

Crummock Reflections

When I was a young child on our dairy farm in Herefordshire I would lie in bed fascinated by a picture on my bedroom wall. It was a panoramic image, a painting but with a photographic realism, showing a Red Indian in a Canadian canoe on a calm lake with fir trees on the shoreline receding towards a distant mountain, the scene forming a perfect mirror reflection. The picture's strange almost surreal quality absorbed and puzzled me, with its strong angular shapes created by the doubled image. Thinking back, it's quite possible that I had never actually seen a mirror image in the landscape and didn't understand how still water acts a mirror. How times change! More than half-a-century later, mirror images could be described as my stock in trade, and I still have a fascination with them that I decided to indulge on this Masterclass occasion. My early June deadline fell on the very last evening of a spell of hot and settled weather, and I headed for the north-western lakes. I think this part of the Lake District is seen at very best in midsummer, when the rich evening light comes slanting across from the setting sun.

I could equally have chosen Loweswater or Buttermere but opted for Crummock, walking to the foreshore from Lanthwaite Green. Arriving at 6.30, I thought I'd made a mistake. Instead of a peaceful lake, there were dozens of people around the shore making the most of the warm weather. Many were picnicking and paddling, or chucking sticks into the water for dogs. Several brave souls were even swimming. I wondered whether I should try for a quieter spot but experience told me that a bit of patience might well be rewarded. I explored a bit then settled down with a book and waited, keeping an eye on the lake and trying not to think about how much I fancied going off instead for a drink at the Kirkstile Inn. Gradually people started to pack up and drift away, the lake slowly settled down, the richness of the light increased and finally, a little before 9pm, I was getting the photos I had come for. The lake was now completely limpid and deserted apart from one fisherman helpfully placed for my photos. Across the lake a cuckoo called twice, a vocal counterpoint to the evening scene.



I love this photo, with its strong shapes, and in particular the way in which the evening sun is shining through the oak trees and catching the top branches. Maybe I should have had a filter (I never do) to accentuate as much sky detail as there was, (not much!) or alternatively have shot a darker image and then lightened up everything except the sky with Photoshop. I have recently added a Nikon D300 camera body to my equipment, and find that most of the buttons look reassuringly the same as my D200 so I don't have to go through a major learning curve. It seems

to be doing the job fine but, as always, I think that being in the right place at the right time is of far greater importance than the techy detail.

I used a tripod, but my cable release wasn't working (using the mirror lock helps to minimise shake – so that at least helps!). I didn't need depth of field because almost everything was at infinity, so I set the camera at a fairly wide aperture ($f/8$) and the speed was $1/15^{\text{th}}$ second. The camera was on the lowest ISO possible so as to maximise quality and I used autofocus (spot setting) on the far distance. I used my 17-55mm Nikon zoom.



Same settings as main photo. I cropped this quite heavily into a more panoramic format – the sky and lake didn't hold a lot of interest. More cloud would have helped! I have lightened up the trees on the left hand side a little with Photoshop.