSR, this 35mm rangefinder was closely based on the design of the Leica II. It is known for its mechanical simplicity and historical significance as a Cold War-era Soviet camera.



Zorki 1 Rangefinder

for more info check out this link

<https://blog.killmayer.fr/zorki-1/>

- **Rolleicord Model III**

- This was a popular twin-lens reflex (TLR) camera produced by Rollei. It used medium format 120 film, producing 6x6cm exposures, and was known for its reliable mechanical operation and robust build.

- **Kodak Retinette (Type 017)**

- A vintage 35mm camera from Kodak's German production, it was a more affordable, simplified version of the Kodak Retina series. It featured a Reomar lens and was popular for general consumer use.

- **Canon IIIA**

- This vintage rangefinder, part of the Canon III series, features a robust brass construction and a soft, quiet horizontal cloth shutter. It boasts a fast maximum shutter speed of 1/1000th of a second and a coupled rangefinder, offering significant capability for its time.



Canon iii

There is a Canon iii with a 35mm f1.9 lens available on ebay for £575 (or best offer)

I'm pretty sure back in 1951 folks were saying of the Canon, "Wow - it boasts a maximum shutter speed of 1/1000th of a second"

The current crop of Canon Mirrorless cameras have shutter speeds of 1/32,000th of a second and even as fast as 1/64,000 of a second on top spec canons like the R3.

This is of course partly due to the move away from mechanical shutters to electronic shutters.

But note that a Canon R3 without lens will set you back £5,500 whilst its estimated that the Canon iii would cost you 300 US dollars in 1951. To put this into context, 300 USD would purchase you a decent used car, or one of them new fangled Scottish inventions. Its estimated

that the 1951 purchase price for the Canon iii is equivalent to something akin to 4-6,000 USD (about the price of a Canon R3!)

Of course you could buy a Canon 2000D, from DVCC, which has a fastest shutter speed of 1/4000th of a second.

One of the other great changes - although this has been and will always be the case - is the use of technology.

I think there is one form of technology that would fascinate our 1951 members: the use of AI - not just to create photographs but how AI can be used as a proxy "local photography expert" to help you, the photographer, get the best out of your camera and your photography

Things for sale

The club has a few items for sale: a couple of projectors, a Canon 2000D camera. If your interested in purchasing any of these then let Chrissy or Nigel know. All items would be purchased on basis of "as seen" and without any warranty.

If you've got any camera / photography things to sell them bring them along to a club night pop them on a table along with a bit of an explanatory note about what it is and price.

Using Ai to help you

One of the easiest ways to use Ai, and this can be done free of charge to a degree, is to ask AI "how do I ..."



An AI generated image of thinking photographers

For some of us this might be something we've not tried before, so I'm going to offer a few examples of where you can use it.

Remember, this is not about is using AI to create images, or to offer up some form of "generative fill" in post processing products but is about using AI as your "ask a friend"

I tried using Chat GPT and Microsoft Co-Pilot and Google AI to ask this quite simple question "How AI Can Help New Photographers?" and here is its answer:

A Friendly Guide for Beginners

Starting out in photography is exciting, but it can also feel like there's a lot to learn all at once. Camera settings, editing tools, file formats, and software menus can be confusing when you're new. AI tools can make this learning curve much easier by giving you quick, clear answers.

Think of AI as a patient club member who's always available to help, whether you're editing your first RAW file or trying to understand why your photo looks too dark.

Getting Help With Lightroom and Photoshop

Most photographers eventually use Lightroom or Photoshop, but when you're new, even simple tasks can feel hidden. AI can guide you step-by-step without you needing to search through menus or watch long tutorials.

If you want to post a photo online, you might ask: "What export settings should I use in Lightroom for Instagram?" AI can explain recommended dimensions, quality settings, and file types so your images look their best.

Learning Photography Basics

AI can also help you understand the fundamentals of photography – the things every club member learns over time.

Try asking:

- "What does aperture do"
- "Why is my photo grainy"
- "How do I freeze motion in sports photography"

AI can break these ideas down in plain English, using examples that make sense.

YouTube is full of great tutorials, but only if you know what to search for. AI can help you find the right keywords. For example Searching for Photoshop Tutorials, instead of typing something vague like "*Photoshop help*", you could ask: "What should I search for to find a video on removing objects in Photoshop?"

AI might suggest:

- "Photoshop Content-Aware Fill tutorial"
- "Remove objects in Photoshop beginner"
- "Photoshop clone stamp step by step"

These searches lead to clearer, more useful videos.

YouTube Channels Worth Following

- PHLEARN (Photoshop & Lightroom)
- Peter McKinnon (general photography & inspiration)
- Pixlperfect (Photoshop deep dives)

Some links suggested by Google AI when asked about how to resize photographs were...

[Worthing Camera Club](#)

[North Fylde Camera Club](#) This also includes section on resizing in Photoshop and GIMP

[Katy Kahala Photography](#)

A follow up question asked for some links to video tutorials, and here is what it came up with.

- [How to Resize and Export Images in Lightroom](#): This video (approx. 2 minutes) specifically covers resizing strategies for different purposes, including web and email, using the "Resize to Fit" settings.
- [Setting Image Size While Exporting \(2-Minute Tip\)](#): A very quick tutorial focusing specifically on the **Image Sizing** section of the Export menu.

So, don't be afraid of using Ai, use it as you would a knowledgeable friend.

Yorkshire Photographic Union (YPU)

Next week Gill will be talking to us about the YPU annual exhibition and how you can, should you so wish, enter either a digitally projected image or a print. The following week Barry and Ali will be sharing with us the joys of printing. "It's not a photograph if it's not printed" is a good prompt to put to AI and search on Google - see what they have to say about it.

Gill will provide you with lots of information and we'll follow that up with information on the web site and we will be offering a separate, special, YPU critique evening via Zoom.

Submission to YPU is bound by some rules and regulations, and it is here that I give you a stern warning about using AI: It is not always correct in what it says. For example when asked how to submit images to the YPU competition it said, : "Follow YPU naming convention for your files (e.g., "Title_YourName_Club.jpg")

- ☼ *Now this is very important! - AI is wrong, it is lying to you, perhaps it's been hacked by another camera club who doesn't want DVCC to succeed!*
- ☼ *Any file which includes "YourName_Club" will be disqualified.*
- ☼ *Do not, and I repeat this, do not include your name, nor DVCC in your file name. (And don't call it 'picture 1')*

So, be careful when using AI and take notes at our next meeting from real experts.

Use AI to learn by getting it to critique your photographs

One of the best ways to improve your photography is to ask someone to critique it for you. Often we ask a friend, but - (perhaps is a touch of 'British politeness') the friend doesn't really critique but gives it a 'thumbs up', a 'like' or a 'yes it's really good'. But has this been the critical friend's observations we sought in or personal photography skills development, have I learned what I could to improve my photography.. Now you could ask AI ...

I asked Ai how I could improve one of my photographs and it crashed the internet and fell about the floor laughing! Now if I wanted support like that I could come to Wath on a Wednesday night - only kidding.



Image of Lucy Edwards taken at Studio Photography Workshops in Pontefract

Dear Ai, "How could I improve this photograph so that it gets a positive reaction from photography judges who follow the judging principles of the PAGB (Photographic Alliance of Great Britain) and The YPU". (PS, you don't have to say 'Dear Ai', nor thank you or please when engaging with Ai)

Here is what ChatGPT had to say:

This is a striking, atmospheric portrait with a very strong concept and colour discipline. It already has competition potential. To score *highly* in a **Portraits** category like the YPU Annual Exhibition, judges typically look for **technical excellence, intentionality, emotional impact, and originality**. I'll break suggestions into the areas judges usually assess.

What's Working Very Well Already

1. Strong Concept & Mood

- The monochromatic blue palette is cohesive and immersive.
- The veil creates mystery and draws attention directly to the eyes.
- There's a sense of stillness and introspection, which suits portrait judging well.

2. Eye Contact

- Sharp, engaging eyes are the strongest element.
- Catchlights are present and balanced, which judges love.

3. Clean Composition

- Tight crop works well.
- Minimal distractions.
- Excellent separation between subject and background.

These strengths mean you're refining rather than fixing.

How to Improve It for Higher Competition Scores

1. Refine Skin Tones & Texture (Critical for Portrait Judges) Even in stylised portraits, judges still expect *controlled skin rendering*.

Suggestions:

- Slightly reduce overall blue saturation on the skin, especially: Under the eyes and Bridge of the nose
- Preserve natural skin texture: Avoid smoothing too much, use subtle dodge & burn instead of blur-based retouching
- Ensure pores and fine lines remain visible at 100% view
- Judges often zoom in closely. Over-processed skin is one of the most common reasons portraits lose points.

2. Enhance Eye Separation (Without Overdoing It)

The eyes are excellent, but they can be elevated subtly.

Try: Very slight local contrast increase (clarity or texture) *only* on the irises, Micro dodge on: catchlight, lower iris edge, slight darkening of the upper eyelid crease for depth

Avoid: Over-sharpening and over-brightening whites of the eyes (competition judges dislike this)

3. Control the Blue Tonal Range

The image relies heavily on blue – this is powerful, but risky.

Refinements: Introduce micro tonal variation: Try cooler blues in background, slightly warmer (or less saturated) blues on skin

Check for: Blue channel clipping Loss of detail in darker blue areas

A subtle tonal hierarchy helps the subject stand out without breaking the colour concept.

4. Improve Depth Between Veil & Face

The veil is beautiful but could separate more from the face.

Options: Add very subtle edge contrast to the veil, a soft shadow where veil meets skin, Slightly soften the veil texture near the edges to guide the eye inward This adds dimensionality – something judges consistently reward.

5. Composition Micro-Adjustment

This is minor but competition-level important; Consider a fractionally looser crop at the top, if the original file allows it. Ensure eyes sit *precisely* on a horizontal axis (judges notice micro-tilts) If you re-crop, do it intentionally – not “almost centred”.

6. Title & Presentation (Often Overlooked)

Titles matter more than people admit in exhibitions. But avoid literal titles like: “Blue, “Veiled”, “Mystery”

Stronger approaches to titles would be emotional or poetic, slightly ambiguous or suggestive rather than descriptive

Example styles would include; One-word abstract, Short phrase implying inner state or metaphorical references (silence, distance, calm, isolation, identity)

A good title primes the judge emotionally before they even assess technique.

Final Competition Checklist (Before Submission)

- ✓ View at 100% and 200% for skin and noise
- ✓ Print simulation (if possible) – blues can shift badly in print
- ✓ No clipped highlights in eyes
- ✓ No obvious retouching artefacts
- ✓ Consistent colour intent throughout

Overall Assessment

Current level: Very strong club / regional competition standard

With refinements: National exhibition contender

I, of course, live in hope and having read this I'd best go out and find out how you make those delicate tweaks, perhaps I'll stick to asking real people at a real camera club.

Facebook

We need you to help improve our presence on Facebook, and to do this we need to get more of us posting our images on Facebook. One or two folks have done this and have also asked “How could I improve this” - last DVCC member that did that came 2nd in an international photo competition!

To encourage DVCC members to share and thus develop our Facebook presence we are running a monthly Facebook competition. Each month the previous month's winner will be asked to set



a theme and to determine which of the entries is the 'winner'. To start us off the theme for January is Circles and the clubs committee members will determine the winner.

You can submit up to 3 images, but please, please, put them into the appropriate Facebook ALBUM. (If you don't know how to do this then perhaps you can test out Ai and ask it.)

Oh, the winner will also get a 64GB SD memory card (or equivalent if your camera doesn't take SD cards).

What are we up to.

We're just finalising our program for the next few months, so there may be changes.

Date	Main Theme	Type
14/01/2026	Preparation of your YPU submissions	Learning
21/01/2026	Printing with Ali and Barry	Learning
28/01/2026	Guess what it is Show and Tell	Show and Tell
04/02/2026	TBC	
11/02/2026	Creative Activities Valentine practical / make a card	Learning and practical
18/02/2026	Street Photography Presentation and Guide	Learning
25/02/2026	Urban landscapes / street Show and Tell	Show and Tell
04/03/2026	Couples portraits (Toys and Miniatures)	Practical
11/03/2026	Toys and Miniatures (Couples portraits)	Practical
18/03/2026	ZOOM: Oliver Wright external speaker: Landscape	Zoom meeting presentation
25/03/2026	Night time photography. Show and Tell	Show and Tell
01/04/2026	Grumpy Old woman with camera, guest visitor	Guest Visiting speaker
08/04/2026	Abstracts	Learning
15/04/2026	That's Safari enough (My photography journey)	Member presentation
22/04/2026	St George's day photos / The Spirit of England	Show and Tell
29/04/2026	Landscapes	Show and Tell
06/05/2026	World Cup Football theme - practical TBC	Practical
13/05/2026	Outdoor model fill in flash. Plus alternate activity. Practical	Practical
20/05/2026	YP What awards	Presentation
27/05/2026	Outdoor model fill in flash. Plus alternate activity. Practical	Practical