

Roll: **20240603-59760**

Camera: **Canon EOS 5D Mark III: E53**

Film: **Full frame digital 22MP**

Subject:

Grave yards. U3A project.

Notes:

I had thought I would do some clever flash photography at St. John's by Colwick Hall. I turned up late in the evening and started setting up. I heard the rattling of iron gates and rushed back to entrance to the church yard thinking that "they" might be locking up. There was no one there and an examination of the gates convinced me that the gates were not regularly closed or locked. I returned to the camera kit and found now that I could barely make out the camera and flash settings. Then I heard the rattling again and rushed back to the gate. Still no one there. I was feeling very jumpy anyway as I was unsure that it was a good idea to be on my own, in a disused church yard, in the dark. The third time I heard the rattling and ran to the gates again, this time shining the torch on my phone ahead of me. I found a big chap in a white t-shirt, carrying a carrier bag. As I flashed the torch at him he seemed as nervous as I. I told him that I thought I heard the gates closing and he assured me that they were not being closed and then stood there looking lost, waiting, I suppose, for me to leave.

I returned to the kit. It was now seriously dark. I had unpacked onto a bench but still found it difficult to locate stuff. I couldn't even get the remote controller mounted on a tripod. Although I had my phone torch I found that I had an insufficient number of hands to manipulate two pieces of kit and the torch at the same time.

Unable to operate the remote shutter release trigger, I put the flash remote trigger on the camera, set the shutter release delay to 10 seconds and ran around the grave yard holding the flash unit in my hand. I repeated this exercise several times. As I couldn't see to pre-focus the camera, I was not optimistic about the results.

Tired and anxious, I packed up the kit. There was now a considerable blaze evident inside the ruins. I could see the flickering red light of what must have been a quite a bonfire through the ruin's windows. I went round to the north side of the church and found the gates that had been affixed across the old doorway to prevent entry. I then realised that the rattle of iron that I had heard earlier would have been from person or persons gaining entry to the building, presumably with the intention of sleeping rough. The fire lit up the internal walls and there was loud crackling from what must have been a considerable blaze.

I scurried down the path with the trolley load of kit and was relieved to get back to the car and head for home. Once there, I realized I had neglected to pack the unused tripod. It would be a good guess, I thought, that no one would notice the tripod in the dark, even assuming that anyone, other than myself, ever went to the graveyard at that time of night, but that it would be unwise to leave it there until the daylight hours, so back I went to effect it's recovery.

I loaded the pictures on to the computer and was surprised to find that the results were far worse than I had imagined. I deleted the lot, which was a shame really, as I could have used a couple to illustrate the folly of this adventure.

With only Monday left to complete the project, I decided there was nothing for it but to visit Rock Cemetery and supplement any shortage of images with a couple that I remembered from my archives. A couple of these I thought could be from U3A walking events, which would provide a nice link to the photography project.

I left it quite late to leave for the cemetery, largely because I was in a funk about where I might be allowed to park. In the event I opted for the Forest Sports car park, which proved to be free, and quite empty until the schools kicked out.

Walking across the Forest, remembering my childhood visits to the swing park, where I watched my intrepid sister in awe, and more than half way to the cemetery gates, I realised that I had left the props I had brought, in the boot of the car. These included an hurricane lamp, a spade, a sword stick and my riding coat. I went back to get them but then decided that carrying a sword stick and or, a hurricane lamp in an unfamiliar location with a reputation for notable crime levels was possibly unwise. Carrying a spade might otherwise look suitably innocuous, but if observed entering a graveyard so doing, it might arouse unwelcome attention, so I opted only to take the coat.

The big problem, once in the cemetery, was that I only had two or three hours before the place closed, and I had no idea of what was might be in there (well headstones and monuments obviously, but I mean I had no idea what items or scenes of special interest might be there), nor did I know where they might be found.

I had read over the years, of the catacombs, and the supposed satanic abuse that had been reported in the eighties, so I had it mind to try and find these locations at least. Surprisingly I think I did find the location of the catacombs, but I did not know that I had done so, not until after I returned home and did the basic re-search on line that should perhaps have preceded my visit.

In the end I was quite pleased with the results. I obtained some interesting angles on some of the statuary, and a "now you see him, now you don't" sequence of pictures featuring myself in a mac.

I used the "live view" feature on my camera for the first time ever. This was to frame a shot through a Celtic Cross to a praying angel. Although I could see the shot quite easily with the naked eye, my hands and legs are far too unsteady to stand, as I needed so to do, on tip toe, while holding the camera sufficiently still to capture the image. I therefore mounted the camera on a tripod and raised it above head height. Then, using the theory that the depth of field extends one third forward of and two thirds behind. the focal point, I pre-focused on an object a third of the distance between the cross and the angel and then re-framed the shot. I used aperture priority to get the best depth of field that I could manage. Although I took lots of shots trying to get a sharp image front to back, I didn't fully succeed but felt that, given the shortage of time, and the cold weather, I needed to move on.

I also spent a lot of time with a fixed focus shot from a tripod, using a remote trigger. For this composition I featured myself, wearing the aforementioned coat, appearing and disappearing. Many of these shots were somewhat spoiled by the inappropriate wearing of shorts and long socks which rendered an awkward, comic, effect upon images that were supposed to be atmospheric and mysterious.

Unfortunately in St. Anne's Valley, as I now know it to be, I had no idea of what I was looking at. I thought the tomb stones had perhaps been laid flat after being perpendicular for some time, or that they perhaps covered cremated remains. I would have taken much more interest and care had I known either; that they marked paupers graves and that each contained up to twenty bodies, or that the public were supposed to be excluded from that area, except when on official tours.

The angel with the severed arm I found to be redolent of the tragedy unfolding in Palestine and reluctantly felt obliged to once again reflect on the death and mutilation of so many children during the ongoing genocide.

I was at first unable to discover the meaning of the angel holding a small object between the thumb and first finger of the right hand, but after more hunting on the net, I now believe that she may be plucking petals from the flowers in her other hand. I have read two explanations of this; one is that it represents the plucking of a soul from the full flower of humanity, and the other is that it reflects the story of Saint Dorothy.

Dorothy met Theophilus on her journey to death and he asked for proof of the heavenly garden. An angel later brought unseasonal flowers and fruit to show to Theophilus as proof that the deceased was in heaven. I would comment that these Victorians knew their stuff and that these monumental carvings always have a well thought out symbolic meaning, but note the date the death of the interred, Muriel Lilian Storks. January 23rd 1999.

For the U3A collection I also included a shot across The Church of St. John's graveyard at Brassington and another looking toward the village of Lowesby from the graveyard of the Church of All Saints.

The final black and white image is of the hillside graveyard at Satterthwaite in Grizedale, Cumbria. Graveyards in the Lake District are often some way from the associated church as they are located where it is possible to dig down a few feet before hitting limestone, granite or other rocks.

Dates:

The only dates and time that were uncertain were those of the hillside grave yard associated with All Saints Church at Satterthwaite. The collection from which these were taken was shot in 1978.

See also: [Church of All Saints, Lowesby. U3A walk 2024.](#)

[Brassington U3A walk 2023.](#)

[Satterthwaite hillside graveyard. May 1978.](#)

Frames:

F47B8258 20240603 14:13:32 Angel through a Celtic Cross.
F47B8262 20240603 14:17:08 Base of Celtic Cross.
F47B8263 20240603 14:17:57 Base of praying angel monument.
F47B8266 20240603 14:21:40 Praying angel monument.
F47B8272 20240603 14:33:28 Tree in a graveyard.
F47B8279 20240603 14:35:27 Man leaning on a tree in a graveyard.
F47B8282 20240603 14:35:34 Man leaning on a tree in a graveyard.
F47B8285 20240603 14:36:11 Man leaning on a tree in a graveyard.
F47B8287 20240603 14:50:18 Saint Anne's Valley.
F47B8293 20240603 14:59:57 Path through the cemetery.
F47B8294 20240603 15:00:45 Overgrown graves.
F47B8303 20240603 15:10:02 Angel with truncated arm.
F47B8306 20240603 15:12:47 View of St. Andrew's Church.
F47B8314 20240603 15:29:19 Angel plucking flower petals.
F47B8315 20240603 15:30:04 Angel plucking flower petals.
F47B8316 20240603 15:33:11 Angel plucking flower petals.
F47B8322 20240603 15:46:27 View of St. Andrew's Church.



F47B8258 - Angel through a Celtic Cross.



F47B8258.jpg



F47B8262.jpg



F47B8263.jpg



F47B8266.jpg



F47B8272.jpg



F47B8275.jpg



F47B8279.jpg



F47B8282.jpg



F47B8285.jpg



F47B8287.jpg



F47B8293.jpg



F47B8294.jpg



F47B8303.jpg



F47B8306.jpg



F47B8314.jpg



F47B8315.jpg



F47B8316.jpg



F47B8322.jpg



F47B8262 - Base of Celtic Cross.



F47B8263 - Base of praying angel monument.



F47B8266 - Praying angel monument.



F47B8272 - Man leaning on a tree in a graveyard.



F47B8275 - Tree in a graveyard.



F47B8285 - Man leaning on a tree in a graveyard.



F47B8287 - Saint Anne's Valley.



F47B8294 - Overgrown graves.



F47B8303 - Angel with truncated arm.



F47B8306 - View of St. Andrew's Church.



F47B8314 - Angel plucking flower petals.



F47B8315 - Angel plucking flower petals.



F47B8316 - Angel plucking flower petals.



F47B8322 - View of St. Andrew's Church.