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Stitching Panoramic Photos

Bob Margolis
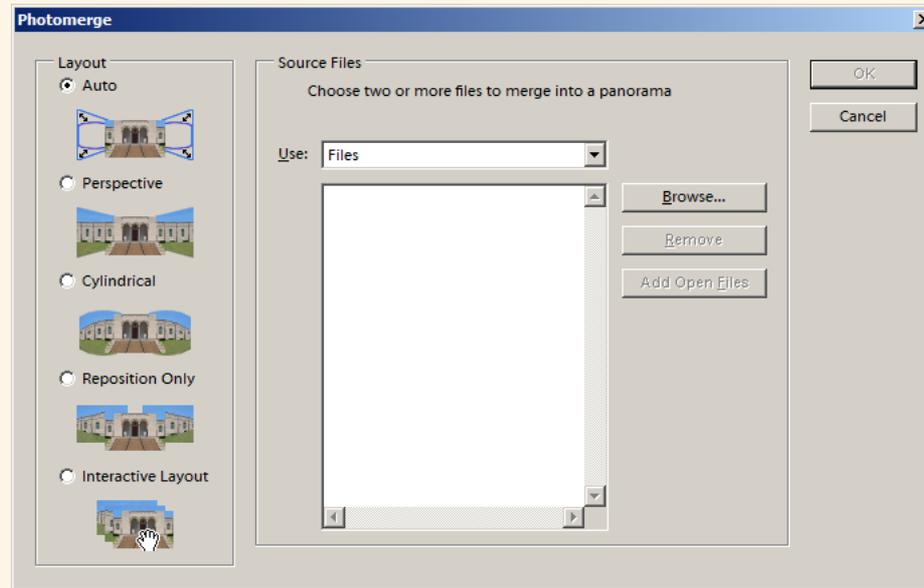Yateley & District U3A

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1.   Introduction

This is a summary of what was discussed at a recent group meeting. It looks at how to stitch photos to make a panorama using Photoshop Elements (tm). I'll also take a brief look at other stitching software.

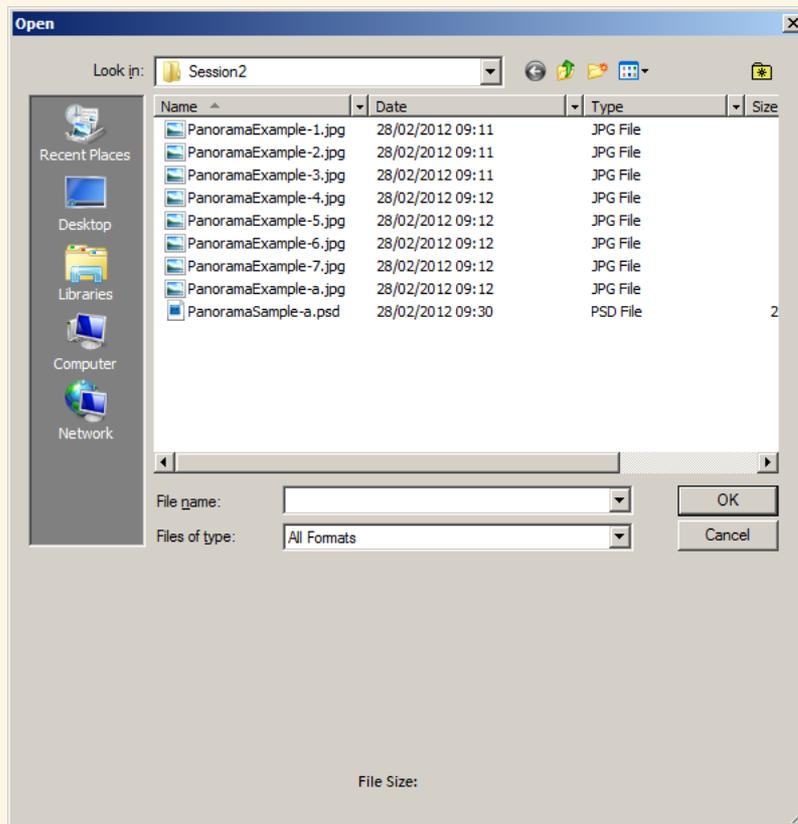You might want to read 'Taking Panoramic Photos' before reading this.

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2.   The Photoshop Elements(tm) Way

Open Elements (choose the editor, not the organiser) and click `File` and then click `New....` This gives a flyout menu with `Photomerge Panorama...` as the last item; click it.
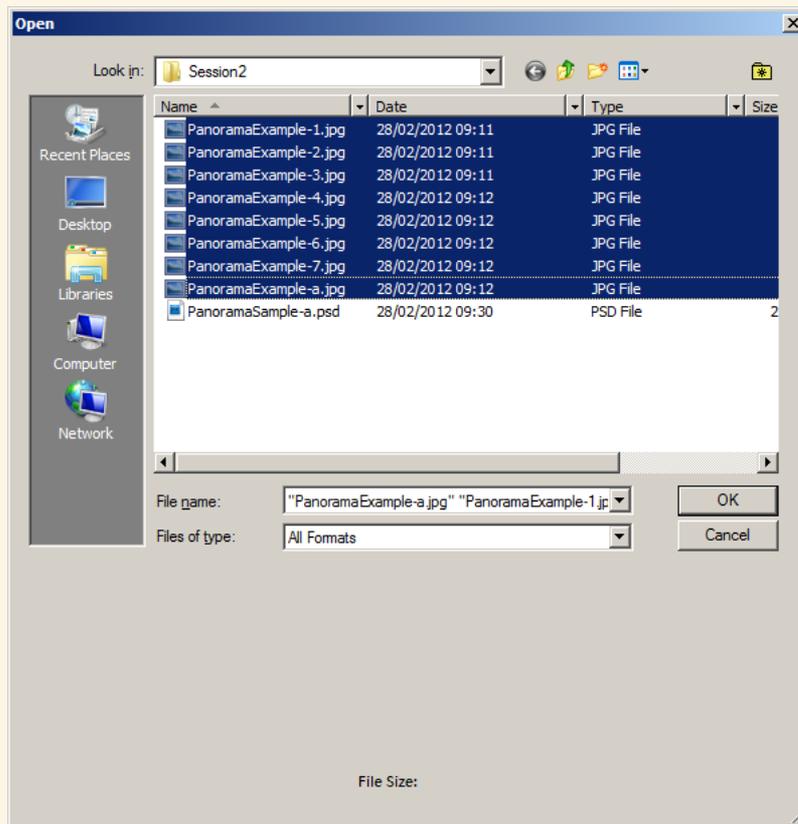You will see the following dialog box
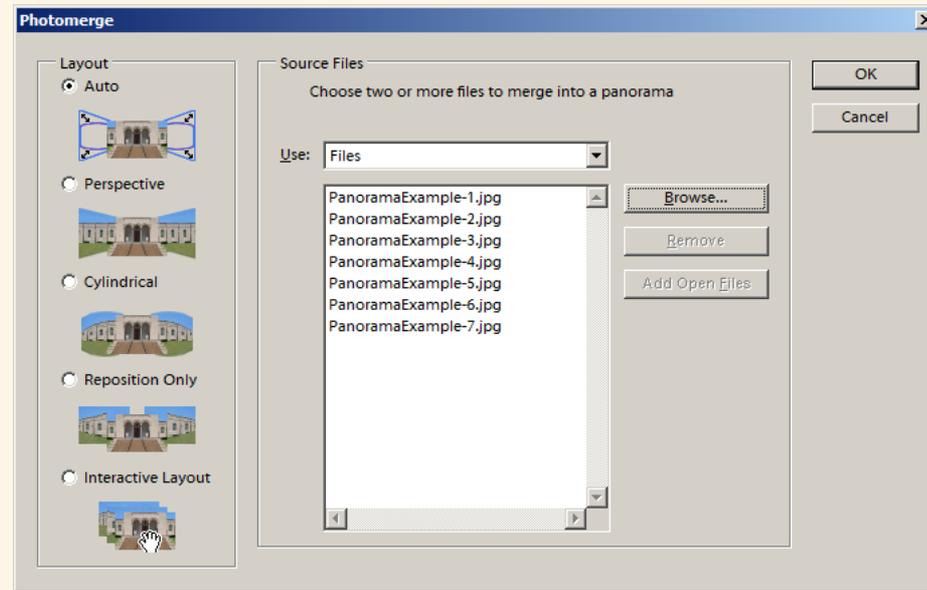

Click the `Browse...` button

and find the photos that make up your panorama; this shows my folder with the images.

The next picture shows my images selected. I did this by clicking the first photo and then holding the Shift key down and clicking the last one.

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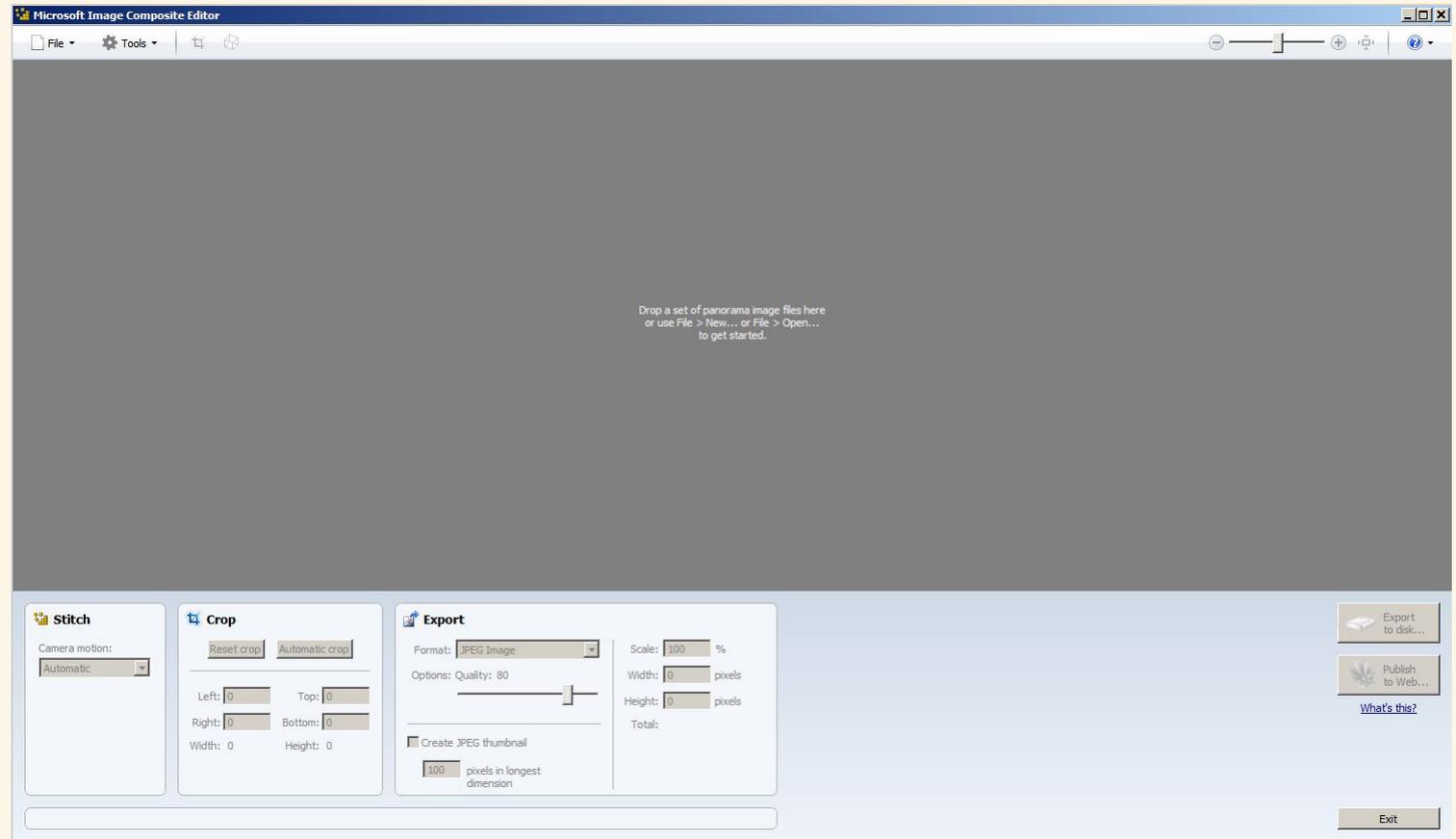Click OK and you'll be back at the Elements Photomerge dialog with the selected files showing.

Click OK and see how Elements gets on. Mostly, it will do a very good job. One member reports that you don't even have to take the photos in order, Elements will sort it all out even if you take, say, the centre photo last.

3.   Microsoft ICE

As an alternative to Elements, there is Microsoft's Image Composite Editor (ICE for short). This is a free download (Google finds it quickly). It is very easy to use.
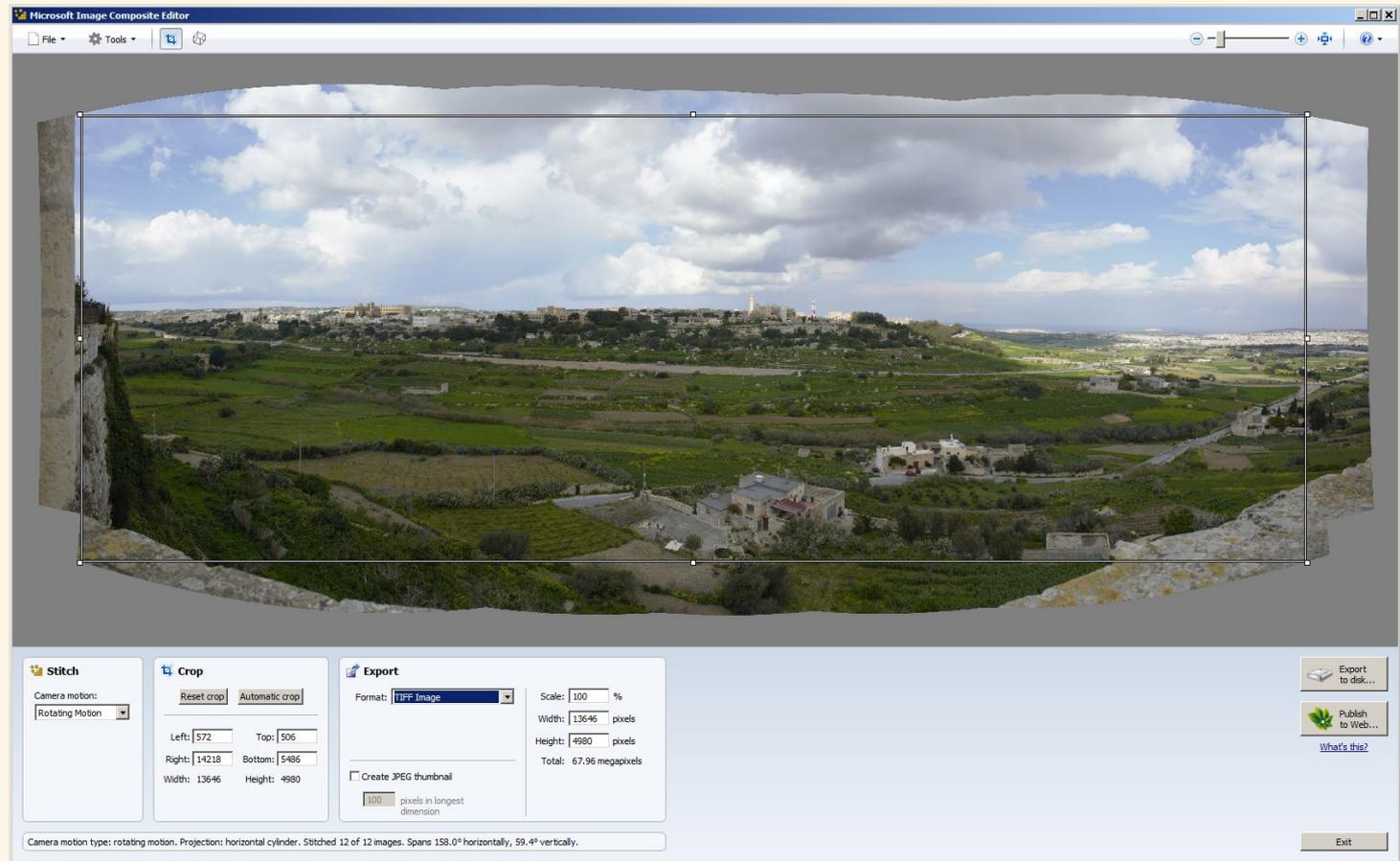
- Open Windows Explorer and find the images that you want to stitch together. Select them

- Start the ICE program.

- Drag and drop the selected files from Windows explorer to the ICE window. Here, I dropped 12 Nikon raw files forming two rows of 6 images. Wait whilst ICE stitches the photos together. This can take some time.

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- Clicking the Automatic Crop button tidies things up.

- The final stage is to choose an output format in the Export area (I use TIFF for further tweaking, but JPEG is often fine), click Export to Disk and give the file a suitable name.

ICE's ability to handle raw files can be useful. You have to have Microsoft's Camera Codec Pack installed but this is also a free download.

It will stitch JPEGs and TIFFs without the codec pack.

4. Other software

There are lots of alternatives for stitching photos, some of them free. Canon and Olympus cameras used to come with very good panorama stitching software, they may still do so.

Unfortunately, the very capable, free photo editor PaintDotNet doesn't seem to have the ability to stitch panoramas yet.

Googling for "free panorama stitching software" brings up quite a few options.