# Wooly's personal workflow in RAW & Photoshop

1. Open a RAW file from Bridge into the Camera Raw workspace. This photograph was taken in September 2014 at the Imperial War Museum Duxford Airshow in the United Kingdom. For history buffs this was one of the major grass airfields north of London that was a major contributor during the battle of Britain in WWII. As the bulk of the airshow was in the middle of the day and the light was quite harsh many of the images look over exposed before I even started. But in the following steps I hope that you will learn some techniques to help improve your own image workflows in preparing for camera club competitions. All of the Camera Raw steps can be done in either Bridge & Camera Raw or in Lightroom CC. However, the final steps can only be done in Photoshop CC. If you have signed up for the Adobe Photographers CC (*$12 a month which is a bargain*) you get both. And whilst you may not use all of the powerful functionality of Photoshop you can use some of it to help you in your workflow process. Also for those who use Elements much of the Camera raw steps can be done there as well especially the latest version.

Let us begin.

2. Check the Histogram first to start planning your changes and I only work on three of the tabs. Most of the following instructions I do always regardless of the photo (*without giving you a great deal of detail these are the instructions I learned from a Mark Galen workshop I attended – he wrote part of Camera Raw for Adobe and is an Adobe Master of Light*). NOTE: ALL of your changes should be done in RAW. Only thing you should do in Photoshop is the final sharpening and cropping (*Rules are meant to be broken and occasionally I will adjust Midtones in PS*). The three tabs are Basic, Detail & Lens Correction and are done in this order always – First Lens Correction, 2nd Basics and Finally Detail.
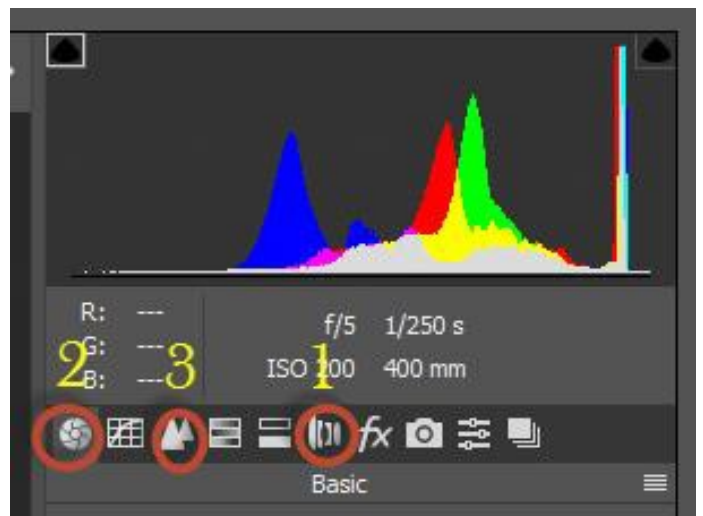
3. In Lens Correction tick the top two boxes then in the Make select your brand then look through the Model numbers for your particular lens (*most of them are there*). You can select another model lens and watch what it does to you image if you want to try something a bit more arty. Then finally the two sliders on the bottom where you may want to fix barrel distortion or wish to add a vignette.
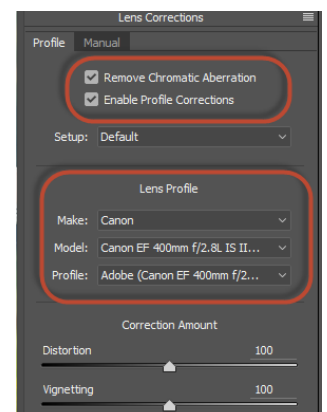
4. Next step is Basics. I always do three things first before I make adjustments. Highlights slider is set to 0, Clarity is set at 40 and Vibrance is set at 30. NEVER EVER touch the Saturation slider as it changes the colour balance of your photos beyond repair. This image was taken just 1pm in the weak UK sunlight (*compared to Australia*) but it seems very washed out. In Step 5 keep a close eye on your histogram as you are trying to get the full colour range. Experiment to see what the changes do to your image as every image will be different.

5. All the following steps are now done in the order they appear:
   a. Temperature – generally set to 5600 K which is daylight (*for night shots I tend to go down into the blue colours around 2800K*)
   b. Tint – rarely touch – use to when I used Cokin P filters which gave a magenta cast which tint helped to partially fix
   c. Exposure – in this case I have taken this down by 1 stop
   d. Contrast +45
   e. Shadows +20
   f. Whites +50
   g. Blacks +35

NOTE: See the shift in colours from the first histogram to this one. The colour range is now more even and the image itself is starting to look better. See the side by side comparison below.
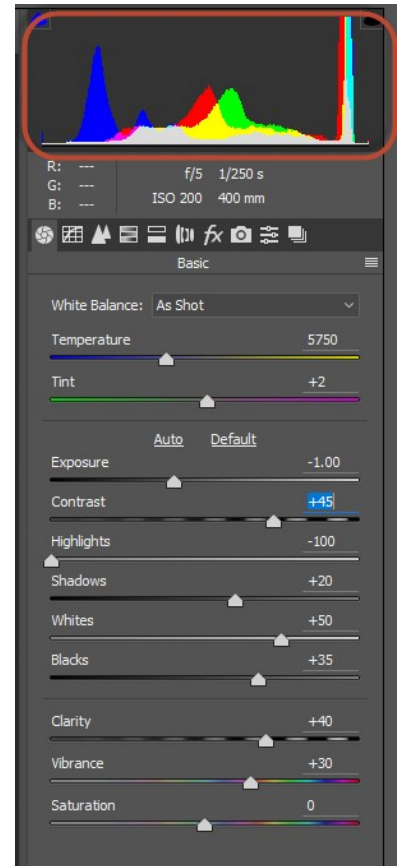
By doing the changes I have also brought out some dust spots in the photo. These can be removed using the Spot Removal tool in Camera Raw (*see Show Me Dust Spots below*) or you can make a conscious decision to ignore them as the final image when cropped may not contain these sections. In this case I intend to ignore them for two reasons:


Original   Final Raw Image

a) The image does not include all of the aircraft and the sky is rather blah and adds nothing to the photo
b) I already had a title in mind as I remember standing there on that airfield that day listening as the pilot revved up the thunderous V12 engine as he tested the magnetos. In my mind the tile said it all and I wanted to bring people on that journey and it would be "The Sound of Thunder" and that I would crop in to make the engine nacelle and the propeller the focus for the image.

6. Show me the Dust Spots

Select the Spot Removal tool then click on the Visualise Spots box and drag the slider to the right. Prepare to be amazed.
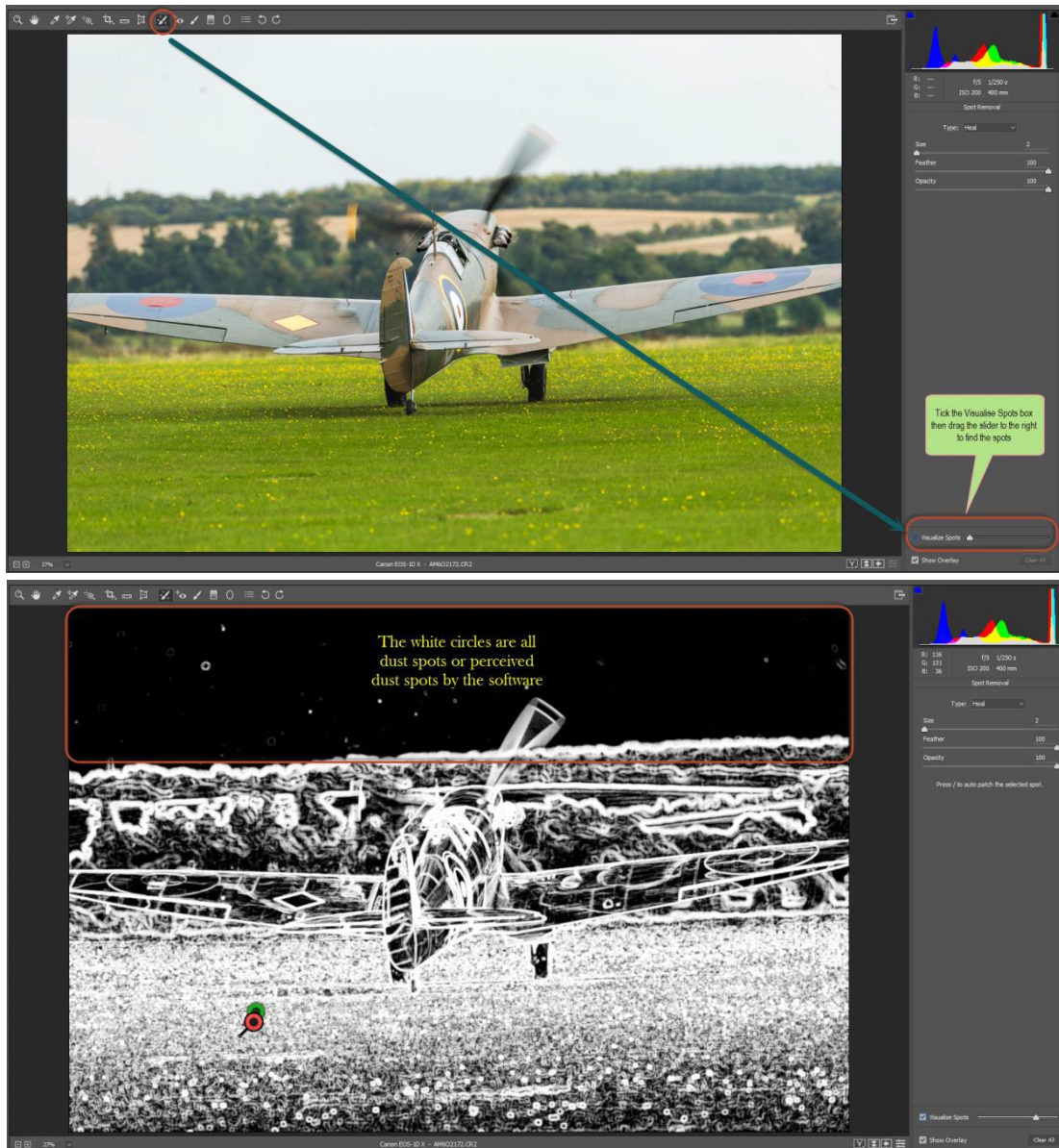

To fix them, using your mouse, click on each dust spot. The software will select a surrounding are to replace the spot. If you don't think it has selected correctly drag the target area circle to another section ie: the green circles. Once complete select the zoom tool to return to the normal screen and continue.
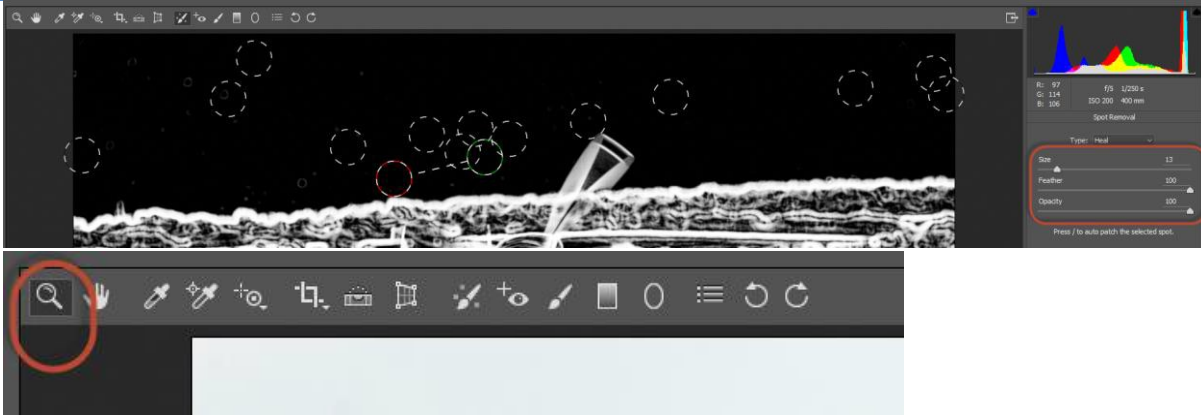
7. The next step is to do some fine tuning in the details section (but not Sharpening). Here we will set Luminance & Colour balances to set the image up for printing. These are my default values. Generally, I set Luminance between 10 to 20; Luminance contrast between 30 and 50; Colour & Colour Smoothness are both set to 100.

8. Next step is to open the file in Photoshop. By just clicking Open Image it will open in PS CC as an image along with all the metadata changes that you have made. My preference is to open the image as an Object using the <SHIFT> whilst hovering over the Open Image button

    – you will see the name change to Image Object. This allows me to drop back into Camera raw if I find I need to do other changes. My recommendation is that you check YouTube as there are a lot of free tutorials on working in the new camera raw.

9. In PS CC the first thing you notice when the program opens is that it has retained the Raw material name (1). The next step in my process is to always make a copy of the 1st layer by using the <CTRL-J> shortcut (2).
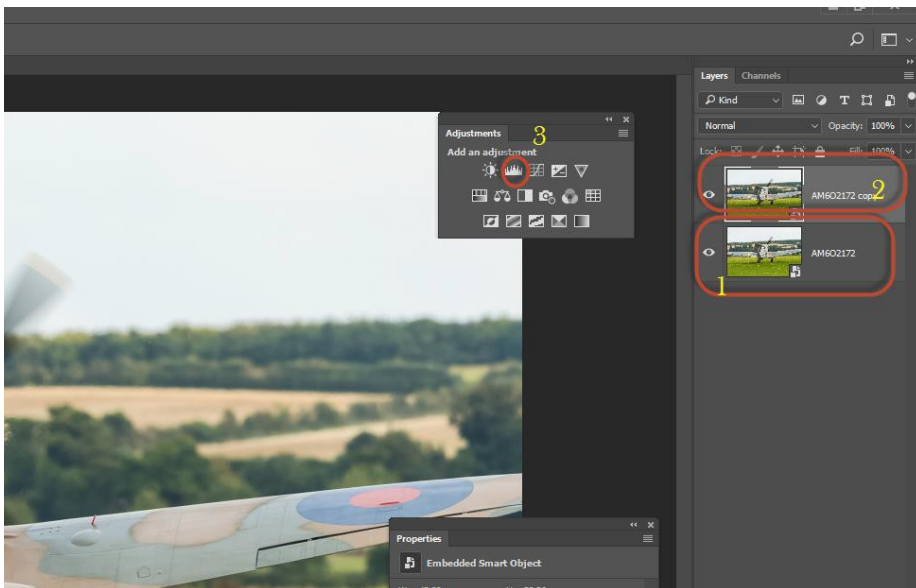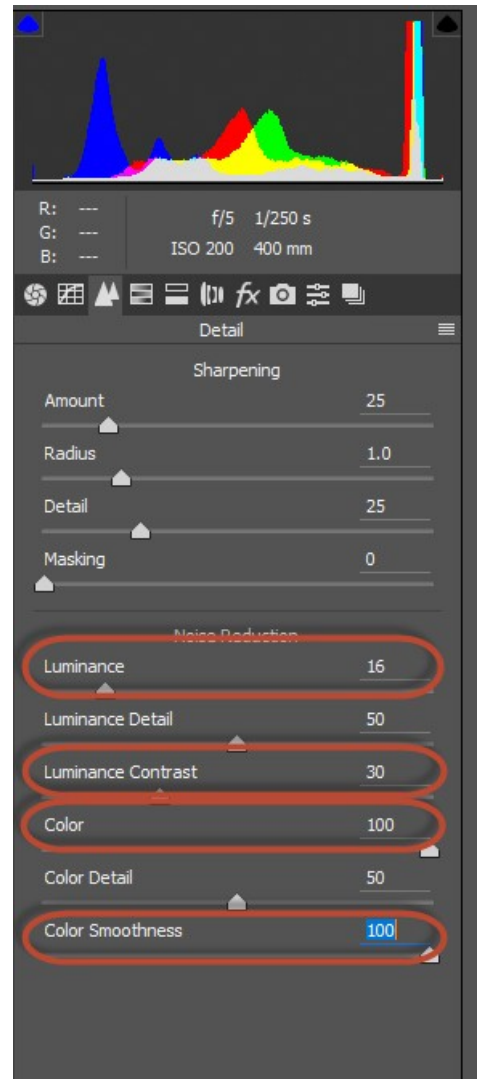
10. Generally, I would do the crop at the next step but in this case I am going to do a final global tones adjustment as I think I can get more from the midtones. So, I select the Levels adjustment tool (3 above). Now the next step is done by your personal preferences either move the sliders or type values in the boxes below the slider. Watch the impact

on your image as these are global changes ie whole image changes. Experiment, with caution, as you can easily overdo this part. Just remember the Blacks are set at 0 midTones as 1 and Whites at 255. If you overcook it just type these values back in to return to the original image. In this case I felt I could do more with the midtones so started there.
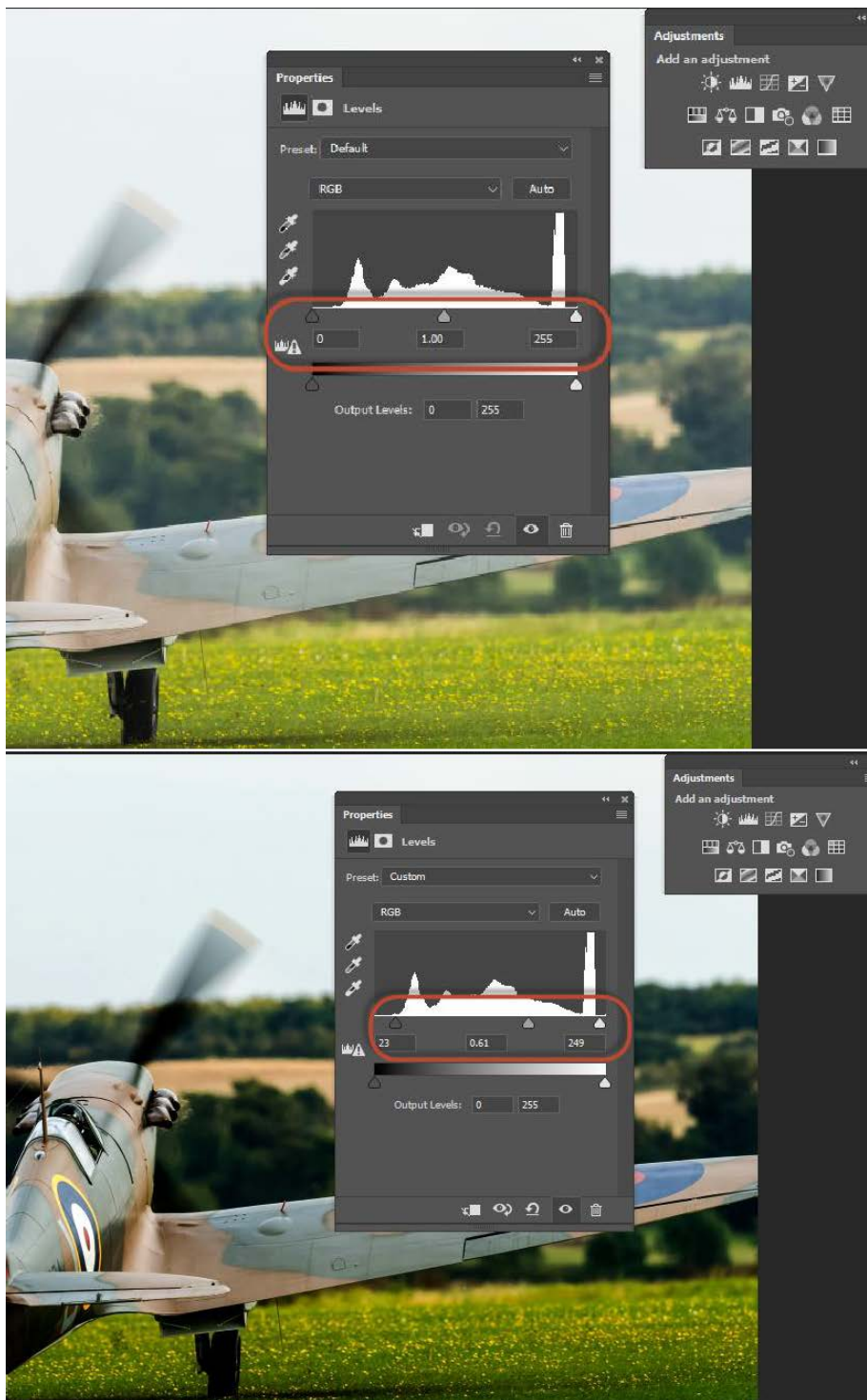
In this case I ended up by moving the Black slider to +23, Midtones to +61 and Whites down to 249. I will let you be the judge as to whether you think I have been successful. It is pleasing to me. For the next step we need to select the Copy Level for the Crop Step.

11. The next step is to crop. In this image, I have already decided that the focus is to be on the engine nacelle and the cockpit and so my crop will be in portrait mode. For camera club, we are allowed a maximum print image size of 12"x8" so I will set a crop preset at 300dpi for this image using those dimensions. In Step 3 I will move the cropping box around and resize

until I have the image I envisaged. In this case the final crop was to remove some of the bottom and some of the top to concentrate the image to fit my title "The Sound of Thunder". In reality when you stand behind these machines as they rev up the ground

and air virtually shake from the tremendous output from a supercharged aero engine and the smell of burnt 100 proof gasoline wafts over you – can you envisage this? If yes, then you have understood the story I am trying to tell you with my picture.
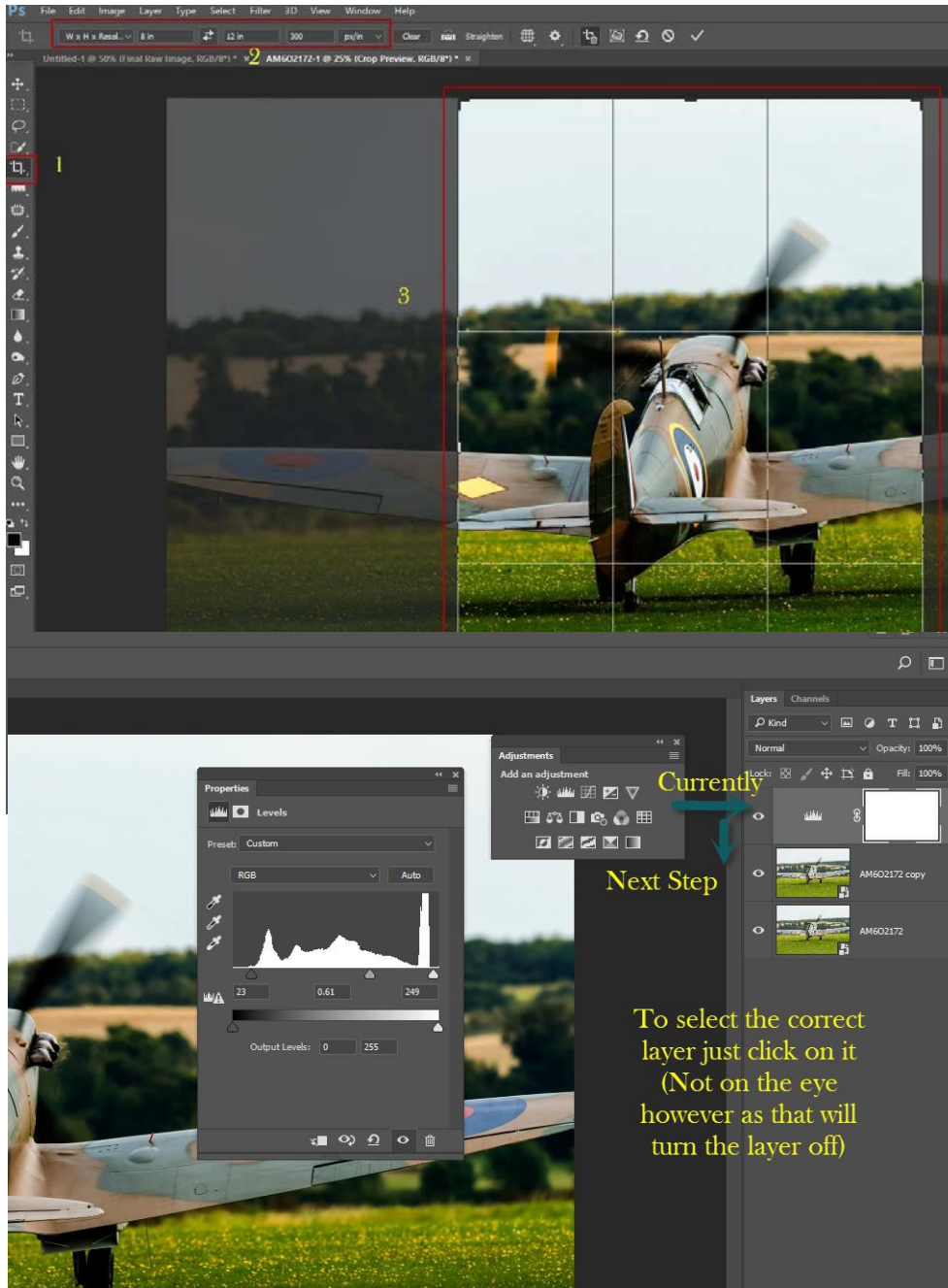
12. Final crop. Notice the 'jellied' air from the stubby exhaust outlets and the blurred prop that shows motion.

13. Almost done. Last step is to do the final sharpening before printing and matting of your image for submission for competition. To do this ensure that you are on the top copy of the image then go up to the filters menu drop it down and select Other then finally High Pass. This filter initially was designed for model portraits as it sharpened people's features. This image was already quite sharp so we will be doing a very minimal sharpening so as to avoid any white haloes around the leading edges (***NOTE:*** *judges look for these haloes and will mark the images down quite harshly because of it so be cautious and judicious here*).
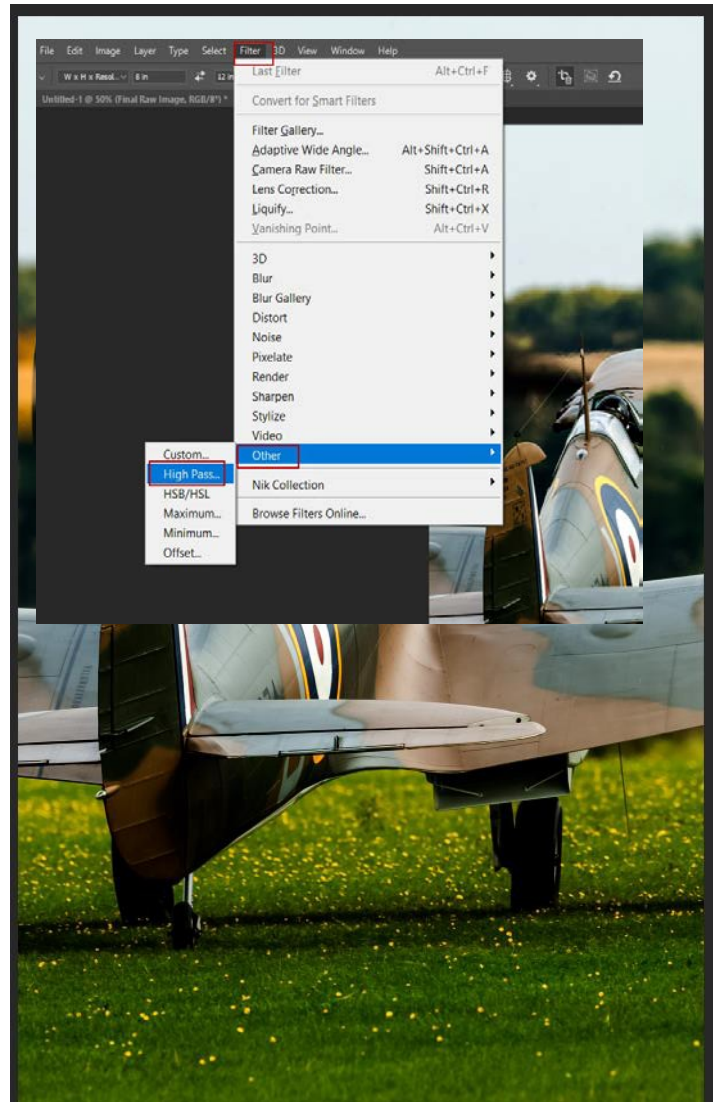

hen you click on High Pass your screen will go Gray and the High Pass control box will pop up. My general rule of thumb is to set this quite low definitely no more than 0.7 at any time. I find 0.4 a good level for most of my photos as they are genrally already quite sharp. Click on OK.

14. Next step is to select the type of overlay that you want your High Pass sharpening filter to b e . Click on the Normal field value and see the choices available to you. I have outlined the correct values that you can select for High Pass. In this case I will select the standard Overlay for my image but feel to experiment with the others as you easily change them by keep going back to the Normal dropdown list and selecting another. Once done check your image for haloes if they are there then back down the High Pass to a lower number from 0.4 pixels. Remember that judges will blow your images up to at least 100% looking for these aberrations. In this case I have taken a selection after blowing this up to 200% and it looks quite sharp to me. Notice the small white spot just above the leading-edge f the wing – that is a small dust spot which I could easily remove (*and did*) before I print the image. Now that I have found one I will look for others as my intention is to only submit my best work.
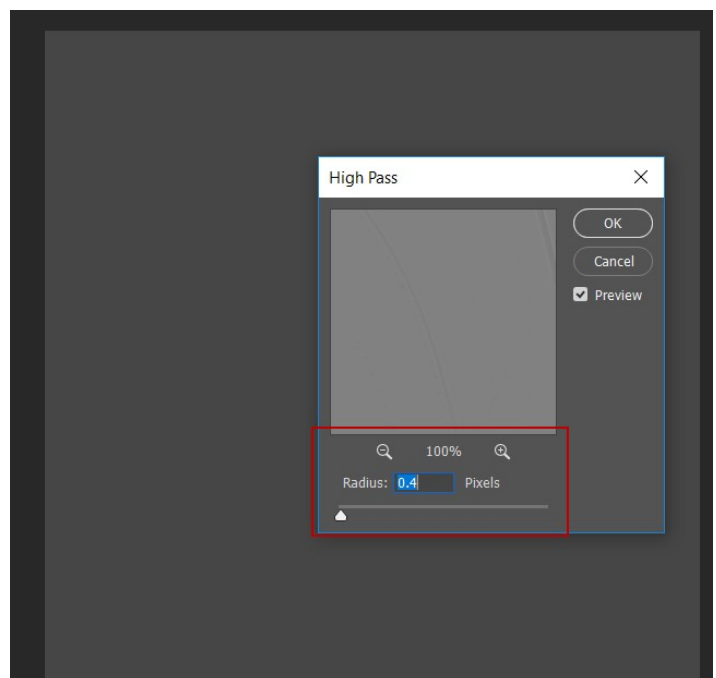
15. Perfection takes time and you should take as long as needed as you are trying to showcase your best work in these competitions.
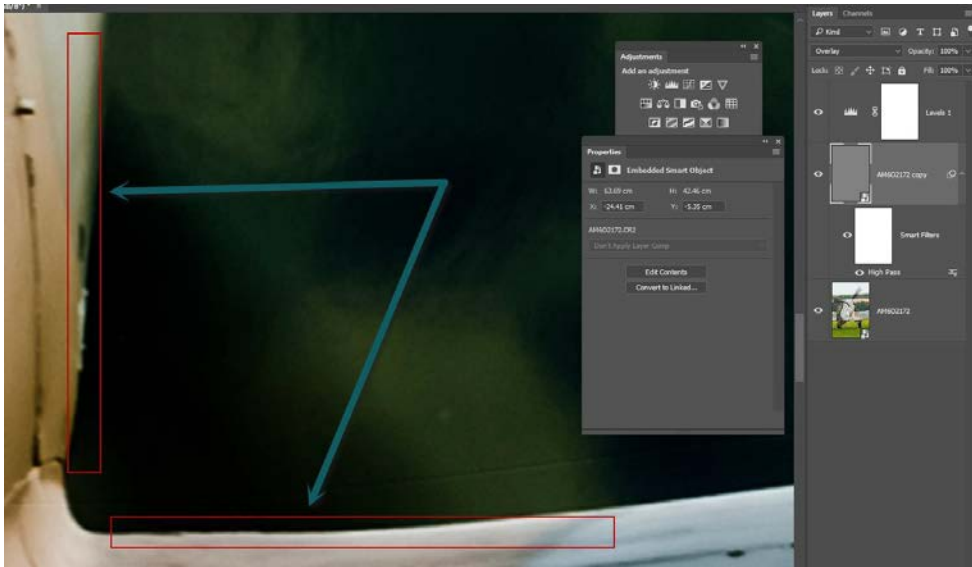
16. The final steps are around my save process using Photoshop CC. First, I save my files as a Photoshop PSD file, then I save it as a High (12) JPG file for printing then finally I goto Image Size and then select 1024 x 768 px 72 ppi and save that image as my EDI copy for competition e.g. 01~The sound of Thunder~CPA.jpg and pick high (12) for JPG quality. Finally, I close the image without doing any more saving. That last step is very important because if you select yes then you have just corrupted your PSD file with all your layer changes and sharpening.
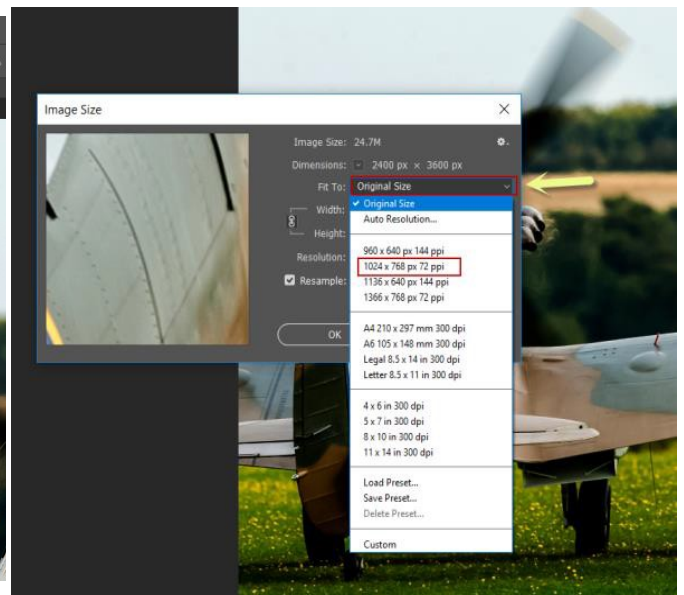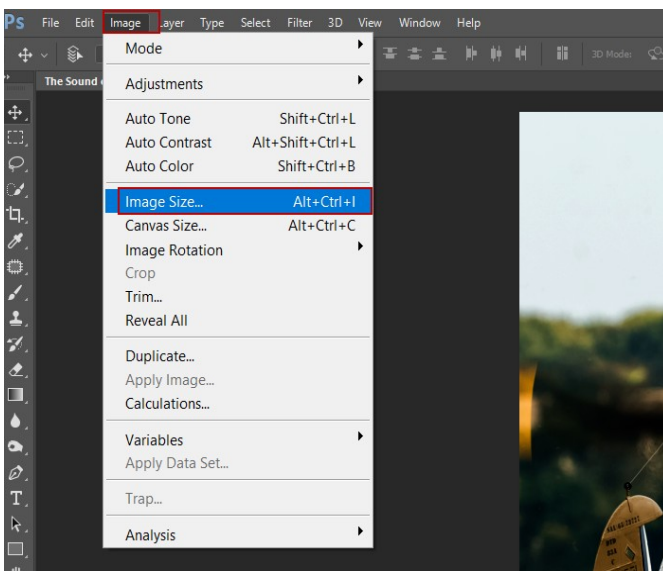
17. This is the final print image:

If you have any questions on this workflow feel free to contact me on flyfisher@spin.net.au or ring 0419 567 502 – cheers Wooly (D*avid G Woolcock, Secretary, Wodonga Albury Camera Club*)