PANORAMA PICTURES – Rod Smith

The Autostitch programme can be downloaded from:

http://matthewalunbrown.com/autostitch/autostitch.html

It's a free demonstration version which I used for my talk at the last meeting. There are versions for Windows and for Mac OSX; be aware that the links for more advanced versions appear not to work. To use it proceed as follows (these notes apply to Windows, I don't know whether the same applies to the Mac version):

1. The download is a Zip file which you then double-click on to open it. This will reveal 11 folders and files. I suggest you create a new folder called "Autostitch" and move them into it. There is no installation process for the programme, it simply runs as a stand-alone application.
2. Contrary to what I said at the meeting the programme will only work with jpg files.
3. I suggest you copy the pictures you want to stitch into a new folder created specifically for the purpose, it makes life quite a lot easier when running the programme.
4. To launch the programme double-click on the "AutoStitch.exe" file. A small window will open with 3 icons.
5. Click on the blue folder icon. A new window will open (it could be any folder) so navigate to the folder containing the pictures you want to stitch. Highlight all the pictures (handy short cut: single-click on the first picture, then hold down the Shift key and single-click on the last picture), then click on "Open".
6. Sit back while the programme whirrs away. When it's done the finished picture will open in a viewer and will be titled "Pano1.jpg". You then need to save it, after which it can be worked on in the usual way as you choose.

Some general points about panoramas:

1. Set your exposure manually so it doesn't change between shots, otherwise you are likely to see variations in brightness between different parts of the finished picture. I suggest you set it for the brightest part of the picture so as to avoid blown highlights.
2. When shooting make sure each picture overlaps by about 25-30% with adjacent pictures, both to the sides and above and below. Also, make sure you shoot well into the corners of the subject as otherwise you are likely to find the finished picture has rounded edges.
3. Choice of subject is important. The programme needs detail it can grab hold of in order to make sense of it all, so pictures with strong, clear shapes work best whereas subjects with lots of fine, random detail aren't so successful.

There are of course lots of other programmes which will stitch pictures together. For a useful review of other possibilities visit:

https://expertphotography.com/best-photo-stitching-software/