



Viewpoint Mike Smith

Photography is perfect for comparing two moments in time – if we remember to come out from behind the lens occasionally

The ability of photography to record the present allows us to compare two points in time. Same person, same place, same view – different date. Brian May's *A Village Lost and Found* (Frances Lincoln, £35), is an example. It shows TR Williams' stereographs of Hinton Waldrist alongside modern recreations. The BBC (goo.gl/WnM6IM) used the technique to show the impact of 20 years of IRA ceasefire in Northern Ireland. Linked to this, as part of Londonderry's/Derry's status as City of Culture in 2013, composite then-and-now shots were produced (goo.gl/t3JjnM) that skilfully merge those points in time.

In *Another Way of Telling* (Bloomsbury, £25), John Berger notes that a photograph preserves a moment of time, preventing it from being effaced by the supersession of further ones. Where the skill of a photographer enters is in persuading the public to lend it an appropriate past and future. Berger saw every photograph as presenting a 'quotation' – the length of that quotation offers us insight into what has happened and what might then happen. A story.

Walker Evans' photos in *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (Penguin Classics,

£14.99) were powerful 'quotations' on the individuals in them. Michael Williamson's photos of 1930s Alabama sharecroppers and their descendants in *And Their Children After Them* (Pantheon, out of print) were follow-ups.

Of course, we are not always in a position to have both then and now. A good example of this is Nick Hedges' imagery for Shelter (www.shelterscotland.org/lifeworthliving), showing some of the most deprived areas in the UK during the 1960s and '70s. After the *Life Worth Living* exhibitions, Shelter is now trying to trace the families in the photos.

Imogen Cunningham's *After Ninety* (University of Washington Press, out of print), portraits of people over the age of 90, includes one of her father. How I wish there were one of him as a younger man, but what you can't do is recreate a photograph of a time that has passed.

This was brought home to me upon the death of my father. I had plenty of photos of him in recent years, but the past? We photographers stand behind the lens and efface ourselves from visual history. So participate in the then-and-now, and search for it. Find pictures of you and your family. Save them, cherish them.



A then-and-now shot of Mike's father

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Social life

Here are some of our favourite images from the world of social media this week

Instagram



Adrian Clarke @adeclarke

We've featured Adrian Clarke several times in Amateur Photographer, and with good reason. He's a photographer with a natural instinct for wildlife photography, particularly when it comes to birds, as we see here in this hazy autumnal shot.

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Leanne Rodgers

This image, which appears as if it could have been drawn from a story by the American author HP Lovecraft, is of Roche Rock in Cornwall. It's an eerie picture, particularly in the way the light seems to struggle to find its place in the face of such overwhelming shadows.

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Mandy Disher

Here we find a set of Japanese anemones brought to life under the glare of Mandy Disher's high-key lighting. Disher is an expert at bringing the best out of her flower and still-life subjects, usually with the simplest of methods.

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