



Ian Dawson

Ian Dawson is a photographer whose career has been guided by a lifelong fascination with the planet’s most remote and fragile environments, a passion that has carried him from regional newsrooms to pivotal moments in recent history, and eventually to some of the most extreme landscapes on Earth.

His relationship with photography began in childhood, when he would reach for his parents’ camera. A few years later, a neighbour’s gift of a manual camera taught him to think creatively, and began his lifelong quest of ‘chasing light’. Around the same time, an inspirational geography teacher nurtured Ian’s love of mountains and big landscapes, sowing the seed for his lifelong commitment to the wild, untouched corners of our planet.

After completing a degree in Fine Art and the History of Ideas in Newcastle, Ian moved to Scotland and began freelancing for local newspapers, the first steps of a career in photojournalism. His talent was quickly recognised, earning him a permanent position with regional newspapers. He credits much of his early development to an editor, whose vote of confidence gave Ian the room to find his own photographic voice.

The years that followed were both thrilling and demanding ones: long days on location, nights spent processing prints in the lab, and assignments that ranged from regional news to major international stories, including the conflict in Bosnia and the funeral of Diana, Princess of Wales. It was, as Ian describes it, an education in working under pressure, “You have to get the picture, no matter what the conditions”, constantly exploring how a familiar subject might be seen differently.

“Photography offers a way of seeing that daily life rarely allows. One that moves the viewer past the surface and reveals, at its best, something more essential underneath.” /D

That discipline, honed through years of composing quickly and reassessing the visual puzzle in front of him, earned him a series of regional press awards and, eventually, an invitation to Glasgow to work alongside national newspapers and magazines. The move placed him at the leading edge of the industry’s shift from film into the digital age.

Ian’s career took a natural turn: having spent years being commissioned for his work, he began commissioning it from others around the world, becoming one of the youngest picture editors in the country. He oversaw several newspapers, driven by a conviction that the images coming in deserved to be laid out on the page with the same care and skill that had gone into capturing them.

Throughout his working life, Ian’s interest in the art and creativity of photography has remained with him. Even while working as an editor, Ian never set his own camera aside. What mattered to him was never the technical process, but the image itself, and its ability to inspire and educate. He continued photographing assignments both at home and abroad, deepening his connection to sweeping landscapes and cold, demanding places.

That connection reached a turning point in 2021, when an unexpected invitation set Ian on a course that would come to define a new chapter of his career: a voyage to the Geographic North Pole. After hearing fellow photographer Sue Flood speak about her time living among the Nenets reindeer herders in Siberia, they discovered a mutual love of cold places, a moment that marked the beginning of their collaboration as ‘Midnight Sun’ and a shared affinity for extreme environments that has continued to shape their work in the Polar regions and beyond.

“Although our photographic styles are different, we come to our work from a similar place; a love of the habitats we seek to document, a passion for what photography can achieve, and a child-like excitement for the challenge it presents.”

Ian has built an international reputation as a photographer. He is a member of The Explorers Club, and The Alpine Club, and in 2025 was made a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society in recognition of his contribution to visual storytelling and geographic knowledge, a distinction that reflects not only on the images he has brought back from the ends of the earth, but the decades of curiosity and endurance that made them possible. Alongside his photographic work, Ian has volunteered for over two decades with Scottish Mountain Rescue, for which he was honoured by Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

Today, Ian focuses on the polar regions, documenting people, wildlife, and landscapes at the frontline of environmental change, and bringing these to our attention in order to encourage conservation, while we are still able.