

CORNISHMAN JOHN CURGENVEN HAS BEEN AN OLYMPUS SLR USER SINCE PURCHASING HIS FIRST OM-1 IN 1976. HE RECENTLY PUT THE LATEST FLAGSHIP, THE E-3, THROUGH ITS PACES IN THE FIELD...

IT'S NOT OFTEN that I look forward to a visit to my family's home county as much as I did earlier last year. I had just taken delivery of my birthday present, an Olympus E-3 and Zuiko ED 12-60mm 1:2.8-4.0 SWD lens, and I was keen to try them out. Not only was I thrilled by their performance but I was very surprised at the way they coped with some very difficult situations.

Wherever I travel, I endeavour to take notes. I always have a notepad and pen in my camera bag; trouble is, I often forget they are there and find myself struggling to remember details when back at home. On this occasion, I took the Olympus Digital Voice Recorder WS-110 DNS with me and recorded my thoughts and memories on the spot while they were fresh in my mind.

The beauty of this voice recorder is that it comes packaged with some excellent voice recognition software. In a prior life, I ran a company that specialised in voice-recognition software. In those days, the accuracy of such software wasn't bad, but was prone to quite a lot of errors. Ten years on, I am delighted to find that the Olympus recorder, combined with the software that comes packaged with it, gives excellent results and, as you may guess, it has made production of this article an easy task.



CORNISH RECOLLECTIONS



Lizard close-up (left)
The cliff tops at Kynance Cove are covered with very attractive colourful lichens. The close focusing capabilities of the ZUIKO ED 12-60mm 1:2.8-4.0 SWD lens, combined with the image stabilisation of the E-3, enabled capture of a very sharp image at close range, a situation for which I used to have to use a tripod.



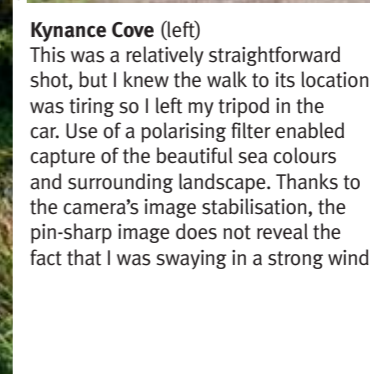
Admirable (above)
There is much fauna to be seen beside the footpaths as well and, once more, the camera and lens enable an excellent close-focus shot.



Storm over Porthtowan (left)
Rain and sea spray on this occasion, but I was able to capture the drama of a stormy day at this surfers' paradise, confident that my camera would not be harmed.



Drink or swim (left)
Kynance Cove is a National Trust site and among its many beauties are rare Highland Cattle, which range freely on the cliff tops. It is not advisable to approach them too closely – however, this chap seemed more concerned with refreshment than chasing me off.



Kynance Cove (left)
This was a relatively straightforward shot, but I knew the walk to its location was tiring so I left my tripod in the car. Use of a polarising filter enabled capture of the beautiful sea colours and surrounding landscape. Thanks to the camera's image stabilisation, the pin-sharp image does not reveal the fact that I was swaying in a strong wind.



Olympus E-3, 12-60mm lens, 1/60 sec, f8, ISO160

Hell's Mouth (above)
The following day I visited the north coast where it poured with rain, with few breaks in between. This particular spot is well-known for its dramatic beauty and, once again, I was able to capture an image thanks to the camera's water resistance.



Olympus E-3, 12-60mm lens, 1/60 sec, f16, ISO40

Granite wall (right)
Many of the walks in this area are bordered by granite walls with an abundance of interesting flora contained in the crevices. The best specimens are inevitably above head height, where they are undisturbed. The E-3's tilt-and-swivel screen enabled me to take this photograph without a stepladder.



Olympus E-3, 12-60mm lens, 1/60 sec, f3.3, ISO200

Friendly local (right)
All of the locals are friendly and I was convinced that this chap was determined to show me his best side, whilst posing with the home of Doc Martin from the TV series in the background. Shots like this one require quick reactions from the auto-focus of the lens: the SWD snapped on to the subject in no time. On close inspection, the resolution of the feathers with the lens at its 60mm setting is superb.



Olympus E-3, 12-60mm lens, 1/250 sec, f4, ISO100

Kennall Vale (left)
On my final day I visited another National Trust site, near Penryn. The area contains the remains of one of Britain's largest 19th-century gunpowder works. These waterfalls are often photographed and I set up my tripod to capture the scene. What particularly impressed me about the shot is that I planned it as an HDR composite using the 5x exposure bracketing capabilities of the E-3. I expected the highlights of the water and the sky in the far distance to be blown out if I used a single exposure. Having examined the resultant RAW images in Photoshop I was surprised to find that the entire dynamic range of the scene was preserved in just one of the five exposures. This speaks volumes for the impressive capabilities of the camera's sensor and Olympus RAW file, and it saved me a lot of time in processing the image in the 'digital darkroom'.



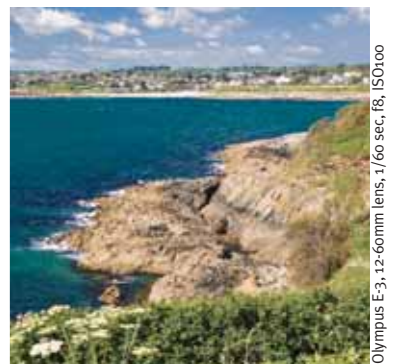
Olympus E-3, 12-60mm lens, 1.6 sec, f16, ISO100



Olympus E-3, 12-60mm lens, 1/40 sec, f16, ISO200

Port Isaac (above)
Further east along the north coast is this delightful fishing harbour. Spring flowers are abundant and there are many photographic opportunities at this typical Cornish seaside town.

More of John's work can be seen at www.johncurgenven.com and he provides further tips and techniques on photography and imaging at www.better-photographs.com



Olympus E-3, 12-60mm lens, 1/60 sec, f8, ISO100

toptips

- 1 Always take a camera with you, wherever you go.
- 2 Prepare for all weather conditions. Take more clothes than you need; they can always be left in the car if they aren't needed.
- 3 Observe other photographers. See where they are taking pictures, then go and try a different viewpoint.
- 4 Take refreshments with you; searching for that picture-perfect shot can be thirsty work.
- 5 Try and take notes; the Olympus digital voice recorder is brilliant for this.
- 6 If you have one of the newer model cameras you might be able to save yourself carrying a tripod.