

# The Steadings Gallery Exhibition 2020



*Jain Turnbull*  
PHOTOGRAPHY



# Photography Exhibition

The Steadings Gallery, Balmacara Square

1<sup>st</sup> to 14th August 2020

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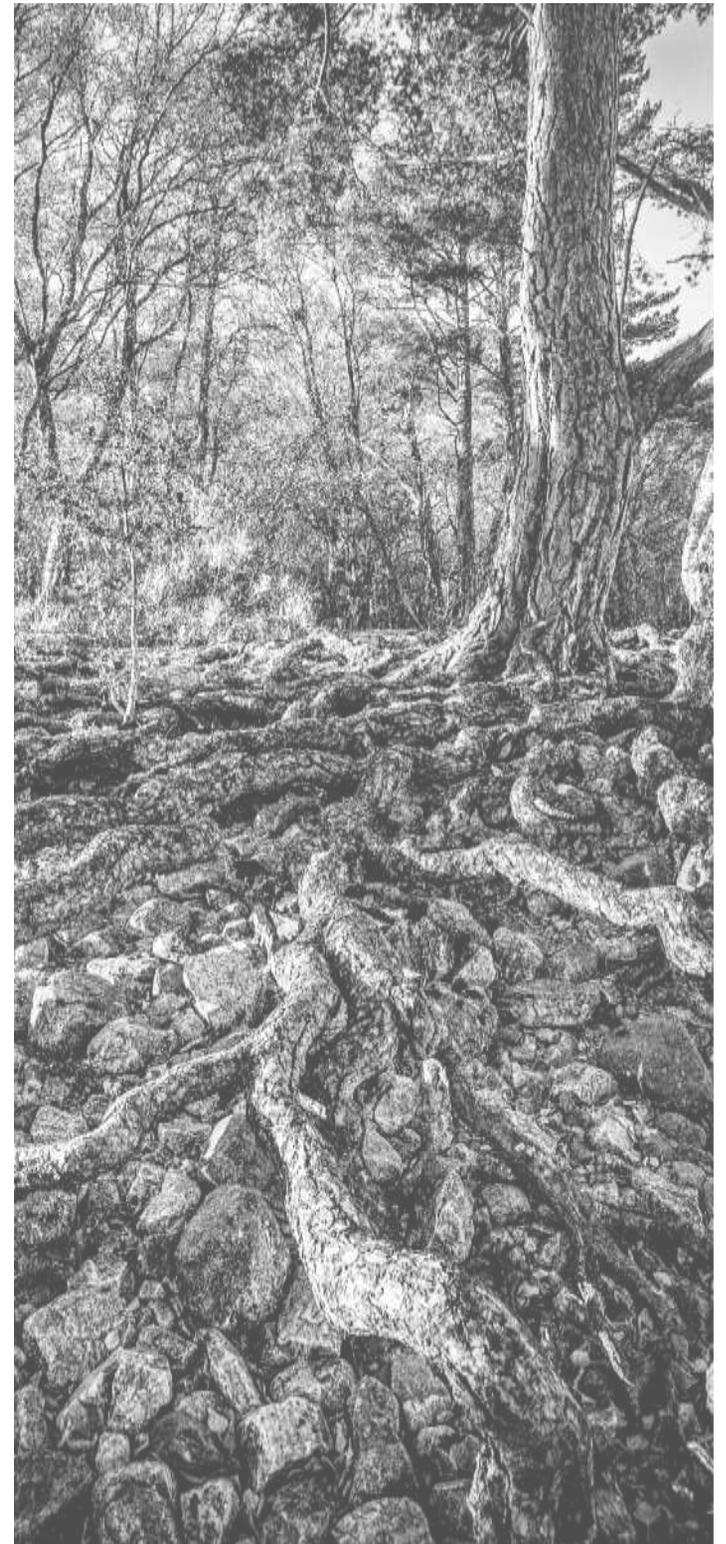
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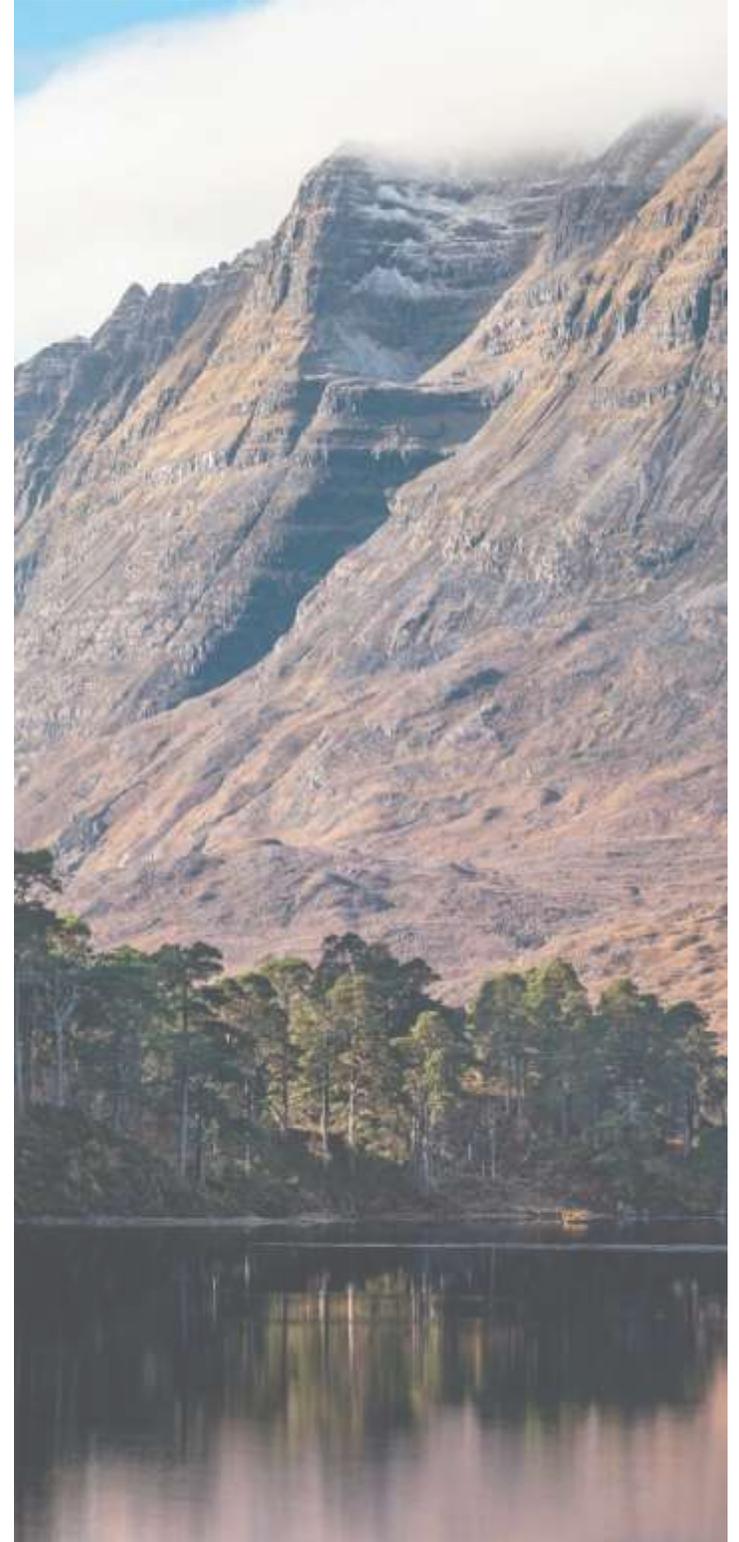
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## Introduction

The photographs in this book comprise my selection for my annual exhibition at The Steadings Gallery in Balmacara Square, Wester Ross. There is no single theme for this exhibition but there are distinct groupings of styles and techniques that I have experimented with or been focused on during the past year or so. One group is a sample of some of my favourite images that I took when studying for an HNC in Photography at the West Highland College – UHI. The theme for that study was ‘*The Celtic Rainforest of Wester Ross*’ and a fuller collection of those images can be found in my e-book by the same name, published in May 2020. A second group was also inspired by my studies towards the HNC qualification and involved a short study of abandoned dwellings in Skye and Wester Ross. The third group is another small group of images taken recently on North Uist, one of my favourite places to visit, but one that I always find challenging to capture with my camera. The fourth group are some of the results of a foray into the ‘art’ of photo painting in Adobe Photoshop. For these four images I used a standard photo as the Background layer in Photoshop and applied various brushes and filters to create a watercolour effect, which produces a very different perspective on these standard digital images. The remaining images are a mix captured during my travels around Wester Ross and Skye.

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# The Collection

The format of this book is one image per page with details of the photograph, where it was shot, the camera equipment and settings used and some commentary reflecting my aspirations and feelings about the image. Those of you who are familiar with my blog, which can be found at <https://www.iainturnbullphotography.co.uk/blog> will recognize the style of these descriptions.

I hope you enjoy the photographs.

Iain Turnbull

August 2020



**Pine Tree**

Torrison

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## Pine Tree

Shot on 24<sup>th</sup> February 2020 in Torrison, Wester Ross

Canon EOS 5D Mark II, EF 70-200mm f/2.8L IS USM lens at 73mm,

1/250 sec at f/2.8, ISO 800, CPL filter, handheld

This specimen pine tree is located within a small stand of old Scots pine (*Pinus sylvestris*) near the bottom of Glen Torrison. The stand is relatively open with most ground vegetation having been shaded out by the closed canopy of the mature trees or through grazing by deer.

I was attracted by the twisting form of the branches and how the tree stood out among the otherwise largely straight stems.

The original image was not very exciting, and the tree blended in somewhat with the background. In post-processing I tried a black & white conversion but while that improved the image, I felt it still needed something more to make it stand out. I ended up with a selective recolouring of areas of the black & white image which produced a desaturated effect overall and somehow captured the muted colours of late winter in the pinewood. The stem's red tones stand out against the backdrop of the desaturated foliage.



**Old Ash Tree**

**Rassal**

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## Old Ash Tree

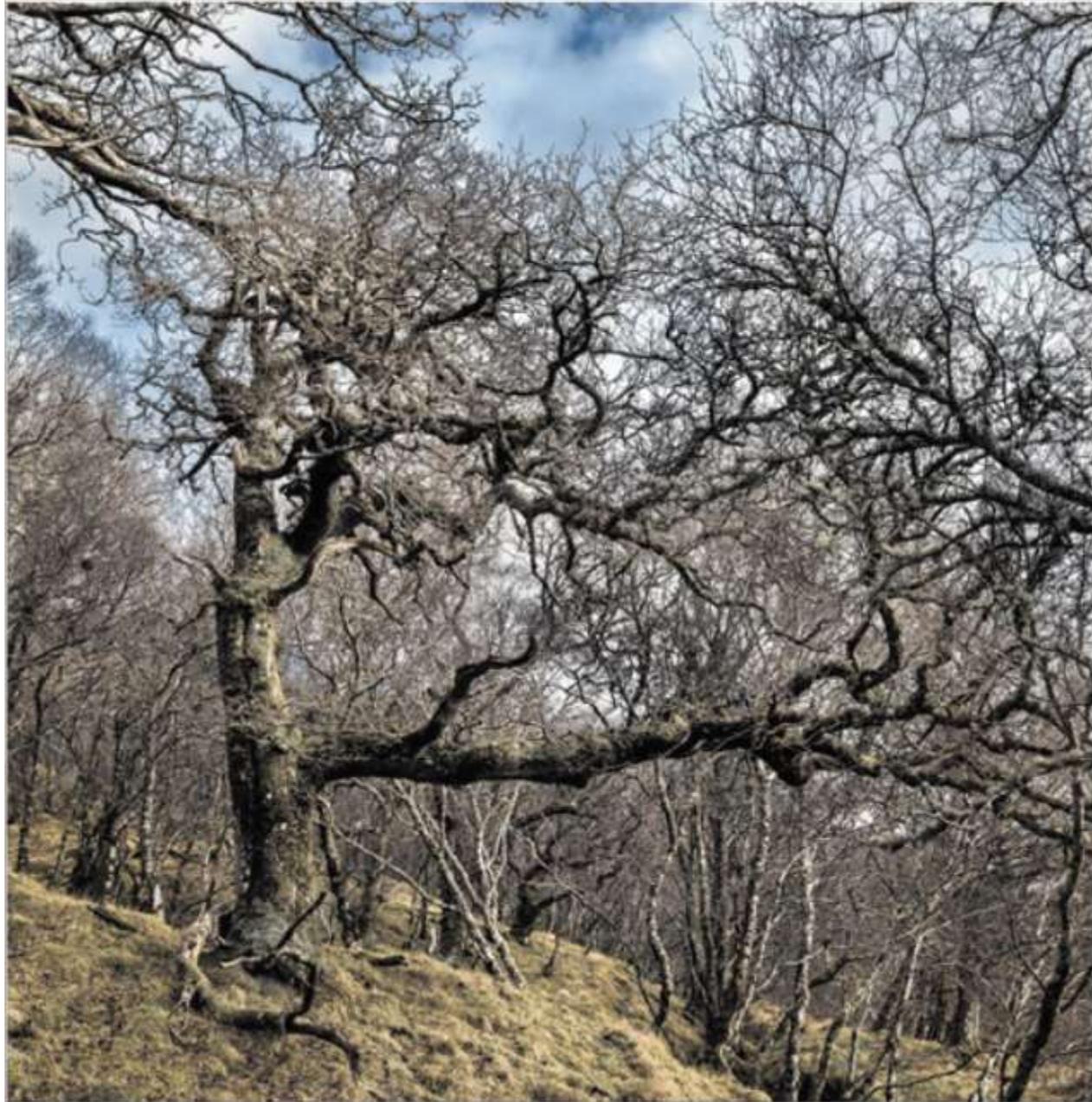
Shot on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2020 at Rassal, Wester Ross

Canon EOS 5D Mark II, EF 24-70mm f/2.8L II USM lens at 24mm,

1/100 sec at f/11, ISO 100, CPL filter, tripod

The ancient ashwood at Rassal has a very sad story to tell. Many of the old ash trees are now dying due to a disease known as Ash Dieback, and in addition to this assault the whole site is suffering from severe over-grazing by deer. Being taken in winter, it is not easy to see that there are many dead and dying branches on these old trees, but in summer the damage is more apparent. The extreme grazing pressure has left a forest floor devoid of young trees and the future of this special woodland is clearly threatened.

This was one of the sites I had chosen for my study of the Celtic Rainforest in Wester Ross with these old ash trees being particularly rich in lichens and bryophytes that depend on the mild moist climate that prevails in the western coastal woodland of Scotland. This form of Temperate rainforest is globally more scarce than its more famous Tropical cousin, and yet at one time would have spread much more widely across the temperate regions. The loss of these special habitats and ecosystems is a serious threat to the biodiversity of Wester Ross as well as the planet. The planting of ash is not permitted at this time, due to the disease, so we can only hope that time will lead to the development of some natural resistance and that government policy will address the massive policy issue of the excessive numbers of red and roe deer across the north of Scotland.



**Old Oak Tree**

**Coille Mhòr**

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## Old Oak Tree

Shot on 29<sup>th</sup> February 2020 at the Coille Mhòr, Wester Ross  
Canon EOS 5D Mark II, EF 24-70mm f/2.8L II USM lens at 35mm,  
1/60 sec at f/8, ISO 200, CPL filter, tripod

The Coille Mhòr woodland is another example of the Celtic rainforest, located near Balmacara in Lochalsh and is designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest and a Special Area for Conservation with the oak woodland and associated assemblages of lichens, bryophytes, and lesser plants being a key feature, along with the dragonflies and damselflies. The woodland has traditionally been managed as wood pasture, although this system has been abandoned for several decades, resulting in the development of a lush ground flora and a lack of young trees, apart from birch in some clearings. The site is also subject to sporadic grazing by red and roe deer, which often exhibit a preference for the seedlings of the more important tree species.

This photo was taken as part of my HNC Graded Unit assessment and I wanted to capture the sense of the scale of some of these old oak trees and the wonderful shapes of their crowns. This one is reaching out towards the south for more light and to me symbolized the need for these trees to reach out for our assistance to keep these woodlands alive and in good health. Control of the deer and reintroduction of cattle grazing would help enormously with the breaking up of the dense ground flora, which often prevents large seeds like acorns from reaching mineral soil to germinate. The huge diversity found in these woodlands is something to behold and deserves to be protected for future generations to be able to experience.



## **Mossy Forest Floor**

**Coille Mhòr**

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## Mossy Forest Floor

Shot on 29<sup>th</sup> February 2020 at the Coille Mhòr, Wester Ross

Canon EOS 5D Mark II, EF 24-70mm f/2.8L II USM lens at 70mm,

1/500 sec at f/2.8, ISO 100, CPL filter, tripod

I took this shot as part of my Photography HNC project. I was attracted by the beautiful mossy carpet and the many birch stems. I chose a single birch, with a small buttress at the base and opted for a wide-open aperture to have a shallow depth of field, focusing the viewer's eye on the base of the main tree. I also used a circular polarizing filter (CPL) to emphasise the tonality in the greens. In post-processing I converted the image to black & white and then selectively re-colourised the grassy/mossy elements, making the stem stand out even more. I also applied a light vignette around the edges of the image, further focusing the eye on the stem.

The effect is really appealing with the soft focus of the background and the sharp detail on the stem and mossy buttress. In the summer this image would look very different with a much more luxuriant growth of grass and the shapes and textures of the forest floor would be hidden beneath. There is a sense of the mysterious forest about this image as the edges are dark and it almost feels like you are looking into a tunnel of light.



## **Birch Stems**

Coille Mhòr

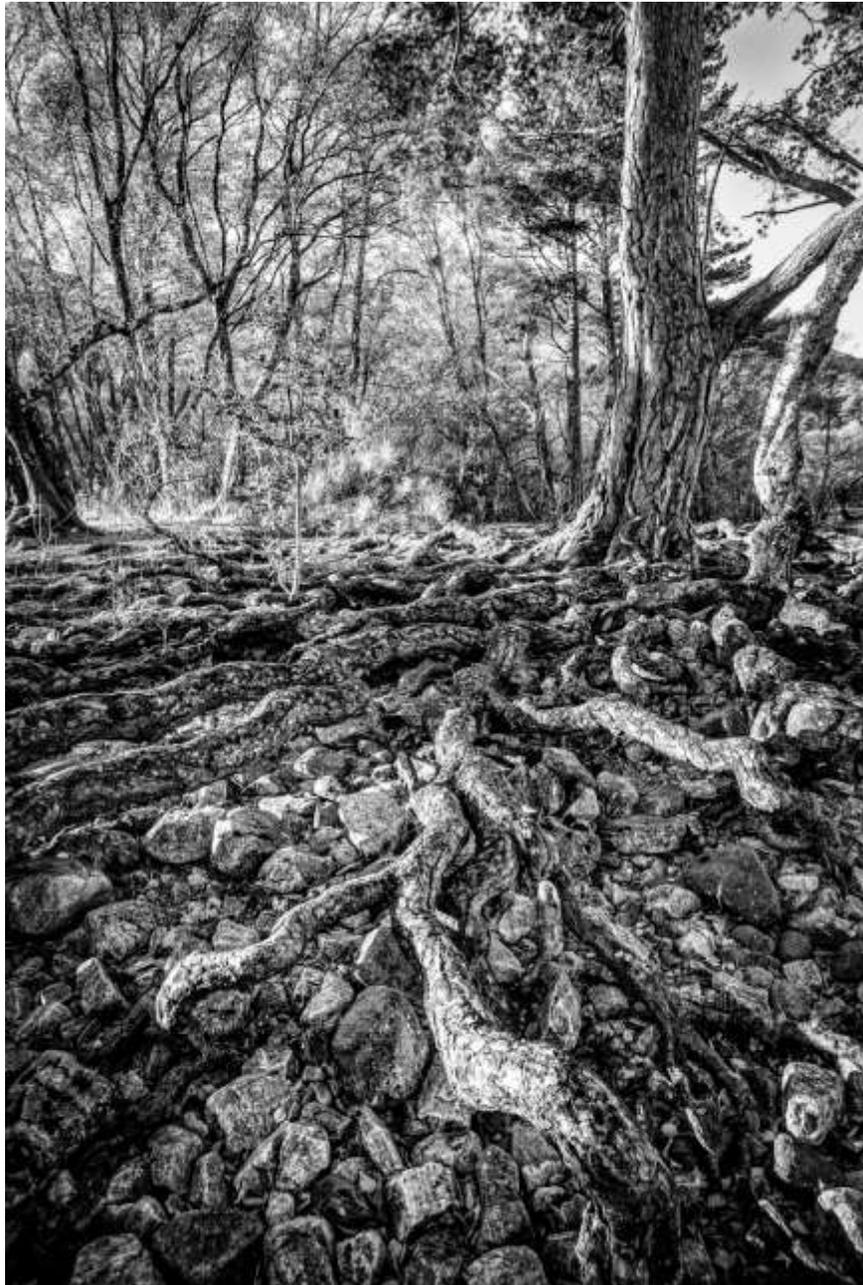
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## Birch Stems

Shot on 29<sup>th</sup> February 2020 at the Coille Mhòr, Wester Ross  
Canon EOS 5D Mark II, EF 24-70mm f/2.8L II USM lens at 70mm,  
1/500 sec at f/2.8, ISO 100, CPL filter, tripod

This composition appealed to me because of the dense mossy covering on the forest floor, beneath the birch stems. While attractive, this actually signifies that the site is not being grazed properly as a wood pasture. The presence of these medium aged birch trees, and the general lack of oaks suggests that site has not been grazed for a while. The birch trees are now effectively shading out any young oak trees and in the summer this scene would look very different as the grasses grow and the taller vegetation prevents many acorns from reaching the soil to germinate. The answer to this problem is to introduce some cattle grazing, preferably of old breeds with selective browsing habits, and perhaps to remove some of the birch to allow more light into the stand, in the vicinity of the older remnant oaks.

The processing of this image was much the same as used for the Mossy Forest Floor one and I feel the two images make a nice pair. The shallow depth of field has rendered the foreground and background out of focus and very soft, with the viewer's eye being focused on a few stems in the mid-foreground. The image is almost split-toned, with the trees largely in monochrome and the only colour coming from the mossy/grassy areas on the ground and on the occasional tree. I like this effect in this context.



## **Pine Roots**

Loch Maree

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## Pine Roots

Shot on 8<sup>th</sup> November 2019 at Loch Maree, Wester Ross

Canon EOS 5D Mark II, EF 17-35mm f/2.8L USM lens at 22mm,

1/40 sec at f/11, ISO 800, tripod

This photograph speaks for itself, the amazing tree roots, which are exposed above the rocky shore of Loch Maree, immediately draw one's attention and simply can't be ignored from a photographer's perspective. The area around Loch Maree is very well known for the pinewoods of Beinn Eighe and the ancient broadleaved woodland on the north shore. This location is actually very accessible, just beside a car park for walks up the lower slopes of Beinn Eighe through the pinewood. However, if you look the other way towards the mountain Slioch, down by the shore you will find a small group of pine trees, of which this is one.

I shot this with my ultra-wide-angle lens to capture both the spreading roots and the base of the stem. The texture of the bark on the tree and the roots, along with the tortuous pattern of the roots themselves, among the stones on the shore of the loch really attracted me to this shot. Due to the low level of light early in the morning when I took this shot, and the time of year, the colours were very muted and I knew I would be converting this image to black & white. The main challenge for this shot was balancing the exposure of the foreground against the brighter sky. I used a small-to-medium aperture (f/11) with the wide-angle lens to maximise sharpness and depth of field, so I could get both the foreground roots and the tree stem in focus. This is a location I will certainly return to, perhaps in autumn, when the background trees could provide a fantastic backdrop for a similar composition.



**Pine Tree**  
Loch Alsh

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## Pine Tree

Shot on 27<sup>th</sup> September 2019 at Loch Alsh, Wester Ross

Canon EOS 5D Mark II, EF 17-35mm f/2.8L USM lens at 17mm,

30 sec at f/16, ISO 100, ND 0.9 filter, tripod

This photo was inspired by Michael Kenna's images of trees. While the subject is nowhere near as clean as his fantastic black & white shots of isolated trees in snowy landscapes, I was trying to capture a sense of the softness that I feel characterizes his images. I used a long exposure of 30 seconds to smooth out the detail in the clouds and the sea, and the mist shrouding parts of the hillside opposite helps to bring a sense of softness and motion. The tree itself is an old stunted and wind-swept Scots pine, shaped in an almost Bonsai style by the prevailing winds from the south-west

The photo was processed in Silver Efex Pro II to convert it to black & white. I used various control points to select different parts of the photo to reduce the detail and increase the softness of the background. I also applied a reduction in exposure to the sky to bring in a little texture and avoid it looking blown out.

I am a big fan of Kenna's tree images and have recently acquired a Holga 120N camera to try out medium format film photography with an almost entirely plastic 'toy' camera, just for a bit of fun. Having looked at his images in his book '*Holga*' I find it incredible to see how sharp some of his images are.



## Old House and Trees

Suisinish

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## Old House and Trees

Shot on 29<sup>th</sup> September 2019 at Suisinish on the Isle of Skye

Canon EOS 5D Mark II, EF 17-35mm f/2.8L USM lens at 17mm,

1/5 sec at f/16, ISO 100, ND 0.9 Grad Filter, tripod

The crofting settlements of Suisinish and Borreraig, on the Isle of Skye were brutally cleared of their residents in 1853 by Lord MacDonald, the landowner at the time. The houses were burned, and sheep brought in to graze the land. The times of the Clearances saw similar events across the Highlands and Islands, and indeed in other parts of the country, as landlords sought to improve their income from the land, often at the cost of the traditional residents, many of whom were shipped overseas.

This house is probably more recent than 1853 and may have been used by one of the shepherds brought in with the sheep, or even from a more recent time. There are several ruinous remains of old houses left in Suisinish and the neighbouring township of Borreraig, and, along with the complete lack of any current residences, provides a starkly sad reminder of these desperate times. When I visited it was a bleak day, late in September, and indeed my photoshoot was curtailed by the onset of very wet weather. The light was flat and grey, with low cloud hanging over the mountains of Skye and Rum. I knew I would probably convert any worthwhile images into monochrome, aiming to capture the sense of sadness associated with the clearing of the settlement and of abandonment. I really like the brooding sky and the obviously wind-swept shape of the trees, suggestive of the exposure this place experiences.



**Old Houses & Rowan Tree**  
Ledgowan, near Achnasheen

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## Old Houses & Rowan Tree

Shot on 12<sup>th</sup> October 2019 at Ledgowan near Achnasheen

Canon EOS 5D Mark II, EF 17-35mm f/2.8L USM lens at 22mm,

1/8 sec at f/16, ISO 200, tripod

This photograph was one of my many opportunistic one, taken on my way home from Inverness, late in the afternoon as the sun was setting in the background. I travel that road quite often and I had been aware of this row of derelict houses set off from the road and intended to stop sometime and take some photos. This time, I had my camera and the timing was decent. I tried various angles and compositions, but this was my favourite, capturing the rowan tree growing at the rear of the nearest house. These trees are commonly found near most old croft houses in the Highlands as they were believed to ward off witches and evil spirits.

The original image was a bit flat and the building did not really pop out of the surrounding landscape. I opted for a desaturated style, which is rapidly becoming a common practice for me, and then I increased the saturation on the rowan berries and the coppery foliage of the other trees and in the sky to slightly emphasise the colours of the fading sun reflected in the clouds. The overall effect is much more impactful, and the ruined houses stand out much more noticeably.



**Dun Telve at Night**

Glenelg

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## Dun Telve at Night

Shot on 16<sup>th</sup> October 2019 at Gleann Beag near Glenelg

Canon EOS 5D Mark II, EF 17-35mm f/2.8L USM lens at 22mm,

132 sec at f/8, ISO 100, tripod

This ancient building constructed somewhere around 2,000 to 2,500 years ago is located in Gleann Beag, near Glenelg. This is one of three brochs in the glen, although only two are open to the public. The structure is of entirely drystone construction with two concentric circles narrowing towards the top. Some of the foundation stones are truly massive. These brochs are a type of roundhouse that is only found in Scotland, mainly in the north-west mainland and islands.

This photo was taken as it was beginning to get properly dark. I used a long exposure (132 seconds) with the camera on a tripod, and I used a little gentle light painting with my rather inadequate torch, on the building to bring out the details. The long exposure has produced a fantastic effect in the sky, almost like an aurora effect, but it was in fact just the movement in the clouds which had not quite gone completely dark. The wide angle of the shot and the low vantage point did produce some vertical distortion in the image which I managed to correct in Adobe Lightroom and Photoshop to bring the main wall back towards its correct angle.

The long exposure and black & white conversion have produced a lovely evocative image, full of resonance with the long-lost history of this site.



## **Ruined Croft House**

Port an Eorna

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## Ruined Croft House

Shot on 7<sup>th</sup> June 2020 at Port an Eorna

Canon EOS 5D Mark II, EF 70-200mm f/2.8L IS USM lens at 135mm,

1/320 sec at f/8, ISO 100, handheld

This old croft house has been gradually succumbing to the encroaching vegetation and has almost disappeared into the landscape now. The small crofting township of Port an Eorna, or Barleyport, in Lochalsh has very few residents and is located at the end of a short single-track road from Duirinish. The views across the bay towards the Applecross hills and the Bealach na Ba are outstanding, and the sunsets looking further west towards Skye and Raasay are amazing.

This crofting township was reorganized in 1995 to bring in new active crofters with the aim of bringing the township back from the brink. Now all the crofts are being worked and there are new croft houses, occupied by people who live there and work the land, although there are also a few holiday homes too. This old ruin serves as a constant reminder that the culture and traditions of the people who have lived in these areas for centuries were almost completely lost and apart from second and holiday homes this might have been the plight of all the permanent residences. Where would the Highlands and Islands be without the crofters working the land, and what would the landscape look like? There would be no species-rich meadows, few livestock and plenty of abandoned dwellings, a very sad sight in my opinion. These cultural landscapes, and the details of the component parts, are one of my favourite subjects for photography.



**Beaton's Croft House**

**Borneskitaig**

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## Beaton's Croft House

Shot on 8<sup>th</sup> September 2018 at Borneskitaig, Isle of Skye

Canon EOS 5D Mark II, EF 24-105mm f/4L IS USM lens at 28mm,

1/100 sec at f/22, ISO 400, handheld

Beaton's Croft House is an A-listed traditional Skye type thatched croft house, with associated thatched byre. The cottage is owned by the National Trust for Scotland and is located in the crofting township of Borneskitaig in Kilmuir, Skye. This shot was inspired by one taken by Paul Strand in his series of photos taken on Uist in the 1950s and published in his book *Tir a'Mhurain* (Land of the bent Grass). It is unusual to select only a portion of a property like this, but it does capture some of the key features of this historic building. The house is incredibly important, being the only thatched cottage on Skye that has its original roof structure, turf, and rush thatch.

Given the inspiration for this photo I processed it deliberately into monochrome but with a sepia preset to replicate the style and tone of the original. The black border adds to the sense of age and the square format suggests a medium format film camera, even though it was shot on my DSLR.

It would be good to undertake a proper study of all these old buildings that are still in use, for one thing or another, and before they disappear. Perhaps that could be a project for the future, it would certainly make for an interesting book.



**Cnoc an Torainn**  
North Uist

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## Cnoc an Torainn

Shot on 13<sup>th</sup> July 2020 at Cnoc an Torainn, North Uist

Canon EOS 5D Mark II, EF 24-70mm f/2.8L II USM lens at 24mm,

1/125 sec at f/8, ISO 400, handheld

This view of Cnoc an Torainn across Loch Sandary is to me a classic example of Uist and demonstrates why it can be a challenging place to capture good images. The land is generally quite flat, and the skies are huge, and often grey and cloudy. The landscape does lack the larger, dramatic mountains of the mainland and islands like Skye and Mull, but it does have plenty of small lochs and wonderful grasslands. What the camera does not capture of course is the fantastic noise of the birds singing and the almost constant breeze. The houses can appear to be very small in the landscape, as in this case, but when you get a good sky the whole image becomes much more compelling.

This shot was captured in the early evening as the sun was getting lower in the sky, producing a lovely warm glow with a contrasting grey cloudy sky. The croft houses on the skyline were illuminated by the sunshine, as was the grassland in the foreground. I wanted to try and capture the sense of space and the scale of the landscape, as well as the atmosphere of that lovely evening light. The original image was fine, but I felt some of the colours were almost too bright and I preferred a more desaturated look. This emphasized the darker parts of the sky, making it much more interesting and dramatic.



**Cnoc an Torainn and Loch Sandaraigh**  
North Uist

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## Cnoc an Torainn and Loch Sandaraigh

Shot on 15<sup>th</sup> July 2020 at Paiblesgearraidh, North Uist

Canon EOS 5D Mark II, EF 17-35mm f/2.8L II USM lens at 17mm,

1/160 sec at f/16, ISO 100, tripod

Loch Sandary is a lovely shallow loch surrounded by croft land. There are always lots of wetland and waterfowl birds on the loch and in the tall reed bed at the south-east corner. It is a fantastic place to go for a stroll late on a summer's evening and there is always the chance of spotting a short-eared owl or a hen harrier and of hearing the corncrake calling. These are three things that to me epitomize the Uists.

This is another shot of the eastern part of Cnoc an Torainn across Loch Sandary in North Uist. Once again this demonstrates the landscape of the North Uist very well, with the houses strung out in a line along the skyline, the ubiquitous loch, and the yellow flag iris in the foreground. The sky, cloudy as usual, provides a sense of movement in the scene and adds to the scale of the landscape.

I shot this image with my ultra-wide angle zoom lens at 17mm to try and capture the scale of the sky. This has resulted in the houses being relatively small in the landscape. I opted for the desaturated look once again as there was limited colour in the grassland and I feel this style helps to add texture and tonality to the image, in the same way as monochrome but at the same time retaining the colours to some extent. This approach is becoming a bit of a signature style for me recently and is something I expect to experiment more with moving forward.



**Croft at Paiblesgearraidh**  
North Uist

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## Croft at Paiblesgearraidh

Shot on 15<sup>th</sup> July 2020 at Paiblesgearraidh, North Uist

Canon EOS 5D Mark II, EF 70-200mm f/2.8L IS USM lens at 170mm,

1/500 sec at f/8, ISO 100, handheld

This third shot across Loch Sandary is looking towards a croft in Paiblesgearraidh (Paiblesgarry). For this one I opted to use my 70-200mm lens to focus on the details as opposed to the previous images where I wanted to capture the sense of space. I have photographed this croft before but this time I selected a different vantage point which brought in the loch and the wet grassland with the bog cotton in the foreground. This adds a lot of interest visually to the foreground, contrasting with the yellows of the flowers in the croft land on the other side of the loch. Once again, the sky was a darker grey and this serves to isolate the buildings and focuses the viewer's attention on them.

The selection of buildings on the skyline is typical of the Uists with a mix of the old and the new. Many of the old houses have long since been abandoned and are either neglected and ruinous or more commonly put to some other use as a small byre or shed. Added more recently are modern sheds and other buildings, often associated with the tourism industry, as in the case of the pale green chalet here. The main croft house itself shows evidence of evolution with dormer windows having been added at some stage. Thus, the crofters declare themselves as adaptable and innovative, making the most of the resources available to them at the north-western fringe of Europe.



**Looking towards Udal from Traigh Bhalaigh**  
**North Uist**

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## Looking towards Udal from Traigh Bhalaigh

Shot on 15<sup>th</sup> July 2020 at Traigh Bhalaigh, North Uist

Canon EOS 5D Mark II, EF 24-70mm f/2.8L II USM lens at 24mm,

1/250 sec at f/16, ISO 100, tripod

One of the most famous aspects of the Uists is their magnificent beaches which go on for miles and miles up the western seaboard. Created by the constant onslaught from the Atlantic Ocean this sand plays a key role in the agriculture of the Uists, creating the wonderful machair land that supports the crofting system in this part of the country. The sands are blown inland and deposited on the peaty soils, creating a much more base-rich sandy soil that is much more productive than the soils of the north-west mainland crofts. This has led to a system of agriculture that is rich in biodiversity with fantastic species-rich grasslands supporting enormous populations of waders and waterfowl. In the breeding season the noise of singing and calling birds is phenomenal, and anyone who has been camping there will testify to being woken at four in the morning by lapwing, redshank, corncrake and many other species defending their territories.

The beach at Traigh Bhalaigh is one of the largest areas of sand when the tide is out, spreading from Solas to the isle of Vallay where there is a ruin of a once very grand house. Looking towards the north-east, as in this photo, you see the headland of Udal and up towards Harris, with dunes stretching the whole way. For this shot I chose a spot with the clump of sea pink in the foreground and the dune vegetation just at the right-hand edge to help provide perspective. It was incredibly bright with the glare from the sand, so challenging to balance the exposure. Once again, the sky makes the photo, I think.



**Old Boat at Plockton (Photo Watercolour)**

**Plockton**

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## Old Boat at Plockton

Adobe Photoshop Photo Watercolour Painting

Created on 27<sup>th</sup> June 2020 from a Photo shot on 27<sup>th</sup> January 2017 at Plockton

Canon EOS 5D Mark II, EF 24-105mm f/4L IS USM lens at 24mm,

1/100 sec at f/20, ISO 800, tripod

A little while back I was tempted into trying some painting in Adobe Photoshop, using one of my photographs as a background image. I tried various approaches after looking at several videos on YouTube and some of the results were decent, and certainly brought a different perspective to my images. Then I found a guy who had produced a Photoshop Action that effectively converted the background image into a watercolour. It is randomized and allows for some fine tuning and optional application of brushes and the like, and so you retain quite a degree of control on the final effect. I tried it and this was the first image I produced.

The original image was shot back in 2017 and was a popular one in its own right but I felt it would adapt into a 'watercolour' style really nicely. The action allows the user to define the core area of the image and then create less detailed areas around that. I tried it a few times before I got this final result which I am happy with. It still feels a bit like cheating from a photographer's perspective, but art is art and the techniques and methods of creating imagery have always evolved and adapted, so who's to say that this isn't a valid approach. The final image is an attractive product and for some might be more appealing than a straight photograph.



**Telephone Box at Diabaig (Photo Watercolour)**

**Diabaig**

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## Telephone Box at Diabaig

Adobe Photoshop Photo Watercolour Painting

Created on 29<sup>th</sup> June 2020 from a Photo shot on 9<sup>th</sup> November 2019 at Diabaig

Canon EOS 5D Mark II, EF 70-200mm f/2.8L IS USM lens at 70mm,

1/100 sec at f/8, ISO 400, handheld

This is another ‘watercolour’ conversion, done in Photoshop, based on a photo I took in November 2019 at Diabaig in Torricon. Old telephone boxes have always been an attractive subject for photographs of streetscapes. Diabaig is a place I had not visited for many years and I had forgotten how lovely it is and certainly not appreciated the photographic opportunities there and on the road to it. This phone box is located adjacent to an old tin shed and the combination of colours and textures provided a really nice composition.

The ‘watercolour’ conversion brings more looseness to the image that the photograph just can’t manage. Also, the telegraph pole in the background was a bit distracting and difficult to remove or adjust in a photograph, but in the ‘watercolour’ it is much less obvious. The result is a vibrant and attractive image with lovely textures in the shadow areas. For the exhibition I had these four ‘watercolours’ printed on canvas to add texture to the product, more synonymous with an actual painting. Overall, a successful experiment and one that I might well explore further. It would be interesting to consider different style of art, such as oil painting or pastels, and different approaches to watercolours too.



**Dun Telve (Photo Watercolour)**

Glenelg

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## Dun Telve

Adobe Photoshop Photo Watercolour Painting

Created on 29<sup>th</sup> June 2020 from a Photo shot on 29<sup>th</sup> January 2017 at Gleann Beag

Canon EOS 5D Mark II, EF 17-35mm f/2.8L USM lens at 21mm,

1/125 sec at f/16, ISO 200, tripod

This third ‘watercolour’ is based on a photo of Dun Telve taken back in 2017. I converted the original photo to black & white then as the colour version was not very interesting, with little contrast or vibrancy. However, when experimenting with ‘watercolour’ painting in Photoshop I thought this subject would produce a good outcome. I created a mask around the main features, i.e. the broch itself and the majority of the trees in the background. This area has been rendered in some detail in the final product but the rest of the image in much less detail. The result is very effective, creating a nice frame around the main subject matter without the distracting elements off to the side. The texture in the stone has been retained and the more dramatic blue in the sky complements the building really well.

This artier style of imagery is another way of interpreting our wonderful landscapes and using my photos as the background allows me to play around with some of my older photos, some of which were not considered to offer much scope for presentation. In some cases, the composition was good but the light just didn’t work, or didn’t come out as expected. This type of processing allows the essential character to be captured and yet embellished through sensitive adjustment, which to me is the definition of art.



**Old Bridge (Photo Watercolour)**

Cluanie

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## Old Bridge

Adobe Photoshop Photo Watercolour Painting

Created on 28<sup>th</sup> June 2020 from a Photo shot on 9<sup>th</sup> October 2017 at Cluanie

Canon EOS 5D Mark II, EF 24-105mm f/4L IS USM lens at 65mm,

2 sec at f/22, ISO 100, tripod

This fourth ‘watercolour’ is my favourite of the small collection. I really like the original image but I think the ‘watercolour’ conversion has worked really well. The main elements of the image are well captured and there is a real sense of motion in the waterfall. The colour of the trees frames the old bridge really nicely and the sheen on the water in the pool is beautifully rendered.

The old bridge is literally once course of stones that still remains form the original structure. You can walk across it but there are gaps through which you can see the water below. It is certainly more than a little un-nerving to take that first step. The perfect curve of the bridge frames the waterfall wonderfully and at early autumn, when this shot was taken, the colours are fantastic. I intend to return in high autumn and try again for a slightly different colour palette and perhaps in winter and spring, to create a full collection of the seasons. I guess one day the structure will fail and this little gem will be lost but for now it is absolutely one of my favourite locations.



**Red Roofed House Overlooking Loch Shieldaig**  
**Inverbain**

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## Red Roofed House Overlooking Loch Shieldaig

Shot on 27<sup>th</sup> October 2019 at Inverbain

Canon EOS 5D Mark II, EF 24-70mm f/2.8L II USM lens at 24mm,

1/160 sec at f/16, ISO 800, handheld

This image just missed out in being shortlisted for the Scottish Landscape Photographer of the Year Awards last year but is to be included in their e-Book apparently. I had seen other people's photos of this well-known cottage by the shore of Loch Shieldaig in Wester Ross and thought I would visit it one day when the timing was right. On this occasion I happened to be in the area so took a detour around the Applecross peninsula and stopped to catch this one. The shot was taken in the afternoon, so the light was beginning to fade slightly and the sun was illuminating the clouds really nicely. The contrast between the bright red roof and the wider landscape really makes this a compelling image, but for me the light and colours in the sky are what make this an interesting photo.

It has become very obvious to me that I tend not to take many good photos in the summer months, especially in July and August. I have often asked why, but it is sometimes hard to say. It may be that during these summer months the landscape tends to turn a general green and the early morning and late evening light is found at pretty anti-social hours when I am not out and about so much. During the shoulder months, and in deepest winter, that is definitely not the case and good light can be found at any time of the day, with storm fronts and variable weather being relatively normal and sometimes very rewarding. While these conditions do arise in summer in the wet west of Scotland, they are much less common, and with prevailing south-westerlies days and weeks can pass without a good opportunity.



**Dramatic Light on Holm Island & the Sound of Raasay**

**Trotternish**

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## **Dramatic Light on Holm Island & the Sound of Raasay**

Shot on 11<sup>th</sup> July 2020 at Trotternish, Isle of Skye

Canon EOS 5D Mark II, EF 24-70mm f/2.8L II USM lens at 70mm,

1/80 sec at f/8, ISO 100, handheld

Having just said that I don't capture many good images during July and August, this one was just that. It was one of those days where the weather is not at all predictable and you don't venture far from the house without a waterproof. As can be seen the variations in the weather were much localized, with heavy rain showers over the hills to the south and areas of deep shadow under the clouds interspersed with bright sunshine where there were gaps in those clouds. The effect is very dramatic and rainbows can be seen in the sort of conditions fairly regularly. In this case there was no rainbow, but the light on the water of the Sound of Raasay and the contrasting light conditions really made me stop to take this photo, from right beside the road.

Trotternish has become a hugely popular destination for photographers, usually focusing on the Quiraing and the Storr, but the area has so much more to offer. There are outstanding views across the Sound of Raasay and the Inner Sound towards the mountains of Wester Ross. It is worth getting up there early in the morning to catch the sunrise against these distant hills. The crofting landscape also offers up beautiful little details and perspectives that capture the cultural heritage of the area and the traditional land use that has shaped this landscape so much. Thus, I tend to avoid the honey pots and look more at the general landscape and the cultural imprint on it, and feel that this is a much more interesting way to interpret this wonderful place.



**Sunset on Eilean Ban Lighthouse**  
**Kyleakin**

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## Sunset on Eilean Ban Lighthouse

Shot on 1<sup>st</sup> May 2019 at Gleann Beag near Glenelg

Canon EOS 5D Mark II, Sigma 70-300mm f/4-5.6 DG Macro lens at 133mm,

1/200 sec at f/16, ISO 400, tripod

This is an unusually classic sunset image, but one which I really like. The photo was taken during an outing of the South Skye Camera Club one evening at Kyleakin on the Isle of Skye. The Skye Bridge is often photographed from the shore at Kyleakin but this was taken from the War Memorial. It was obvious that the sun was setting and the colours were going to be very spectacular. I took several shots and then realized that it was possible that the sun might just break the horizon on the bridge at the point where the lighthouse was situated. So, despite the midges, I waited until the decisive moment and managed to capture this shot. The sun was perfectly aligned with the lighthouse, producing this lovely outline of bright light in the reflection and also a little highlight of red where the light is located. The yachts on the foreground provide interest and perspective and Duncaan, the mountain on Raasay in the background completes the setting perfectly.

One of my shortcomings as a photographer, and there are many, is a lack of patience. I often find myself rushing around taking shots and I am not good at just waiting for the light to improve or something to change in the scene that will make it so much better. Many of my shots are opportunistic, but this is one which I visualised and it came out perfectly. I waited for well over 30 minutes for the sun to get to where it needed to be and the result shows it was worth the wait. I need to do more of this, just slow down!!



**Croft Meadow**

**Duirinish**

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## Croft Meadow

Shot on 20<sup>th</sup> June 2020 at Duirinish

Canon EOS 5D Mark II, EF 17-35mm f/2.8L USM lens at 17mm,

1/80 sec at f/16, ISO 100, tripod

This is an unusual shot of the croft meadows at Duirinish in Lochalsh. Firstly, it is in monochrome which is unusual for flower meadows which are often full of colour. Secondly, a lot of the image is just empty sky. I took this image from a very low vantage point with a wide-angle lens to try and capture as much as possible of the sky which was a brilliant blue with almost no clouds. The few clouds that are present came out beautifully white and really enhance the image. Meanwhile, the textures and tones in the grassland in the foreground, with the single hawthorn tree on the skyline make an interesting and compelling foreground.

The conversion to monochrome, with the application of a red filter, has produced a dark black sky and contrasting white clouds. I increased the texture settings on the foreground grassland to bring out the contrast and detail and the f/16 aperture combined with the wide-angle has ensured that the image is sharp from the front to the back. When I first looked at this image in colour it just did not work for me. While the colours were truly bright and vibrant, it just did not look real. I could have tried converting this to a more desaturated style, which might actually work, but when I converted it to black and white, I was so pleased with the result that I left it at that.



## Hay Stooks

Tarskavaig

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## Hay Stooks

Shot on 16<sup>th</sup> October 2019 at Gleann Beag near Glenelg

Canon EOS 5D Mark II, EF 24-105mm f/4L IS USM lens at 105mm,

1/200 sec at f/16, ISO 400, handheld

The crofting township of Tarskavaig is one of the most active and traditionally managed on the Isle of Skye. I visit the Sleat peninsula pretty regularly with my camera kit and I often drive round the Ord-Tarskavaig loop. This time I took a detour round the township and spotted the unusual sight of hay stooks in a field. These days the landscape tends to be dotted with large round bales, often wrapped in black plastic, just like so many agricultural areas. However, these small piles, stooks, of drying hay were much more common in the past. As a result, I just had to stop and take a few shots. This one, with the backdrop of the Cuillins on the Isle of Rum in the Small Isles, works really well. The small scale of the operation is very clear to see, typical of this subsistence form of agriculture. Along with the colours in the bright autumn sunshine make for a wonderful composition that captures something that you would have to travel far and wide to see again.

In some senses this scene typifies what I mean when I refer to the Crofting Cultural Landscape, which is one of my main interests. This is an agricultural landscape, but somehow the scale and nature of these old practices seem so much more in harmony with nature and the landscape than the more modern systems. Which is more sustainable? I suspect the old ways were truly more sustainable, but people have moved on and have other competing demands on their time and perhaps the requirement to use the land is less nowadays, but it would be nice to see more traditional crofting going on.



**Machair**  
**Berneray**

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## Machair

Shot on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2019 at Berneray

Canon EOS 5D Mark II, Sigma 105mm f/2.8 EX DG Macro lens,

1/250 sec at f/22, ISO 400, handheld

This photo could have been included in the small Uist collection earlier, but it was taken last year on a previous visit to the islands and is a completely different style. The machair, as explained earlier, is a special maritime grassland landscape which Uist and other parts of the Outer Hebrides are famous for. On Berneray, between North Uist and Harris, there are some of the best areas of machair for wild flowers. At the right time of year, the colours are truly amazing with the bright red poppies standing out against the background of yellows, greens and whites.

This shot was taken from a low vantage point using my Sigma 105mm macro lens at f/2.8. I focused on the poppy in the foreground and the wide-open aperture ensured that the background would rapidly fall out of focus. This was intentional so that there were no distractions and the viewer's eye would be drawn very much to the bright red poppy. It was quite a challenge to get the poppy in focus as there was the usual onshore breeze to contend with and the long stems of the poppies meant they were swaying around a lot. I took several shots and I think this was the only one where the poppy is actually sharply in focus.

Poppies are one of my favourite flowers, being so incredibly vibrant. We do not find them in our meadows in Wester Ross, the ground probably being too wet and acid, but they are always one of the treats I associate with visits to Uist in the summer. Combined with the bees and the birds, it is a special place to just sit and absorb the peace of the environment.



**Sunset on Dubh-Lochan near Loch Osgaig**

**Achnahaird**

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## Sunset on Dubh-Lochan near Loch Osgaig

Shot on 7<sup>th</sup> July 2019 at Achnahaird

Canon EOS 5D Mark II, EF 24-105mm f/4L IS USM lens at 70mm,

6 sec at f/16, ISO 100, tripod

This photo was due to feature in my exhibition last year until I noticed when I got the image printed on a large canvas that I had used the wrong image. The one I had printed was not sharply focused and the edges of the rocks and the background were soft and blurry. Aside from that I was keen to exhibit this image as Achnahaird is one of my favourite places and I really like the tones in this photo. Therefore, I went through my images again and found this version which is actually sharply focused.

Sunsets are not uncommon in the north-west Highlands, and there are plenty of locations where you can create compositions with elements in the foreground that make the image truly interesting. This one is more interesting in my eyes because of the beautiful soft tones and pastel colours. The reeds and rocks in the loch and the shape of the clouds above and in the reflection help to lead the viewer's eye into the frame, but it is the colours and softness of the image that really appeals to me. There is often a temptation to boost the colours and vibrancy of sunset images, but this one did not require any such treatment and it always brings back memories of a wonderful evening in a fantastic place.



**Liathach from Loch Clair (B&W)**

**Glen Torridon**

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## **Liathach from Loch Clair (B&W)**

Shot on 8<sup>th</sup> November 2019 at Loch Clair, Torridon

Canon EOS 5D Mark II, EF 24-70mm f/2.8L II USM lens at 45mm,

1/400 sec at f/8, ISO 200, tripod

This image features twice in my exhibition and it is unusual because it works well in colour and in monochrome. This black & white version is probably my favourite, but that is more than likely just that my preference is usually towards that format. The photo was taken by the shores of Loch Clair in Torridon, looking towards the magnificent mountain, Liathach. This loch is a view that has been photographed many, many times, and in my youth, I recall it featured more often than not in the Scotsman calendar, always with a perfect reflection. That being said, I had never actually taken the short walk down to the loch side to try and capture the scene myself. On this occasion I was out with a friend and I suggested it might be worth a try since it was a lovely calm day and the light was good. I took various shots from different vantage points but this is my favourite, with the rocks in the right foreground leading into the frame and the almost perfect reflection. There was just enough cloud to make the sky interesting.

I converted this to black and white and applied a red filter to darken the sky. I enhanced the texture in the mountain, the rocks and the trees on the left, and slightly softened the sky a bit. The effect is quite special I think and I have little doubt that this is a viewpoint I will be returning to again and again.



## **Bla Bheinn Light**

**Torrion**

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## Bla Bheinn Light

Shot on 5<sup>th</sup> July 2020 at Torrin, Isle of Skye

Canon EOS 5D Mark II, EF 70-200mm f/2.8L IS USM lens at 120mm,

1/250 sec at f/8, ISO 200, handheld

Another shot of Bla Bheinn on Skye. This one stands out because of the bright patches of light illuminating the house and the small patch of hillside to the right. It was another of those days when you had to wait for the weather and the light to behave but it did provide some excellent opportunities to get shots like this. The gaps in the clouds provided these fantastic areas of light against the generally dark mountain and a pretty uninteresting sky. I opted for a slightly panoramic view because I wanted to capture more of the mountain and light areas without too much of the sky or the loch, both of which were not offering much to the composition.

Bla Bheinn is a truly spectacular mountain and, being relatively local to me, it is a frequently visited site for photography. I have never ventured up the mountain, so perhaps that is something I should consider doing sooner rather than later. One of the great things about this mountain is the way it is always changing. Almost every time you visit it looks different. Sometimes it is invisible in the cloud and rain, while at others it is starkly clear and crisply standing out from its surroundings. At different times of the year it wears different clothes and provides an endless scope for the photographer, not just from the other side of the loch, but from further afield at Loch Cill Chrìosd and even at Ord on the Sleat peninsula.



**Coire Liath Mor on Liathach from Loch Clair**  
**Glen Torridon**

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## Coire Liath Mor on Liathach from Loch Clair

Shot on 8<sup>th</sup> November 2019 at Loch Clair, Torridon

Canon EOS 5D Mark II, EF 70-200mm f/2.8L IS USM lens at 185mm,

1/250 sec at f/8, ISO 200, tripod

This is another shot taken during the visit to Loch Clair last November. In this case I zoomed right in on the buttresses of the mountain, with the pinewood and the loch in the foreground. The light on the trees contrasts nicely with the shadow areas and the detail in the mountain is what drew me to this composition. The use of the 185mm zoom has produced a much-foreshortened effect, making the impact of the mountain much greater. I like using this technique with mountains and often focus on part of a mountain rather than trying to capture the whole scene.

Liathach is a huge lump of rock standing proudly out of the surrounding landscape, with spectacular crags and scree slopes. It is another mountain I have never ventured up, having a bit of an issue with heights these days. The striations on the Torridonian sandstone are clear to see as remnants of the ice ages that shaped this amazing landscape. It is possible to imagine the bulk of ice slowly grinding its way towards the sea, carving out what is now Glen Torridon on its way. This ice left behind deposits of gravel moraines which are now drier than the peaty bogs in between and on which you can see the ancient pinewoods, where they have not been grazed out by deer and sheep. These woodlands, represented earlier in one of my images, are wonderful places to visit with amazing old ‘granny pines’ and a huge variety of life including pine marten and red squirrel.



**Bla Bheinn from Loch Cill Chrìosd**

**Cill Chrìosd**

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## **Bla Bheinn from Loch Cill Chrìosd**

Shot on 28<sup>th</sup> October 2018 at Cill Chrìosd, Isle of Skye

Canon EOS 5D Mark II, EF 24-105mm f/4L IS USM lens at 65mm,

1/160 sec at f/16, ISO 400, tripod

Last year in my exhibition I included an unusual image taken from the same place as this one but composed only of the reflection, thus entirely upside down. This received probably the most comments from people, many of whom thought I had hung it upside down. This year, I thought I would include a more ‘normal’ version of the view as it deserves to be taken more seriously.

This was taken early on a frosty morning in October in 2018 from the shore of Loch Cill Chrìosd looking towards Bla Bheinn. The reflection mingles beautifully with the reeds emerging from the loch. The contrast between the orange/yellow colours of the hillside and the reeds and the bright cerulean blue of the sky make this a very dramatic and impactful image. I do not usually like photos with empty blue skies but in this case, it only serves to provide a blank canvas for the mountain and the reflection.

This is another of my regular haunts for photography outings, and the church yard at Cill Chrìosd is well worth a visit, offering lots of scope for architectural photos set against a marvelous landscape. Also, the footpath to Borreraig and on to Suisinish starts not far from the church.



**Liathach from Loch Clair**  
**Glen Torridon**

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## **Liathach from Loch Clair**

Shot on 8<sup>th</sup> November 2019 at Loch Clair, Torridon

Canon EOS 5D Mark II, EF 24-70mm f/2.8L II USM lens at 45mm,

1/400 sec at f/8, ISO 200, tripod

This is the colour version of the image described earlier. Once again, the view of Liathach from the loch side is spectacular and the autumn colours make this work well in colour as well as black & white. In this case the pinewood to the left stands out a bit more as the green foliage contrasts with the blue but I don't feel the impact of the sky is as great and the textures in the mountain are more impactful in monochrome. That being said, the colour and the simple majesty of the landscape would make this work in almost any format.

For the exhibition I have produced a large (120 x 80 cm) canvas print of this image and the scale really does justice to the landscape. It will no doubt be one of the most noticed images in the collection.



**The Bealach na Ba from Gleann Mor**  
Gleann Mor

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## **The Bealach na Ba from Gleann Mor**

Shot on 8<sup>th</sup> November 2019 at Gleann Mor, Kishorn

Canon EOS 5D Mark II, EF 70-200mm f/2.8L IS USM lens at 135mm,

1/160 sec at f/11, ISO 400, handheld

The last image in the collection is yet another of my favourite views, but one which I have tried to photograph many times without much success. The view down Glen More, looking towards the hills through with the Bealach na Ba passes can be really dramatic, but it is hard to capture as the road runs right down the middle. I chose to use some zoom to remove the unattractive two-lane road from the image, and also to help foreshorten the perspective, adding drama to the scene. Once again, the light was patchy and I was lucky this time to catch a patch of bright sunlight on the hillside and trees on the right and again on the lower slopes of Beinn Bhan. The remainder of the pass is largely shrouded in cloud and mist providing a clear edge to the mountain and a sense of mystery to the scene.

The Bealach na Ba is another of my favourite subjects and I have many shots from many angles and locations. This is the first time I have managed to capture this aspect successfully and it is one of my favourites. It just resonates of the landscape and the quality of light that makes Wester Ross such a magnificent place.

I hope you have enjoyed this collection of my photographs and they might inspire you to look at the landscape with a new perspective. I am lucky to live in the best part of this world and to be able to get out and enjoy capturing its many guises through the lens.



## **Bla Bheinn & Autumn Trees**

**Torrin**

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## Bla Bheinn & Autumn Trees

Shot on 17<sup>th</sup> November 2019 at Torrin, Isle of Skye

Canon EOS 5D Mark II, EF 70-200mm f/2.8L IS USM lens at 170mm,

1/30 sec at f/11, ISO 100, handheld

For the exhibition I have selected to display this image as one of my centre-pieces, on a large canvas (120 x 80 cm). The landscape is enormous and the large scale of the canvas really makes this an impactful photograph. The image was taken from the road from Broadford to Torrin. As I was driving to Elgol I spotted this view and almost stopped but I had a car immediately behind me so it was a bit awkward. So, after visiting Elgol I decided to stop on the way back, in the hope that the light would still be decent. The mountain was standing prominently, but also very foreshortened by the light conditions so I opted for a bit of zoom to really focus in on part of the hill and the trees. I also wanted to avoid catching the road in the image. The sky was pretty dark but the autumn trees in the foreground were highlighted by an area of sunshine coming through a gap in the clouds. The snow on the hill really emphasized the texture and cragginess of the ridge. I very much like the contrast between the wintery snow on the hill and the warmer autumn colour of the trees. I also included in the exhibition a smaller framed print of a similar, but slightly wider shot from a slightly different vantage point (Right), taken with much the same settings on the camera but at 105mm zoom.

