

## **Ards Camera Club Local Environmental Portraits in Covid Times**

NIPA had asked for Panels showing **Life in, out and about around our clubs, the joys, troubles, community efforts, and other aspect of life.** We chose to prepare a panel of **Environmental Portraits.**

### **Process**

We had a brainstorming night with loads of ideas such as wildlife, portraits and landscapes but that raised the question of boundaries so we limited it to Ards and Comber. As we worked through the subjects we knew Ards has a strong history in nature photography with our Roy Finlay Memorial competition and we considered just focussing on Kiltonga Nature Reserve as it was a lifesaver for many during Lockdown, even before the Kingfishers moved in. However we felt a close up photo of a bird would not scream Ards Camera Club to viewers. We wanted the panel to be more meaningful to us. When we looked at what made our Club special we kept coming back to the people, the friends we have made and the strong relationships that thrive in the club and felt that is what Ards Camera Club is know for and treasures and is why we are still thriving after 60 years.

We finally agreed on Environmental Portraits, which was a new genre for many of our members so we also had a challenge and learning opportunity. These are not simply a photograph *of* the person, they are a photograph *about* the person. They tell a strong story of the individual character, with their immediate surroundings showing more about what they do and who they are, falling somewhere between a staged studio portrait and a candid photograph. In particular we focussing on people around us who had helped make life in Ards and Comber better during Covid and post Covid times. It is both an homage and a record of these times.

So throughout 2021 our members sought out and captured people who were part of the joys, troubles, community efforts, and other aspect of life within the Ards local area and club members lives. The added beauty of the Panel is that you don't need to know who the people are as they represent everyman and every woman who lived here in 2021. We hope you recognise their contribution.

From the beginning we decided to feature 10 different photographers and to include novices and advanced.

### **The final panel featured photographs from:**

Jenny McCrea N - In search of liquid gold  
Linda Hutchinson A - Covid dentists  
Steven Ferguson A - Street Art in Ards  
Rodney James N - Sewing and Crafts  
Jacqui Agnew N - Would you like a coffee?  
Marty Coney N - Frank at Work  
Ted McKee A - Balazs the Luthier

Anne Orr N - Sally and the missing Cinnamon Bun  
Derek Black N - Aziz, the Turkish Barber at work  
Patricia MacKey A - Female Welder

The final photograph is especially important and symbolic to us all at Ards. The darkness and shadows symbolise the losses many endured in Covid times directly or indirectly. However although there is a lot of darkness there is a glimmer of light and recovery is a work in progress for us all.

We are also delighted that Ards and North Down Borough Council funded our learning and development throughout 2021 and are also supporting a final exhibition including the Panel.