

This image of Worsley Packet House on the Bridgewater Canal has a great composition framed by the foliage and boats. It's a nice balance of dusk and artificial light, which produces a surreal quality. The reflections draw the viewer to the central building as the focus of the picture.

# Pretty as a picture

With just weeks left until *WW*'s annual photography competition closes, we ask three professionals for tips on how best to shoot the waterways

Last year *Waterways World* launched the Robin Smithett Photography Competition to honour the memory of this supremely talented waterways photographer. When devising the competition with partners Drifters boating holidays and the Association of Pleasure Craft Operators, we deliberately left the entry brief as simple as possible – “a photograph of the inland waterways”. As such, we received a huge number of submissions focusing on everything from wildlife to industria-era relics, and modern pleasure-boating to bank-side details.

Reviewing these images, it became clear that the UK's canals and rivers not only provide a wealth of subject matter but endless possibilities for employing such photographic techniques as lighting, composition, movement, editing, posing, manipulation and storytelling.

To guide readers on these, and other, issues, we've picked the brains of three

*Downloaded by Geoff Caine from waterwaysworld.com*

professionals who, by sharing some of their own favourite waterway pictures, provide pointers that could help you snap a prize-winning image this year.

## Barry Teutenberg

Until 2008 Barry Teutenberg was running a successful photography business on the east coast of the North Island of New Zealand. He's now better known as the owner of the Home Brew Boat but still finds time to photograph waterside scenes on his travels. The three images he's chosen can be bought as part of a set of greeting cards from [www.thehomebrewboat.co.uk/product-category/greeting-cards](http://www.thehomebrewboat.co.uk/product-category/greeting-cards). For more images see: [www.facebook.com/inspirationalimagesUKinlandwaterways](http://www.facebook.com/inspirationalimagesUKinlandwaterways).

Living on the waterways brings an abundance of opportunities. There are the historical aspects, stunning colours and designs of boats ancient and modern, a

RIGHT: I love this shot as it gives a historical perspective of the system. Taken at Lock 20 on the Stratford Canal, the image is framed by the lock walls and takes the eye towards the split bridge and intriguing sky in the distance. If not for the modern signage, the scene could be from 200 years ago – black and white adds to this timelessness. There's a balance between the stillness of the canal and the flow of the water into the lock.

multitude of cities viewed in a different light, and the diversity of rural and urban scenes. I've repeated many routes, but they still differ depending on direction of travel, time of day, season, people, and boats around at the time.

My advice for any budding waterways photographer is predominantly to keep the image simple. With today's digital cameras, you don't need a top-of-the-range camera to take really good photos. I've had a Panasonic Lumix G1 since 2007.

## Tips and pointers: Framing

To emphasise a subject, aim to have





**RIGHT:** It's the bright colours and clean lines that I find most attractive in this shot of the bows of a historic narrowboat and butty. I've increased the saturation to really bring out the vibrancy. There's a wonderful simplicity, without distractions, which for me sums up the essence of these beautiful boats.

something in the foreground to frame the shot – a bridge or lock gate works well. This sets the mood and adds a three-dimensional effect, thus keeping the viewer's eye towards the subject.

### Lighting

The most dramatic effects are gained using early morning or evening light, as the sun is at a lower angle. There's a fallacy that blue skies and sunshine produce better shots – in actuality stormy skies can have a profound effect on the finished view. It's not necessary to have any sky in the picture unless it's interesting, adds value and doesn't detract from what you're aiming to produce.

### Perspective and depth

Canals and rivers are ideal for producing shots with perspective and depth of vision as the eye is led along their path. You can also use this to direct people towards the subject matter you want to emphasise.

### Use your peripheral vision

Always look around the viewfinder as well as through it. Similar to driving a car, be aware of the peripheries – not just the road ahead. Can you find a different angle that cuts out the telegraph pole or unsightly rubbish bin?

### Maintaining focus

Keep the horizon straight and the central subject vertical. It's also imperative to maintain a steady hand – or use something to keep the camera as still as possible (of course, this isn't something you can do when shooting and simultaneously driving



the boat; a skill I've learned over the years!). A tripod is ideal. Alternatively, look around and use a post, a wall, or even a rolled-up item of clothing to balance the camera on, employing the self-timer once you have the picture in your viewfinder.

### Practise

Like most things in life, the more time you make to get out and practise, the better you'll get.

### Polishing your images

For the more technically minded, my advice is to shoot all images as RAW files and spend time editing using software such as Adobe Lightroom, Photoshop or similar. These require additional time and practice to use, but are well worth the effort to produce spectacular results.



## Geoff Caine

The man behind popular canal photo repository [canalscene.com](http://canalscene.com), Geoff Caine lives in central Birmingham overlooking the BCN.

He also photographs more general travel subjects for his [www.andformynexttrip.com](http://www.andformynexttrip.com) website, which he set up in 2014.



This was shot on the Grand Union at Hatton Locks (40 to 42) and the sweeping, descending line of the canal is accentuated by the extreme rectangular crop of the photo. I always try to include more of a scene than will be needed, so that during editing the image can be cropped to provide the best composition. This shape also frames the canal to make it the main focus. Nevertheless, there is enough periphery detail to give a feeling of open air and spaciousness. The lady crossing the gate, windlass in hand, adds action to an otherwise fairly static image.

Downloaded by Geoff Caine from [waterwaysworld.com](http://waterwaysworld.com)





I wanted to convey a summer-holiday-afloat feeling with this photo, taken at Hurleston Locks on the Llangollen Canal. The sloping line of the locks leads the eye from the children seated on the balance beam to show what they are looking at. The foreground subject, the balance beam, is placed on a line one-third up from the bottom, while the top locks are placed on

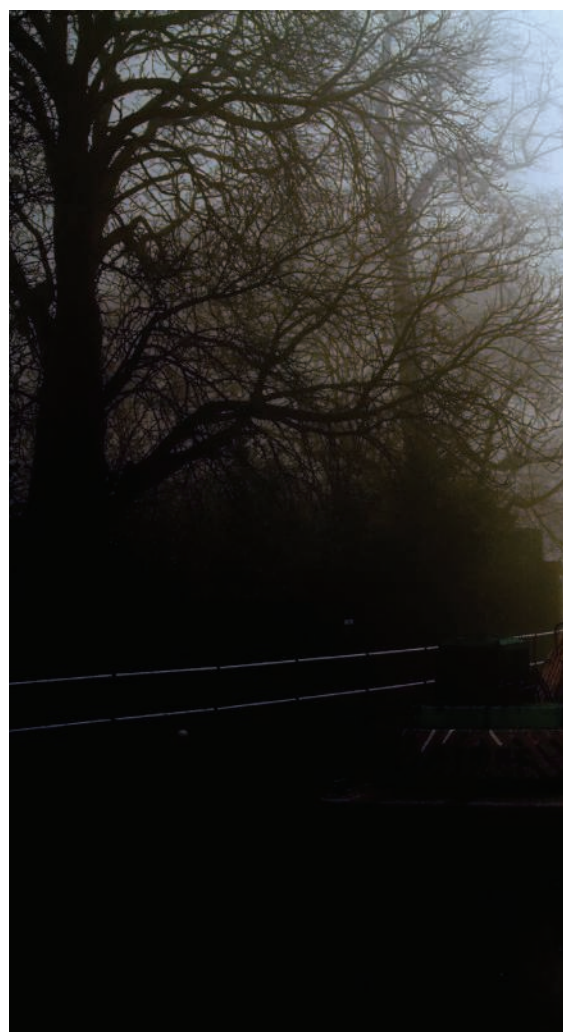
the intersection of a line one-third down from the top, with a line one-third in from the left. It's a technique known as the 'rule of thirds', and marks where the eye is naturally drawn. The narrowboat breaks this rule and so does not stand out as the main subject. The sunny aspect gives a warm glow to the scene, while the young boy raising the gate paddle adds further interest.



The narrowboat and curved towpath lead the viewer's eye to the group of cyclists having a break for elevenses at the George Inn at Bathampton Road Bridge near Bath. Considering the period features of the pub, which dates from the 13th century, I was careful to exclude any modern objects that might jar.

*Downloaded by Geoff Caine from [waterwaysworld.com](http://waterwaysworld.com)*

Although the house, narrowboat and bikes aren't old, they don't clash as, say, a modern sign or car would. While we can often ignore these when viewed live, they can easily spoil a photographic image. Given the canals' heritage, it's worth watching out for such problems and trying to frame the picture so they're not visible.





## Prizes

### 1ST PRIZE

A week's hire-boat holiday worth over £1,000 from a choice of 40 bases. This includes much of the main inland waterway network, as well as the Lowland Canals in Scotland, and the Fenland waterways.



**Winner 2014**  
By Mark Welton

**2ND PRIZE** A short hire-boat break worth up to £650 from a choice of 40 hire bases. This includes much of the main inland waterway network, as well as the Lowland Canals in Scotland, and the Fenland waterways.

**3RD PRIZE** A weekend family ticket, plus free camping or mooring, for the 2016 Crick Boat Show worth £160. Plus a pair of tickets for a trip on a day-boat and a two-year subscription to both *Waterways World* and *NarrowBoat* magazines.

**4TH PRIZE** A weekend ticket for the 2016 Crick Boat Show plus a two-year subscription to both *Waterways World* and *NarrowBoat* magazines.

**5TH PRIZE** An annual subscription to both *Waterways World* and *NarrowBoat* magazines and a pair of day tickets to the 2016 Crick Boat Show.

**+ TEN RUNNERS-UP** will receive a one-year subscription to *Waterways World*.

## Enter your picture

The 2015 Robin Smithett Photography Competition closes on Friday 30th October, so don't forget to get your entry in. Digital pictures can be emailed to [admin@wwonline.co.uk](mailto:admin@wwonline.co.uk), or can be submitted on CD or memory stick to **Robin Smithett Photography Competition, Waterways World Ltd, 151 Station Street, Burton-on-Trent, Staffordshire DE14 1BG**. Prints and transparencies should be submitted to the same address.

Only one photograph may be submitted per person, and don't forget to mark your entry clearly with your name and address. Unfortunately, photographs cannot be returned in any form.

**The winners will be announced in the January 2016 issue of *Waterways World*.**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ I would prefer not to receive mailings of interest to Crick Boat Show visitors

☐ I would prefer not to receive mailings of interest to *Waterways World* readers

#### Terms and conditions

The Robin Smithett Photography Competition reserves the right to use all entrants' photographs in *Waterways World*, *The Crick Boating Times* and *Canal Boating Times*, and on their respective websites. Photographs cannot have been published elsewhere prior to entry. Staff members and family members of Waterways World Ltd are not permitted to enter. Winners will be decided by a panel of judges.

## Tom Medwell

Tom Medwell is photography editor at weekly culture magazine *Le Cool London*, and has also shot for Nike, the Tate Modern, the ICA and been published by Yale. He lives by the Lee Navigation and is often inspired to take pictures along its banks. [www.tommedwell.com](http://www.tommedwell.com)

For me, the most important thing to remember when shooting canals – or any landscape for that matter – is to have a clear idea in your head of how you think it looks best. Living by the Hackney Cut, surrounded by marshland, I've always been enchanted by the fog that comes down and smothers the landscape, even when the sun is shining overhead – the sense of stillness it brings, and the way it gives even the most industrial boats a magical quality. It's not about getting a 100 different shots and picking the best, it's about being ready for that one moment that comes along.

It's also worth keeping in mind the elements that are abundant around waterways – the boats, the locks, the isolated buildings – and playing with the way they can seem incongruous in the landscape beyond. Although waterways are often great natural environments, it's equally true that they are amazing works of engineering. The two banks make great parallel lines, and the ageing of them, the way they're slowly reclaimed by their environment, makes for an interesting subject to study.

Lastly, as with the photograph (left), think about the play of the elements beyond the immediate water and earth – whether it's marshland, urban, or a great expanse of landscape. There are often interesting effects that come into play at certain times of day or year, and if you're a habitual visitor, it's worth making a note of them and returning when you think it looks best.

