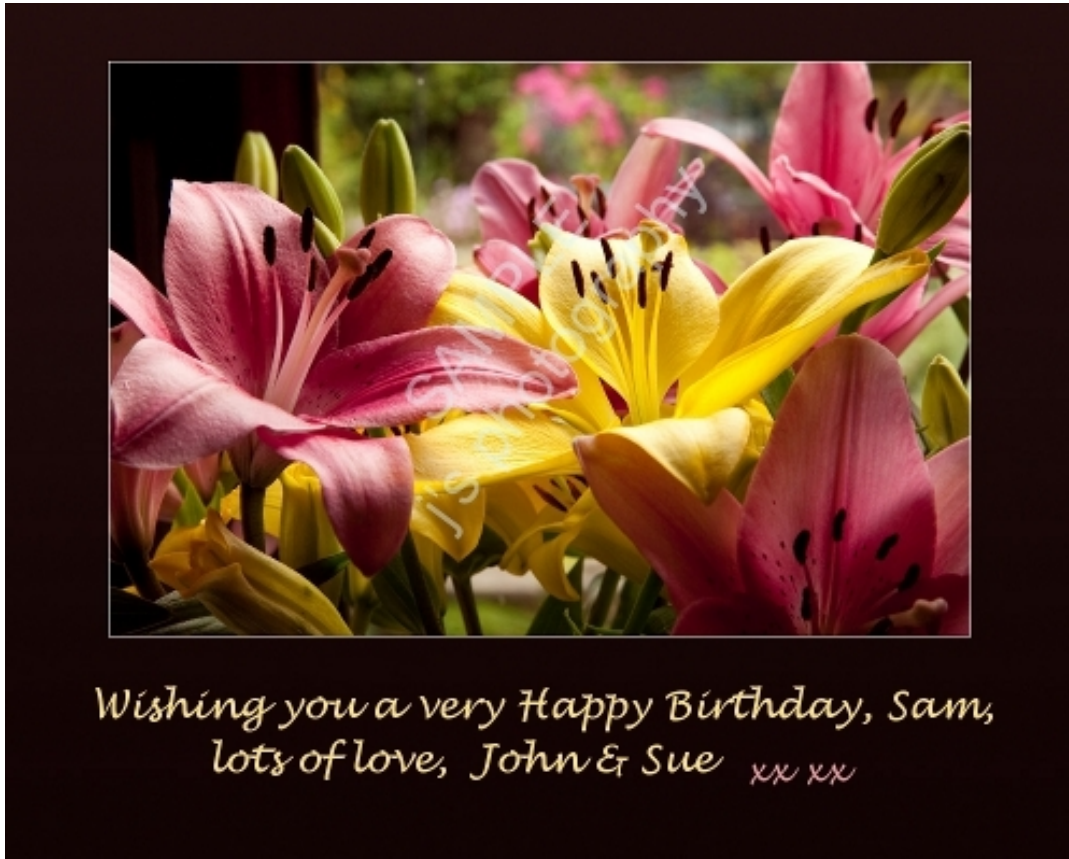# Working with Layers in GIMP to create an e-card

(updated on 28/11/12)

What size of e-card should you go for? Well, have a think about the size of your recipient's computer screen. Also, have a look at the table at the bottom of the next webpage, which gives dimensions in pixels of a variety of laptop screens.
http://www.geek.com/laptop-screen-size-resolution/

So I think the optimal size of an e-card in landscape format, is about 1000 pixels in width.

I've put some of my recent e-cards on this Picasa web-album … http://tinyurl.com/6xm59z3
Here's one of the images I've used …

There were 4 layers in this image …
1. the background layer (or canvas)
2. a reduced-sized flower photo (with an optional thin white border around it)
3. (and 4.) two layers of text ... the "kisses" were added as a separate layer.

Start by opening up Gimp … click on the Desktop icon
(download it from http://www.gimp.org/downloads/ … the 2.8.2 version currently)

If you're not familiar with Gimp, have a look at a few YouTube videos to get a few
ideas on how to set it up and use it http://jwebdesigns.angelfire.com/gimp1.htm

To browse for your photo … File > Open or Ctrl + letter O

To reduce photo in size … Image (on top toolbar) > Scale image
type in your image width (eg 800px) > Scale
(the height measurement is automatically scaled down by Gimp!)

Save your work … File > Export as or Ctrl + Shift + letter E

Give your new image a new name eg type in the
additional letter "r", just after the image number.

Save at 100% quality.

To add a thin white **border**, see my Gimp page 2 … I added 2-3 px to the width & height.
To **sharpen** the image, go to Filters > Enhance > Unsharp Mask.
    …. I use a radius of 1.0, an amount of 0.1 and a threshold of 0 > OK
    …. to repeat, go to Filters > repeat UnSharp Mask.   (Don't overdo the sharpening).
To alter the **colours / contrast**, go to Colours > what you fancy.

To create a background … onto which we'll stick the photo …

Change the foreground colour (black) to a colour you'd like
… either by clicking on the black colour box, selecting a colour > OK
… or by using the colour picking tool in the left hand sidebar (looks like an eye
    -dropper) & then picking a colour from the image you're using.
Do the same with the background colour box (white)

I find dark greens work well with landscape photos, dark browns with flower photos,
and blues with snow scenes.

Minimise your main photo now.

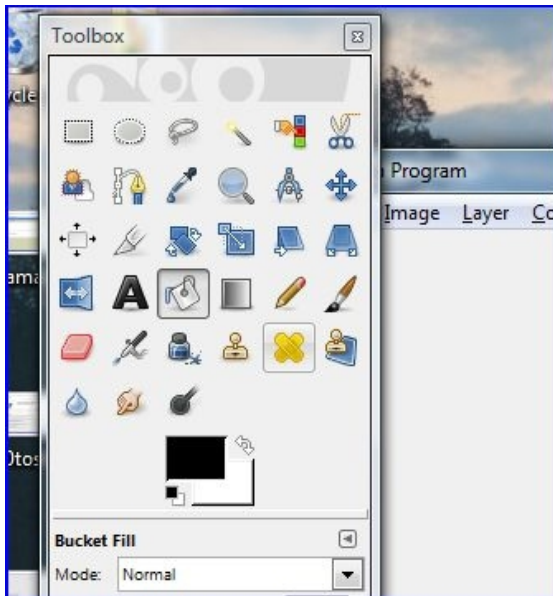Create a new background canvas … File > New or Ctrl + letter N
Put in the dimensions you'd like, eg 1000 x 800 px
> OK
You now have two options as regards colouring in the white canvas …
    1. to fill it with a single colour, with the Bucket fill tool (this would be with the
        foreground colour)
    2. to fill it in with a graduated colour wash with two colours: foreground & background
        colours.

To fill the blank white canvas with a single colour you've chosen, click on the Bucket Fill
tool, (which is next to the black capital A in the left hand side toolbar) … see below.

To splash on the colour, just click on your blank white canvas.
(You could now save this new canvas/background as above, for future use).

For a graduated colour wash, click on the Blend (or "Gradient") tool, the icon for which is just next to the Bucket Fill tool. Make a vertical swipe with your mouse pointer from top to bottom of the white canvas. If you'd like the colour gradient the other way round, go back one step in the Undo History palette (on your right hand side), and swipe your canvas from the bottom to the top. You could also switch your colour boxes around, by clicking on the letter "X" on your keyboard. *To change the colours back to B&W, click on the letter "D".* Now save this canvas for future use.

Now to stick your photo onto the canvas....
Maximise the photo.
Click on Select (on top toolbar) > All … or Ctrl + A
You have now selected the entire photo (you'll see marching ants going around its edge)
Copy it … Ctrl + letter C
Minimise your photo.

Now paste your copy onto the canvas … Ctrl + letter V.

Next job … to re-position your image so that you've got more space below it than above, if you'd like to type in some text below your photo.

Click on the Move tool (in the left hand side toolbar) … this icon has 4 arrowheads radiating from it. Click on the photo and drag it to the position you'd like.
Next, we need to **anchor** the photo onto the canvas background.

Click on Layer (on top toolbar) > Anchor … or Ctrl + letter H
This flattens the 2 layers down into one layer.
(You could use this technique to copy and paste a whole range of selections onto a blank canvas or onto one of your photos. You could use Ctrl + letter V again, to paste on

more copies)

Time now to SAVE YOUR WORK. File > Export, or Ctrl + Shift + letter E
Give your new image a new name, as save as a jpeg.
Save at 100% quality.

(To remove the marching ants from your original image… Select > None,
or Ctrl + Shift + letter A)

Next, **to add your text to the e-card**...

(there is a fuller description of how to do this on my jwebdesigns-angelfire website).

Adding text is perhaps the trickiest thing to do in Gimp.
The icon for the text tool is the black capital letter A in the left hand side toolbar.
If you click on this, select the font style (I like Lucida Handwriting and Lucida Bright).
It takes about 15 seconds for the list of fonts to appear after you click on it.

Select a colour for your text (in the colour box below the font parameters) … click on the
vertical rainbow, and then click on a colour in the larger colour box alongside > OK.

Click in the space below your photo, on the left hand side, and start typing,
After finishing your message, you can now alter the size of the text to your taste …
click on the font size in the left hand tool box area for the Text tool, and increase or
decrease the size of your text. At this stage you could also change the colour of
your text, by changing the colour in the lower colour box in the text tool box area.

To edit anything about the text, you can now change it directly inside the text box on
your image. The text is a movable layer, but to move it to another position, you now
have to click on the Move tool and then click on one of the letters in your text, and
drag the whole text layer to the new position. You might have to have 2-3 goes at
this to get the Move tool to latch onto the text.

The text layer and the background layer are two separate layers.
When you've finished, you will need to flatten the two layers down into one. Select the
Layers dialog in the right hand side toolbar. Do a right mouse click in the white space just
below the little image icons. Select "Flatten image" from the pop-up menu.

If you wish to add say a few "xxxx" in a different colour after your name, you can do so before you save your work. If you add an extra layer of text like this, remember to flatten the two layers down to one layer again, before you save your work.

Now you can save this final image. File > Export, etc.

If you wish to undo any bodges, find the Undo History dialog in the right hand side-bar, and click on a previous stage in your work.

As I mentioned earlier, there's a lot more information in my website ….
http://jwebdesigns.angelfire.com/ .

For example, if you'd like to create a more arty photo, have a look at all the fab effects under "Filters". Below is my photo of Weymouth Harbour, onto which I've put a painterly effect. This photo is also at the bottom of my webpage "Gimp 3", with details on how to do this.

As regards finding something Christmassy to photograph to go onto an e-card, have a look at your local events calendar, and see if there's something you fancy, e.g. carol singing at a local historic site.   Or you could find some suitable flowering plants, snow-scenes, or set up a still-life of Xmas decorations & pressies to photograph.

I hope you have a lot of fun, doing all this.

Cheers,
John