RAW "workflow" and "Smart Objects"

We already know that RAW files hold far more data than for instance JPEG. We also know that we can manipulation images and reveal different areas of a number of layers or variations of that image by using layer masks.

By using **Smart Objects**, we can apply exactly the same logic and use layer masks with RAW files

A layer is usually, but not always, created by effectively placing a copy of an image on top of itself. When that new / top layer is at full opacity this would normally mean that you cannot see the one on the bottom as it is covered by the top or upper layer.

A layer mask then allows you to reveal/hide specific areas by painting that area – this is similar to the option to erase areas of a layer but of course, and quite possibly crucially, non-destructive.

A white layer mask will hide the lower layer(s) which can then be revealed by painting with black. Conversely a reverse (black) mask will ignore or basically hide the new layer and show the lower one(s), this then allows us to 'paint in' (white) the areas we want to reveal from that new layer. Using a reduced brush opacity will of course paint in a tone of grey and as such will partially reveal / conceal.

Don't forget that any painting errors can be corrected very simply by use of the opposing absolute brush colour.

Your choice of which way to edit your image will logically be swayed based on how much there is to paint and the stacking order of your layers. In this example I will be revealing relatively small areas of the new layer and as such a black mask will be more logical.

1. Open your RAW image in your RAW processor – make any changes that you feel are appropriate to the **majority** area of the image. Here you will see I have desaturated the greens and yellows (which also effect greens).
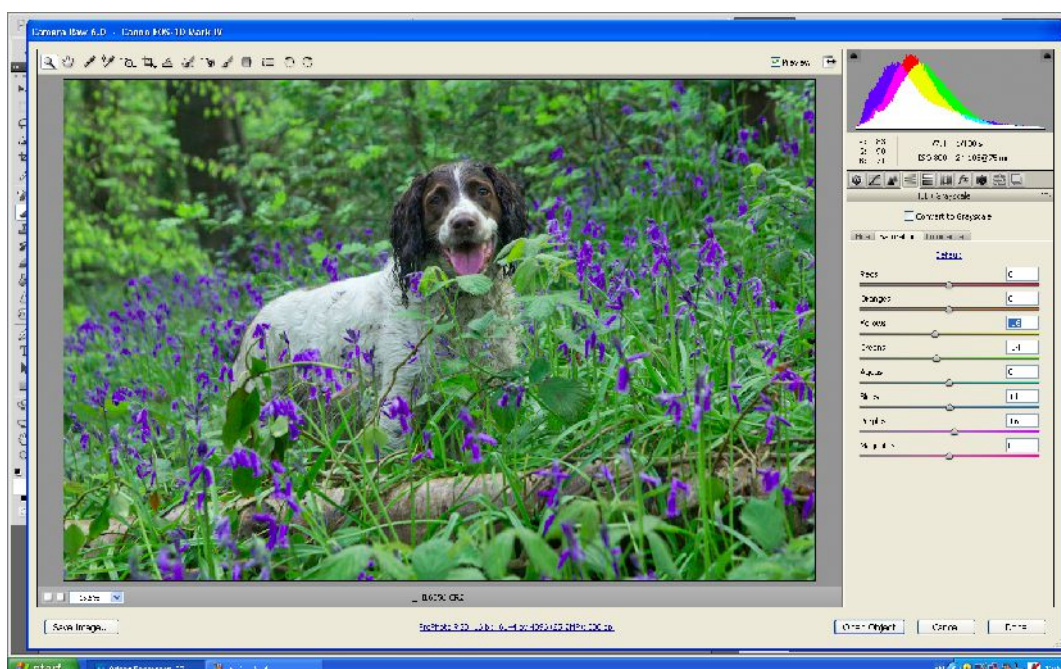
Before opening into Photoshop, enter into the settings dialogue.
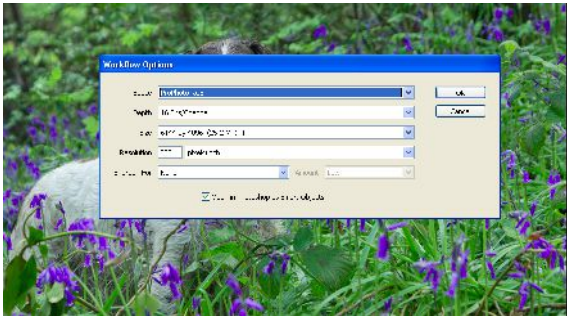
Ensure that you have ticked the "open as smart object" option is ticked.

Settings shown are as recommended in Tony Dudley's presentation. Please note that not all filter options are available in 16 bit.

2. Click **Open Object** and your image will then open (almost) as normal in Photoshop.
3. Now "right-click" on the existing layer and select **New smart object via copy**
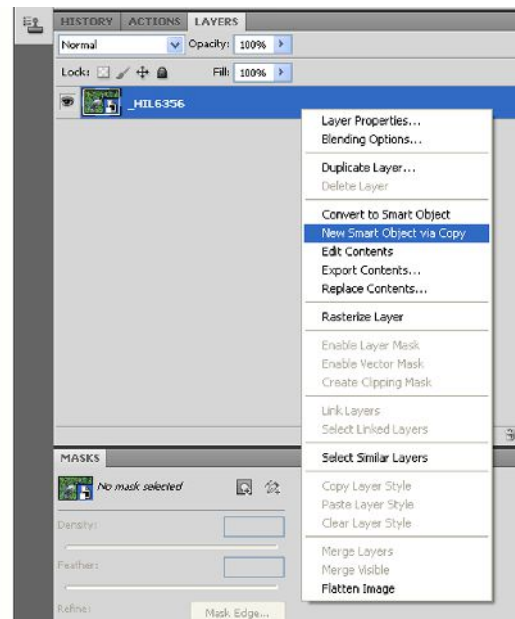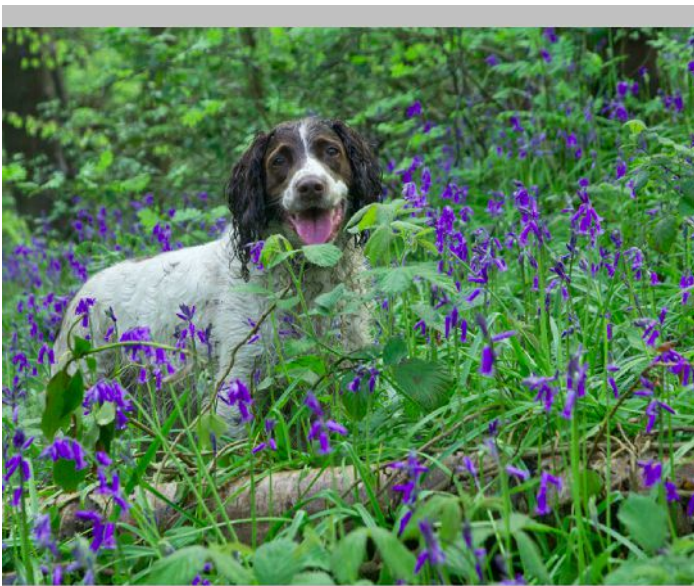

4. Then double-click on the new layer thumbnail – this will now open this new copy / layer back into your RAW editor where you can make further changes.
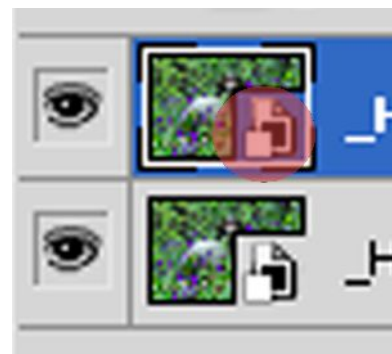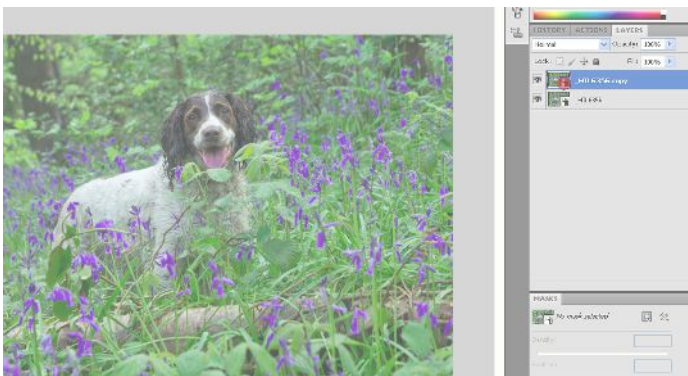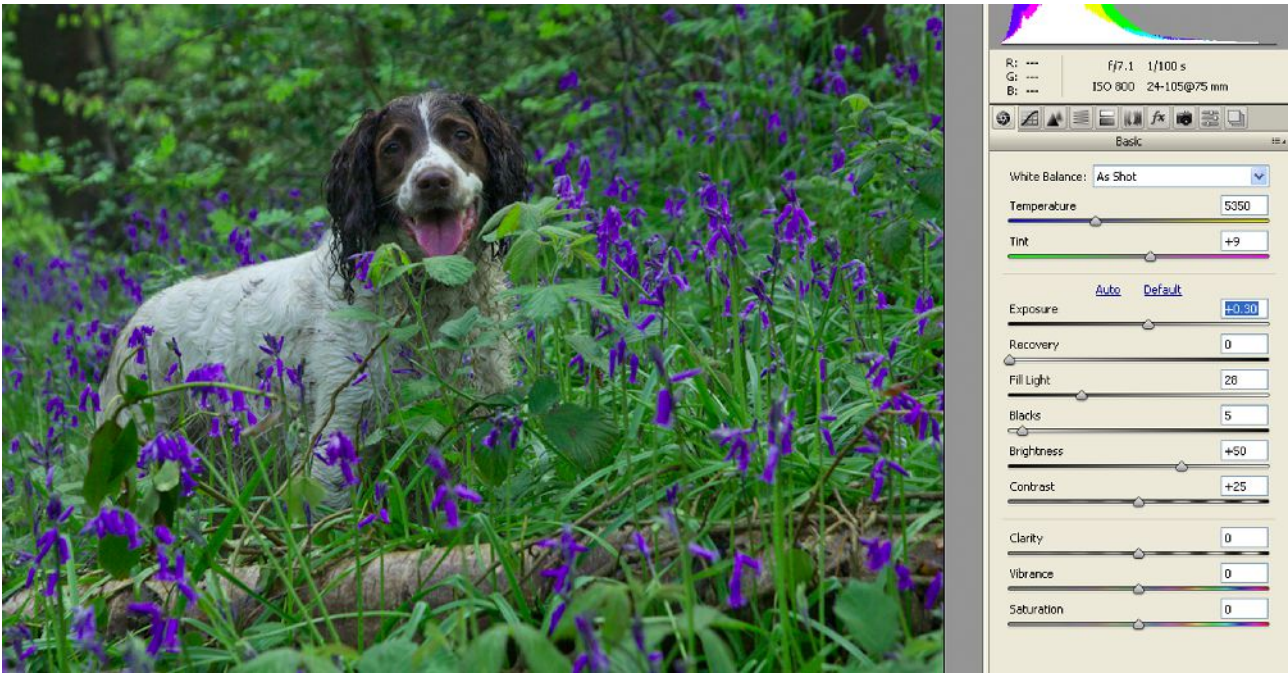
Here I have reduced the exposure a little to pull back the highlights on the subject's back. Recovery will also achieve a similar result.

5. When done, open into Photoshop again (as step 2). When you reopen your altered image into Photoshop you will now have two layers of the same image but with different characteristics.
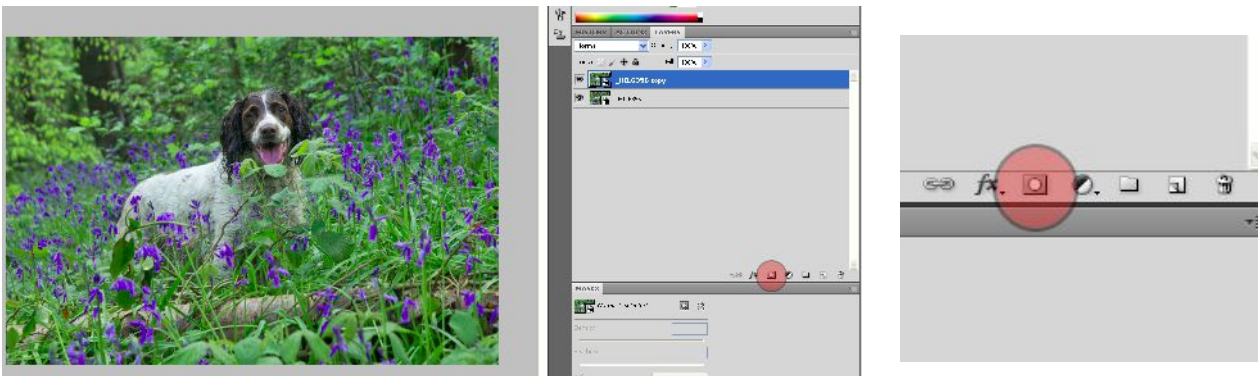
6. To create a reverse or **BLACK** mask, hold down the **Alt** key and select the add layer mask icon. You will see that the mask acts as though your new top layer is not visible and you are now looking through it to the layer below. To reveal the area of new/top layer simply paint with a **WHITE** brush.

If you have more areas to alter then simply repeat the basics from step 3 – **new smart object via copy**
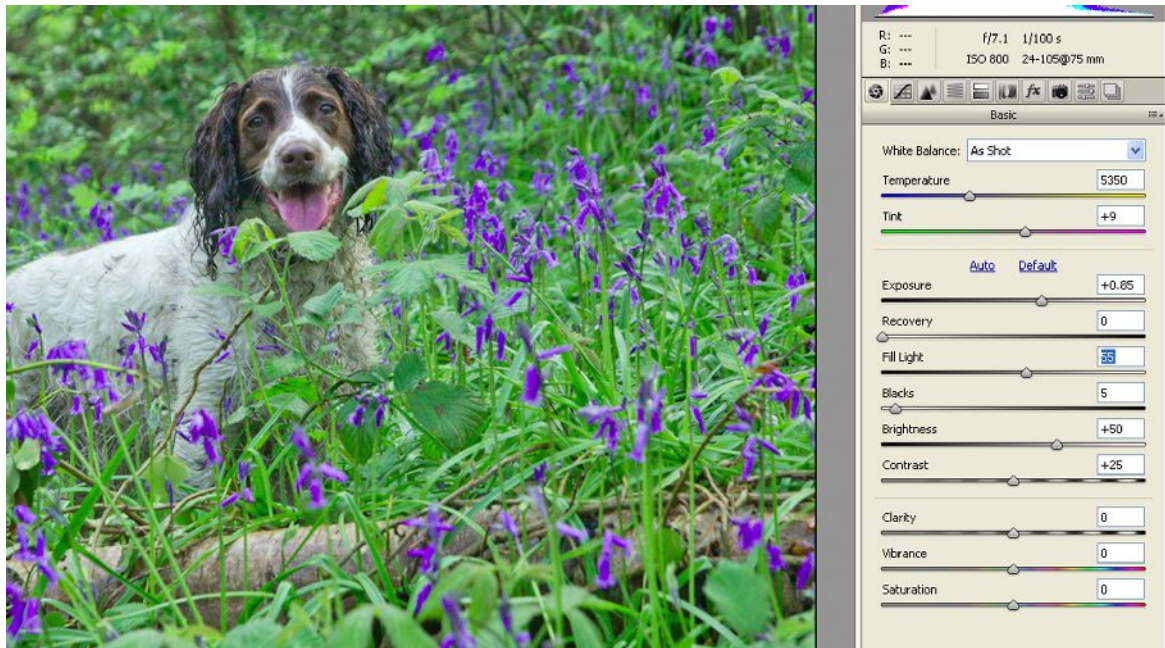
As an example, here I have increased the exposure to lighten the eyes. I then simply reopen in Photoshop, add a new black layer mask and then paint it white where I wish to reveal the *new* adjustments.

Look at the layers palette (to right hand side of image), you will see there are now 3 layers – the original, the 'dark layer' for Oakley's back and the 'lighter layer' for the eyes.

If you hold down the **Alt** key and click on one of the layer masks you can see the area painted, and can if need be, paint directly onto that.
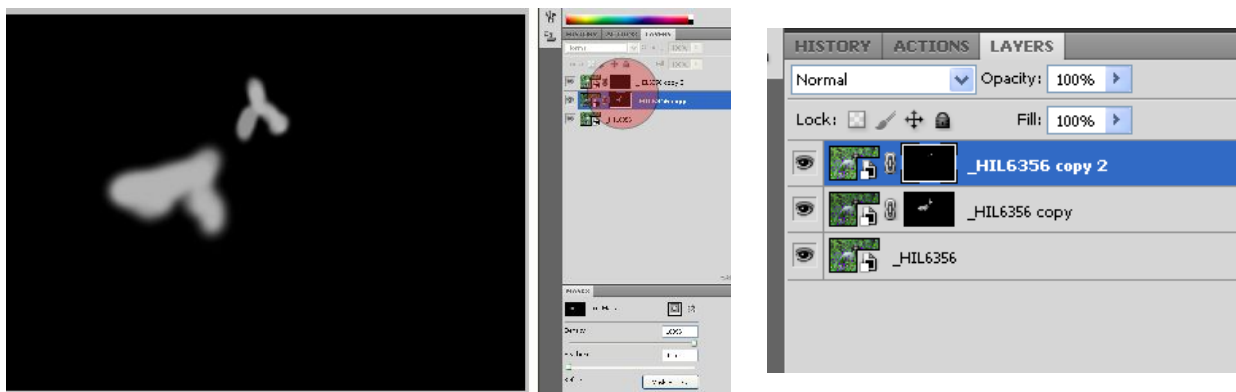
When done then save as a TIFF or PSD as normal in order to preserve layers in case you wish to make changes later. Flattening the image will discard layers as normal but also convert *from* Smart Object.