

PAINTING OVER THE CRACKS

STEPHEN POWER TALKS TO THREE PHOTOGRAPHERS WHO HAVE TURNED – OR RETURNED – TO PAINTING THEIR SUBJECTS INSTEAD



OVER the years, we've watched the careers of many photographers change, sometimes leaving behind the camera completely, the same way that others often enter photography as a second career.

More young photographers are art-college qualified than ever before, more have portfolio skills encompassing digital creation or movie production. For those with a lifetime of photography behind them, a background in fine art or graphic design is more likely. We asked Associate Editor Stephen to talk to three such photographers, well-known in their own specialised fields, who have returned to the easel and palette alongside their camerawork.

They are John Eagle in Ireland, Ed Buziak in France and Roger Harvey in England. Long live Europe!

JOHN EAGLE: MIGRATING TO FLY HIGHER

In 1993, John Eagle, a native of Oxford, was cutting grass as part of an Irish employment scheme in South West County Cork, when he got a very ambitious idea.

"I was watching a helicopter taking off and landing regularly, while I working on Dinish Island" says John. "I dreamed up the idea of taking aerial shots of lighthouses, never thinking for a second it would succeed. I actually just fancied going for rides in helicopters."

John, whose interest in photography began when his brother gave him a Kodak 127 camera in the early 1960s, had been visiting Ireland with his mother on holidays from around that time, after she bought a house near Eyeries on the Beara peninsula. John purchased his own property 3 miles down the road and moved in permanently in 1991.

John will tell you that he doesn't have the mindset of an



John Eagle and Irish Coastguard helicopter, above. Below, Fanad Lighthouse from the air and Fastnet Lighthouse from sea level.

astute businessman. However, this statement belies the huge amount of planning, networking and arranging of sponsorship and financing that went into what became a massive – and important – sixteen-year project to photograph every major lighthouse on the Irish coastline.

He began by contacting a local fish farm manager, Barney Whelan,

who gave him sponsorship for the first batch of postcards. "On the first 12 postcards", John explains, "there is a blue fish which was part of the Salmara Salmon sponsorship. I printed 54,000 in 1994 and sold 48,000 of them. The Fastnet and Mizen lighthouse images sold best from that series." John reprinted the Fastnet postcards in 1994, and has

done so in successive years since, re-shooting some locations and re-numbering the collection as he included new images.

Print quality for the postcards was a paramount concern and initially they were printed in Cumbria. In 1995 John began using a company based in Ireland and ordered 250,000 cards. He quickly saw that the quality was inferior by comparison. He had borrowed £5,000 from his brother to cover the cost of printing the cards but found it difficult to recoup the money from sales, due to the poor print quality.

That's when Sue Hill of The Heron's Cove restaurant in Goleen, West Cork, stepped in. Realising that John was in serious financial trouble, she put her restaurant logo on the back of the Fastnet, Crookhaven and Mizen postcards and over the years has bought many thousands of postcards for sale at her business premises and the Mizen Head visitors centre.

Sue has also made a huge display board for John's work at the Centre and hung 30 x 20 inch prints of his work on the walls.

Having changed his printer to Graham and Sons, in Omagh, John felt that 'a true businessman' would have stopped at covering the lighthouses on the south coast of Ireland. However, the artist in him decided that wasn't enough and he set out to shoot even more lighthouses.

David Bedlow, who oversaw the operation of helicopter flights at the Commissioners of Irish Lights, would let John know if there was a spare seat on a flight to a lighthouse he wanted to photograph. John would then arrive at the helicopter pad and be flown to it, free of charge. These trips generated commissioned shoots for Irish Lights and John eventually flew on dozens of flights with them.

He became the first photographer to achieve the momentous feat of shooting every lighthouse on the Irish coastline and – in the era of the ubiquitous drone – he is probably the only one to have done it using helicopters.

John's interest in painting began at school, but on leaving he didn't pursue it again until he moved to Ireland in November 1991. He spent a Winter in the village of Allihies, in West Cork, where eminent oil painter Maurice Henderson lived. John would go to his house to watch him paint, and Maurice gave John his first lessons in oils. John states that he rebelled against what had been taught to him, in order to find his own style.

His first exhibition in Ireland, at the inaugural Beara Arts Show in the mid 1990's, was a hit with his fellow exhibitors but not with



John Eagle: johnneaglephoto.com
Sarah Walker Gallery: sarahwalkergallery.com
The Heron's Cove B&B & Restaurant: www.heronscove.com
Mizen Head Visitor Centre: www.mizenhead.net

Above: *After Sheep*; below, *Moonlight on the Beara Valley*. Both oil on canvas.

the exhibition organiser, who considered his work too avant-garde for the show. John's oil was (in his words) "relegated to a hair dresser's window".

This setback slowed John's painting output down considerably, until Irish artist John Brennan suggested that he might try to be less exact and more free-flowing with his technique. He was initially very reluctant to exhibit his new techniques at the Beara Arts Show in 2000, but with the aim of "keeping people happy" he submitted a black and white scene of a rowing boat in a storm, called *Seine Boats*.

John remembers clearly the show organisers asking how much he wanted for it. With a shrug he told them £100 pounds would be fine, and they told him that the price would need to be increased to £145 to include their

commission. He had the painting framed and was staggered that it sold quickly for the full asking price; later to be exchanged by the buyer for a sheep.

That same buyer purchased a further 14 of John's oils and also helped to promote his work around Ireland, including arranging his 2005 exhibition "Elements" at the Old Market Arts Centre in Dungarvan, County Waterford, where he sold 17 oil paintings. In the same year, John sold a total of 36 oils, and his work continued to sell throughout the recession with total sales of around 190 painting to date, around the world. His paintings are also now on show at the prestigious Sarah Walker Gallery in Castletownbere, West Cork.

John has an emotional attachment to his paintings and states that the worst part of the

work is that he misses the ones he has sold. There has also been a lot of advice along the way, too. "So many people have told me I paint too dark, that I should lighten up, and it got to the point where I stopped painting because I started to listen to them", says John.

He then met artist Tim Goulding, well-known for his Bog Fire paintings, who advised him to paint whatever he wanted, regardless of whether it sold or not, which stopped him from trying to please other people. This resulted in several very large and important sales, including 15 oils to Dick Grogan, a columnist with the *Irish Times* newspaper.

Painting sales paid for John's first digital SLR camera, a Canon EOS 5D, which in turn helped him to get more photography work for businesses that needed aerial shots. This work then helped John to buy a 5D MkII and the 5D MkIII (his current DSLR).

Despite his success – and skill – with a camera, John regards photography as "donkey work", which pays the bills and gives him something to do when he's not painting or organising tours of lighthouses across Ireland.

Most people know him a photographer, he says, especially those that have bought his two very successful lighthouse photo books. The second one, published by the Collins Press in 2010, was reprinted in 2013.

John's brother recently gave him the gift of a Phantom 3 Advanced Drone to "broaden my horizons" and John is very pleased to say that it did. He now flies it off the coast to get the shots for which he would have previously needed a large, noisy and expensive helicopter.



ED BUZIAK: PHOTOGRAPHY IN THE BLOOD

“I’ve always had photography in my blood” says Ed Buziak. He was a war baby, born in 1944 and his mother used to swap ration-book food coupons for the one roll of film a week the local chemist was able to source.

“So, from literally my first breath a camera was poked in my face” he explains “and I guess the magic and curiosity from being the subject of those tiny deckle-edged black-and-white prints grew to become a life-changing photo-shooting situation for me.”

Ed was entrusted (his own word) with his first camera - a Kodak Box-Brownie - at the age of eleven, during his first school holiday abroad. From then on, the act of framing a view, or pet cat, or schoolmates in the viewfinder became a skill that was unique to him amongst his friends.

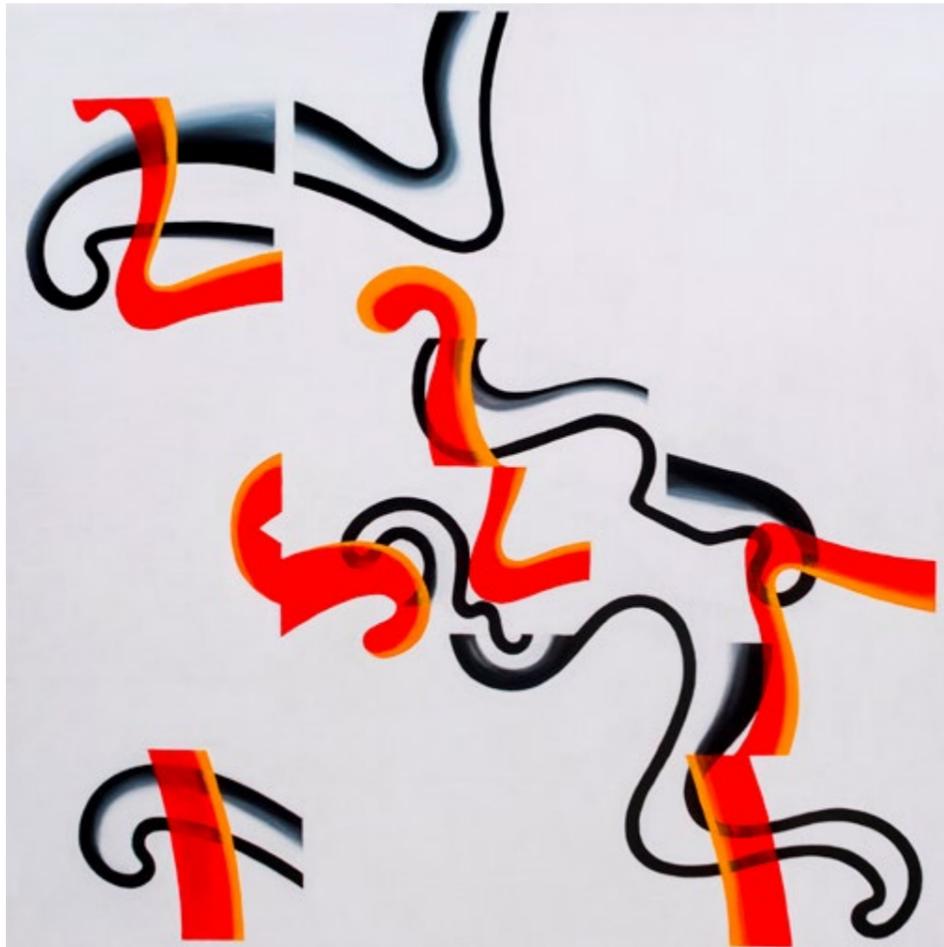
Hearing Ed describe how he would click the shutter with bated breath, then carefully wind-on the film to the next number appearing behind the red window, it’s easy to see how the bug for creating an image developed in the budding creative artist.

The photographic bug became so strong that in 1974, on his 30th birthday, Ed gave up a well-paid career as Senior Production Designer with Granada TV and became a freelance photographer. “For the past 42 years I have basically lived by my wits, and a few other interests”, he candidly admits.

However, he had given some thought to his change of career before making the move. “A couple of years before I left my job, I had entered several big photo competitions” says Ed. “I won enough motor-driven Nikon F bodies and a bag full of lenses to enable me to cover any kind of freelance assignment, after I’d previously touted my portfolio around, of course.”

As a freelance photographer, Ed quickly realised that mailing single images to editors didn’t result in regular reproduction fees. What he found really grabbed an editor’s attention, was to provide a picture story consisting of three or four images accompanied by several hundred words of pertinent copy. An interesting story line - which didn’t have to be ‘current news’ per se but more of a ‘soft feature’ to put between the hard news - usually guaranteed acceptance.

In the late 1970’s Focal Press asked him to write *The Focal Guide to Selling Photographs* (published in 1979). This is the book that has encouraged and inspired



Ed Buziak at Saatchi Art: www.saatchiart.com/ed.buziak

very many aspiring freelance photographers (this writer amongst them) to find ways to make money with their cameras.

Ed remembers supplying an 110,000 word text with which his publishers were not pleased, as the contract had stipulated only 55,000 words. This resulted in very heavy editing and another important lesson learned.

“It shows that I’ve always enjoyed adding words to images to round-out a visual scenario”, says Ed. “I almost regard it as an insult to the viewer’s intelligence when I see images posted on social media sites which haven’t even been captioned with a location or the name of the subject.”

“A great quote from Rudyard Kipling which I have adhered to throughout my freelance career is: I had six honest serving men. They taught me all I knew. Their names were: Where, What, When, Why, How and Who.”

Ed studied Art as the major subject in his final years at grammar school because of a desire to go on to attend art college. One of the teacher

trainees in the sixth-form at his school was the Merseyside poet and pop artist Adrian Henri, who then became one of his tutors at art college.

“The international art scene was very exciting in those days, so I’ve always drawn and painted and in fact sold my first abstract works more than fifty years ago”, he says. “A few years ago a Facebook friend posted a snap of one of my paintings still in the same house where it was first hung in the early 1960s by the original purchaser.”

These days, Ed considers himself to be primarily a painter rather than a photographer. He feels that photography has become too easy; too ‘automatic’. “My first proper camera was a Nikkormat FS - the stripped-down version of the Nikon F - but without an exposure meter”, Ed explains. “This made the practice more difficult to start with, but with a more positive learning curve. Nowadays, everything is so automated it’s difficult to do anything badly - except perhaps compose.”

Ed says that he loves the



‘hands-on’ process of drawing and painting as much as he loved photography when he spent hours every day in his darkroom developing thousands of rolls of film and making countless black-and-white prints. He vividly remembers the associated chemical smells and clock-timer ticking sounds under the glow of an amber or red safelight.

He has used digital imaging software over the last 10 years to contribute digital images to Alamy and other stock photo agencies,



Top left, *Homage to Verner Panton*, acrylic on canvas by Ed Buziak (with Saatchi Art). Below left: Ed at work on a self portrait in his studio. Above: installing fibre optic cable, taken from a hotel window. Below: a man who regularly sells fresh produce from the pavement in the town where Ed lives. Both photographs © Ed Buziak and sold through his regular photographic outlet, Alamy.





Ed with work in progress in his French village studio.

but it just doesn't have the same appeal for him as being in a 'wet' darkroom.

Ed had a similar experience related to his darkroom work, 20 years ago, after he replaced his manual Durst enlarger for a computerised one. "I struggled printing the shiny oiled steel 'valve gear' of a steam locomotive against deep shadows with the manual enlarger, he explains. "Whenever I printed the negative on a different paper stock, I had to make many test-strips to see an acceptable result.

"However, with the computerised Durst Laborator L1200 all I had to do was swish the measuring probe across the baseboard randomly and the enlarger's computer would indicate the paper to a tenth of a grade and exposure time to a hundredth of a second." What Ed realised – after initially appreciating the Durst's energy and materials saving capabilities – was that his darkroom was becoming too automated.

"The trials and tribulations of a couple of hours under the safelights were replaced by five minutes' start-to-finish for a quick 'perfect' print. No sweat, little emotion, and ultimately less pleasure at having done it myself".

Before his move to France Ed edited and published, for a period, *Camera and Darkroom* magazine – one of the inspirations for this title and now a collector's find.

For his stock photography work Ed concentrates on what is around him locally, keeping the photographic equipment to a minimum. "All I own is one body and three old manual Nikkor lenses; a 24mm wide-angle, 55mm macro and 135mm short telephoto. They're all I need to supply Alamy stock agency with interesting images and I can wander around France – which has very strict privacy laws – without being thought of as a pro photographer."

Ed states that around 60% of his recent stock image have been taken within a few minutes' walk of where he lives. His best-selling image – of a World War Two map, copied from a French textbook found at a local car-boot sale – has sold 37 times.

Ed's artwork became much more concentrated during the last ten years of his late wife's battle with multiple sclerosis. He was her sole carer and did not leave her side for more than a few hours at a time. "So, I spent much of the day near her bed with my sketchbooks and crayons and paints, hopefully amusing (but probably confusing to a greater extent) her with my ideas and output", he says.

His artwork is primarily abstract, and Ed generally has several themes on the go at any one time. Some art is completed very quickly in minutes, whereas a large graphic image such as the 1-meter square abstract, using the outline shapes of a Verner Panton chaise-longue, took three weeks to complete.

The wide angle general photograph of part of his studio (above), in a quiet French hamlet, has several examples of what is typically coming from his mind to his canvas.

Some of Ed's artwork is viewable on-line with Saatchi Art and other art-based websites. He has also recently started using Patreon where the public can sponsor him for a fixed amount every month for which they receive an artwork.

Ed feels that this is a neat way of buying his art on credit terms spread over the year, "although I must push that opportunity harder" he states.

Interestingly, some of the artwork of this artist with photography in his blood, has been licensed for publication by Alamy stock image library, often for fees greater than was paid for the original work.



ROGER HARVEY: LIFE CHANGES, ART GOES ON

There are creative artists whose careers are defined by one major success in one specific field. Then, there are those whose work spans more than one genre and whose success is so wide-ranging that it is hard to quantify it succinctly in a brief magazine article.

Roger Harvey is one of those people. Furthermore, he is not only one of the most achieved creative artists around but also a most charming and self-effacing man. He might reel-off a long list of high-end photography and art clients, in the matter-of-fact manner that most people will tell you what they had for dinner. Then, while your jaw is still on the rebound from hitting the desk, he will apologise for sounding conceited and explain that his success is really all down to luck.

He does acknowledge, however, that he has had a long and very varied professional career: "That is the story of my life" he says with a chuckle; "it keeps on changing".

Not only did Roger have a very auspicious career as a photographer, he continues to have an equally successful one as an artist. Luck has nothing to do with it, though. Roger is an immensely talented photographer and painter. Perhaps as importantly, he and his wife, Chris, combine to form a strong business team that are able to recognise and build on profitable leads and opportunities.

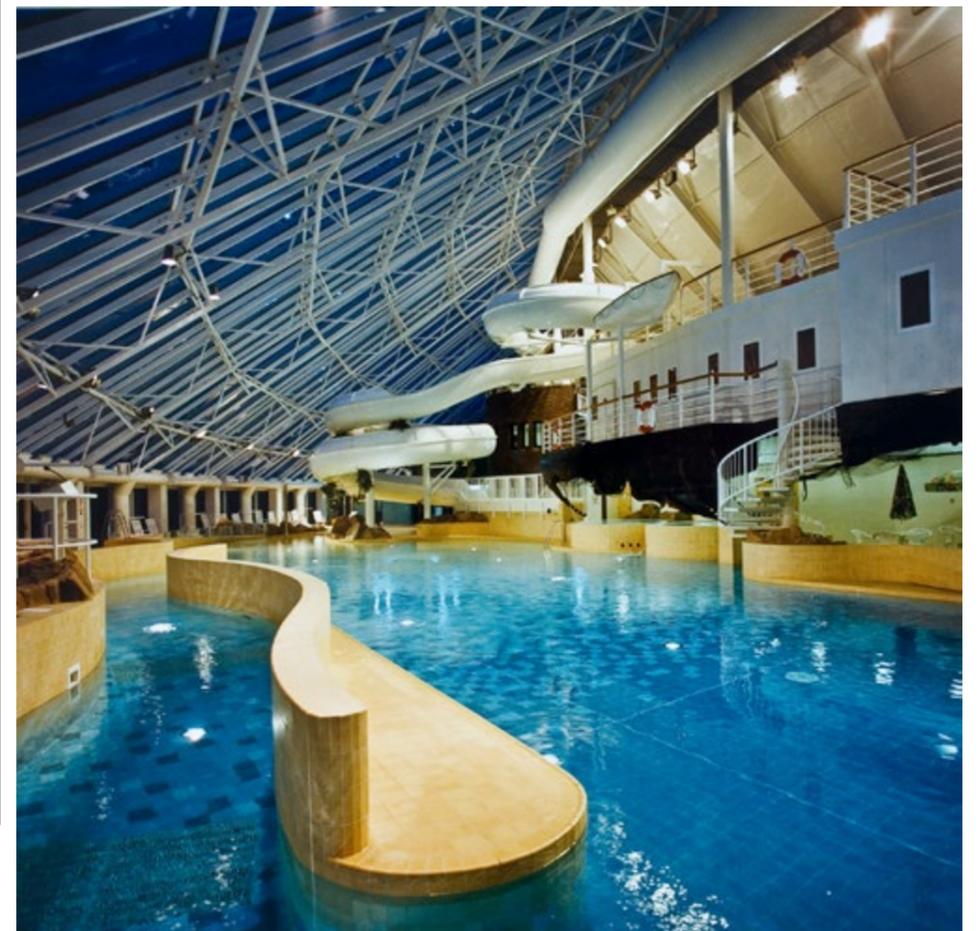
Roger was born in Coventry in 1936 and witnessed what, for a young boy, must have been the terrifying ordeal of his city "getting a right pasting" on at least two occasions, during the Coventry Blitz. He found himself being evacuated with his mother – his engineer father had to remain in Coventry – first to his grandfather in Ashburton in Devon and then to Barnoldswick in Yorkshire.

Most of his schooling was done in Coventry following the family's return to the city, towards the end of World War II. Roger recalls, at the age of eleven, taking a 127 camera on a school trip to Liverpool and recording the events of the day. These photographs – including a portrait of the Headmaster spitting out cherry stones – won first prize in the school's end of year photography competition, for which Roger received a book on photography which he still has in his possession.

On leaving school, he won a scholarship to Coventry College of Art, where he studied landscape



From Roger Harvey's photographic life: the site of the Tate West, St Ives, Cornwall; below, interior of Ships & Castles, Falmouth.





Oil paintings made with the help of photography as a notepad and source, by Roger Harvey. Above, a very traditional English landscape of Suffolk Harvest. Below, a popular destination for photographers and artists alike, Obidos Lagoon in Portugal.

See: www.rogerharveyart.co.uk



and portraiture painting, amongst other artistic skills. Roger then joined The Royal Air Force and it was there that he got one of his first commissions; to paint a portrait of President Roosevelt, from a photograph, to hang in the squadron Mess.

It was while painting in Spain in the late 1970s that Roger was asked to make a small portrait of a man he met on a golf course. It transpired that he was the brother of the *Coventry Evening Telegraph* editor, who then asked Roger to paint a portrait of the Coventry rugby star David Duckham, as a gift on receiving his MBE.

As occasionally happens in the life of a visual creative – although not always – one thing led to another. His painting of David Duckham was seen by George Best, who asked Roger to paint his portrait. In his own words “the flood gates opened” and commissions for painted portraits came in thick and fast from sporting glitterati including Nick Faldo, Alan Ball, Mick Mills, John Lloyd, Chris Evett, and many others. Chris Evett was so pleased with her portrait that she gave Roger the shoes that she had worn in her successful Wimbledon championship that year, 1980.

Signed limited edition prints of Roger’s painting of the Liverpool football team, which still hangs in the Anfield stadium to this day, were originally sold for £60 each. Today, in good condition, one will fetch anything up to £1500.

Roger’s photography business came out of his love for the craft, but also from necessity, when he was working as a marketing and PR consultant, following his time in the RAF. “I was at a bit at loss” he says. “So, I got a job and some training in marketing and PR through the company and built that up”. “One of the professors who trained me gave me the incentive to start my own business and I began by advising people on how to promote their own businesses. I needed to commission photography to use in mailshots I was preparing for my clients, but quickly became disappointed with the quality of the images”, he explained.

Roger decided to buy his first professional camera (a Minolta Autocord) and before long found himself contacted by Graham Wainwright of Leeds camera centre, who became a personal friend. Graham asked Roger to photograph a new tripod for publicity purposes and insisted on him using a Hasselblad that Graham provided. Roger was so impressed with the quality that he bought one himself and has never looked back.



As a social and portrait photographer, Roger has several remarkable achievements to his name. These include photographing over 20,000 portraits of children in ten years as a consequence of pioneering the Cherubs child photography promotion. He was given the catchment area from Newquay to St Austell, in Cornwall, where he was based at the time. This led to work in general practice photography, plus lucrative commercial assignments.

His clients in that field – to mention but a few – have included Volkswagen, Siemens, BMW, Jenoptik, McAlpine, and architect David Shalev OBE. Roger’s fisheye photograph of Tate West in St Ives, taken while he was inside a bucket, hanging from a crane 140 feet in the air, has been published all over the world (see page 53).

Other indicators of Roger’s success in photography include eight Fuji Platinum Photographer of the Year Awards and Associateships of both the British Institute of Professional Photography and the Master Photographers Association.

It was while working in Cornwall that Roger was diagnosed with COPD (Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease) in 2006. His medical consultant gave him the dire warning that unless he moved out of Cornwall, he would die. This shocking pronouncement, that left Roger speechless, was made on the basis that the average rainfall was very high and a less damp climate would help him.

Roger and Chris moved to Suffolk, which has much lower rainfall, shortly afterwards.

Unfortunately, he became ill again within two years with double pneumonia and septicaemia. His survival, Roger is certain, was solely due to his “bloody-mindedness”. This did curtail his travel plans for five years though, as he was “grounded” by his present consultant. It is only in recent months that he has been given permission to fly again, as his health is, thankfully, improving.

Throughout his photography career, Roger continued to paint and became a full-time professional artist in 2009. His most recent commission was for the Kings Troop Royal Horse Artillery, of an officer in full uniform (above).

Roger uses photography as reference for his paintings and prefers to take the shots himself, where possible. He asked to photograph the officer, only to be told that a photograph had been already taken, by one of Her Majesty’s official photographers. In addition, the same image was being used to illustrate a stamp. This could have caused copyright issues, but Roger was able to arrange for copyright restrictions to be waived by the photographer and Royal Mail.

Roger believes passionately that the camera is a cornerstone to his paintings and that there is a very close link between art and photography. He stresses that the Old Masters discovered this connection, too, with their use of the camera obscura. “Painters like Caravaggio, Leonardo da Vinci, Rembrandt, Vermeer and Canaletto all used camera obscura” he explains.

“This is where the great masterpieces came from, because

they used a camera to form the basic image. Vermeer’s *Girl with a Pearl Earring* has been x-rayed to show a perfect circle in the reflection of the earring. This says to me that he must have been using a camera obscura to enable him to paint the highlight to form a perfect circle, which would have been impossible to do otherwise.”

Regular commissions for portraits and other styles of paintings and drawing are being received all of the time via his website and Roger is more than happy to oblige. “My life is currently dedicated to painting landscapes and seascapes and human and dog portraits”, he states with a smile.

His weekday routine is very disciplined, a trait he attributes to his Services background. He wakes at 6.30am, paints until 10.30am then stops to make his own coffee – “just the way I like it” – then paints again until lunchtime, concluding his painting at tea time with a little work later to clean his brushes thoroughly.

Roger sums up his life and career in this humble way: “I’m just an ordinary guy that’s had a bit of luck. I’ve worked hard, I’ve got a wonderful wife and a wonderful family, and we just go on. Some days I think ‘I haven’t sold a bloody thing this month. No one likes my work at all! Then, I have days like today when a gallery owner calls to say that he sold a new painting within minutes of my leaving it with him.”

Without doubt, this hugely talented and amiable man will continue to enjoy more days like those for the rest of his ever-changing life.