

ROYAL PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY SOUTH WEST REGION

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

SUNDAY 24th FEBRUARY 2019

10.30am Dolphin Hotel, Bovey Tracey

Committee Present: Tim Sanders, Mick Medley, Joy Medley, Rod Fry, Martin Howse, John Page, John Widdows

Attendees: Carol Ballenger, Hans Gebauer, Mary Gebauer, Graham Hodgson, Sue Howard, Alister Heath, Vivien Howse, Melanie McLoughlin, Lynda Piper, Antony Rowe, Diane Rowe, Tricia Scott, Sue Smith, Muriel Somerfield, Pam Stirling, Ted Strawson, Bob Styring, Lois Wakeman, Sylvia Wilson, Michael Woodhead, Colin Yelland

1. Apologies from Alan Bastin, Marcia Fry, Margaret Hocking, Tony Spooner, Linda Wevill, Diane Wilkins

2. Minutes of 2018 RPS SW Region AGM – The minutes were posted online (SW Region website) and accepted / signed. (Proposed by Lois Wakeman & Seconded by Tricia Scott)

3. Matters Arising from 2018 Minutes – None.

4. Regional Organiser's Report – Tim Sanders reported on his first year as RO and began by thanking the committee for their specific contributions and all other volunteers for their help and support. This year two committee members have decided to step down from the committee (Linda Wevill & Mac Bouchere). Tim thanked Linda for successfully running the SW VA Group for 9 years and she will be replaced by Di Wilkins who is stepping down from her role in managing the Nov Distinctions Advisory Day. A total of >1500h contributed to the successful running of the SW Region by the committee and other volunteers. Membership numbers (n=502) were similar to last year. The region ran 2 Distinction Advisory Days, 4 Lectures and 7 Field trips, plus events by VA and Contemporary Groups. Attendance, particularly at events has been disappointing and consequently we have struggled to break-even financially, particularly at lectures. Tim also highlighted significant changes at RPS HQ due to the move from Bath to Paintworks Bristol and staff changes. (see Appendix 1 for detailed RO Report)

5. Treasurer's Report – Joy Medley summarised last year's accounts which involved contributions from RPS HQ based on regional membership plus ticket money for events. The main expenses are due to travel costs, which for some speakers and Distinction Panel members may include overnight accommodation. Joy emphasised that online booking for events makes her life easier and would encourage all members to use it. The balance in hand at the end of this FY was £4369. (see Appendix 2 for detailed Treasurer's Report)

6. Webmaster's Report – Mick Medley outlined some of the changes he has made to the SW Region website and informed us of the proposed update to the RPS website in the near future although no details have been provided to date. He also requested panorama style images for the banner at the top of our SW webpage and encouraged blogs and photos to be sent to him after field trips. (see Appendix 3 for detailed Webmaster's Report)

7. Organisers' of Distinctions Advisory Days Reports – Martin Howse who is responsible for organising the April Advisory day highlighted the concern about the marked decline in participants at this event (~40%) and we had to cancel one of the two advisors, otherwise we would have made a significant loss.

Di Wilkins ran the November Advisory day with a better attendance although 4 of the 17 who booked failed to attend.

(see Appendix 4 for detailed Advisory Days reports)

8. SW Region Biennial Members' Exhibition – John Widdows summarised the current situation with the Biennial Exhibition. Previously we have exhibited at the RD&E Hospital, but their Healthcare Arts Organiser retired and he has not been replaced, so we have been searching for another venue willing to host our exhibition for 2-3 months. We have recently confirmed that Torre Abbey Museum is willing to host our exhibition in Jan-Mar 2020.

9. Special Interest Group Reports

9a. Contemporary Group – Rod Fry told us that the SW Group formed in 2007 to view each another's work at regular meetings, hold exhibitions and produce joint photobooks. In addition he informed us that he would not be seeking re-election in 2020 and would be looking for a successor.

9b. Visual Art Group – Linda Wevill highlighted the creative work shown by visiting speakers (Robert Canis & Andy Small) and the two excellent Members' Days where participants show their own work.

9c. West Cornwall Group – Vivien Howse reported on another successful year of the Group (up to 15 members) that live in the remote west of the SW Region. They have bi-monthly meetings to share ideas, working practices and study other photographers. They also have their own exhibition.

9c Travelling Portfolios – Margaret Hocking highlighted the 3 print portfolios (2 general & 1 mono) which are circulated in the region with 7 to 9 members in each. These are circulated either by hand or post and members comment on each print.

(see Appendix 5 for detailed Special Interest Group Reports)

10 & 11. Election of Regional Organiser, Deputy Regional Organiser and Committee

These elections were all rolled into one and those standing for re-election were all duly elected. (Proposed: Vivien Howse; Seconded: Graham Hodgson)

12. Election of Additional Committee Member

Sylvia Wilson volunteered to organise one of the Distinctions Advisory Days and replaces Di Wilkins. (Proposed by Linda Wevill Seconded: Di Wilkins)

13. Items Advised to Committee for Discussion

No items raised.

14. Items for Discussion from Committee

14.1 – Rod Fry informed members that he was Co-Chair of the Representatives Committee (REPCOM) which meets twice a year to report back to Mike Taylor (RPS Chief Operating Officer). The RPS HQ often over-look members' interests in the regions. Rod Fry outlined the new 'state of the art' exhibition centre at the new RPS HQ in Bristol. He would press the RPS to try and attract International Photographic Exhibitions to the new exhibition gallery at RPS HQ.

14.2 – Tim Sanders is encouraging Chairs to share REPCOM information with members. REPCOM is not transparent and members are objecting. However, it is recognised that some topics (financial aspects etc.) are sensitive and cannot be shared. Tim informed us that the RPS President recognises that certain things have to change and RPS has to be more open.

15. Date of Next Year's AGM – 23rd February 2020

A.O.B.

1. Carol Ballenger highlighted a future event at the Devon Guild in Bovey Tracey which is a mix of Sea Songs, Photographs, Music and Poetry + a Buffet at £10 p.p.

Meeting Closed at 11.25

Appendix 1. SW Regional Organiser's Report (Tim Sanders)

The year has seemed to fly-past and I am indebted to the committee and all the other volunteers for their help and support during my first year in post. The committee have put in a lot of hard work behind the scenes to ensure we are able to hold the events that we do and to make sure that they run smoothly. The fact that so many of them having been providing this support and for so many years is a clear testament to their dedication to the RPS and the region and I thank them heartily. This year two committee members have decided to step-down Linda Wevill who has very successfully run the VA Group for the last nine years and also found time to organise a field trip to Lukesland Garden this year is moving on to be on the Licentiate Distinctions Panel. Di Wilkins is also stepping down from her role managing our November Distinctions Advisory Day and will be taking on a greater role with the VA Group. I wish them both the best of luck in their new roles, and thank them for their efforts in the region.

Other committee members are also deserve mention, as they have continued to provide support and professionalism to the region: Mick Medley has been a great support and continued to keep our web entries up to date and also arranged a behind the scenes field trip to the South Devon Railway while Joy Medley has kept our accounts immaculately, John Widdows has not only carried out the note taking duties but has been invaluable providing the projector, setting up and operating it, while Mac Bouchere ran a wild and wet field day on Dartmoor and John Page has provided much wise counsel during the year, Martin Howse has done that as well as putting in the considerable work required that ensures the April Distinctions Advisory Day runs so smoothly, and not forgetting the Postal Folio work done by Margaret Hocking as well as the Field Trip she organised to Kynance Cove. While Rod Fry has continued his sterling work with the Contemporary Group.

Other volunteers not on the committee are also deserving of mention: Vivien Howse has been translating my Devonian into English for the Newsletters and Bulletins, as well as running the West Cornwall Group - who additionally put on a superb exhibition at Heartlands during the year. Graham Hodgson and Carol Ballenger helped members start the New Year with their annual "Blow away the Cobwebs" event and Helen Moore organised an excellent field trip to Mount Edgcumbe. Thank you to all those volunteers who contributed during the year but have not been named individually.

Overall volunteer hours put into regional work conservatively averages just over 1500 hours per annum.

How well did the year go: membership of the region was 505 at the last AGM and now stands at 502. The region has run 2 Distinctions Advisory Days, 4 Lectures and 7 Field Trips during 2018 not including those events organised by the VA Group and the Contemporary Group. Overall attendance at events has been disappointing and we have struggled financially to break-even with all the lectures. However, our speakers Ben Cherry, Matilda Temperley and Ann Cook all put on superbly entertaining lectures and many of you that attended them have voiced your appreciation of the events.

Rob and Lisa and their staff at the Dolphin merit mention as they have continued to provide us with a friendly and convivial venue for our events.

At RPS HQ we have seen quite a change over of staff and the turmoil of moving the HQ from Bath to the Paintworks in Bristol. Our volunteer support to the region Nicola Young who many of you will remember from last year's AGM left during the year and has been replaced by Naomi Galliford. While those of you who have experienced problems with the website will be pleased to know that the development of a new website has been approved by Council as the old one really is not fit for purpose.

Looking forward, we have the following events planned.

Saturday 9 March Greg Bos – will talk about his long career with Reuters and his successful London exhibition and book launch “Trails of the West”

Sunday 7 April Tony Worobiec - Tony will be showing us 2 talks on the day

“Abandoned on the Plains” and “Fragments of an American Dream”.

Sunday 4 November Guy Edwardes will give us two talks during the day, immensely popular for his expeditions and courses this was the only weekend Guy could fit us in during the year.

Appendix 2. SW Region Treasurer's Report for 2018 (Joy Medley)

South West Region AGM Treasurers report for 2019 AGM

Our financial year ends on 31st December so all figures reflect the period January – December 2018

Our balance brought forward to 2018 was £5091.08, our contribution from Bath for this year was 509 members @ £1.45 each total £738.05, all other income is generated by the Region.

Expenses for the year have included purchasing a small sound system for our use, Dainton Storage costs for storage of our equipment, 2 paper newsletters in the year, Committee travel costs for events and Committee meetings and for speakers fees plus their travel costs and in some cases overnight accommodation. In addition we do pay travel costs and out of pocket expenses for any member who organises a field trip.

We have to keep a detailed spreadsheet for Head Office, which details all our income and expenses which also includes VAT codes in order we reclaim VAT where we can do.

This gets reconciled on a quarterly basis. We also receive a subdivision account from Head Office on a monthly basis which gives details of booking online and acts as a check against our Regional accounts.

Online booking for events works well, also refunds are now issued online, less our admin fee which we charge if cancellation is not within the time scales which we stipulate on bookings.

Money for online bookings is advised to us from Head Office as a monthly statement, and this is then entered onto the spreadsheet by event, after which we can analyse our costs versus income for each event. We receive these amounts one month behind the date of receipt by Head Office, therefore for bookings made in December, the cash comes to us in January. Online booking has made life much simpler as it means less trips to the bank to pay in cash and cheques and we urge everybody, if possible, to book online as it does save work and time. Also online bookings give us a better idea of whether an event is viable to run, as we do have the commitment from members to turn up, and can mean the difference between running and cancelling an event.

The balance in hand at the end of December was £4369.64, a decrease of £721.44 from the previous year, but we have purchased the sound system for our use, plus costs for newsletters and travel cost has increased over the year.

Appendix 3. Webmaster report (Mick Medley)

Not a lot has been happening on the website during the last 12 months.

We were promised a new website and I did join a few webmasters to put opinions as to what the new site should look like but no further developments have been made.

A statement was made in the last newsletter from Mike Taylor which reads:

“To complement our investment in bricks and mortar, we hope to have fully refreshed our website and will be starting behind the scenes work on this soon. This is very important as it will provide us with a platform for increased digital reach and further increase the profile of the RPS and excellence in photography”

So watch this space for further developments.

I have spent a little time recently trying to make our Regional pages a bit easier, there are now links on all the Committee email addresses which save having to copy and paste, and on our “About us” page, the current events are all listed as before, but underneath each one is a link to the event which will give full details and booking information.

We could also do with refreshing our banner images which show at the top of our local pages, these ideally need to be panorama type images with measurements of 1085 pixels x 605 pixels, part of this is obscured top and bottom so useable area is 1085 x 380 but they must be the full size when put on the website. Putting these on is done by Emily Mathisen but we do have to have groups of 3, so if I got 3 or more I can then send them off and these will be shown as a header on a rolling basis.

One last thing, we do try to put a blog onto the site for every event but we very rarely if ever get any comments, this is especially frustrating when we have a field trip and attendees send in photos from the day but nobody looks at them, or comments. Please try or we will take the option off the site.

Appendix 4 Reports on Advisory Days (Martin Howse & Di Wilkins)

22nd April 2018 Advisory Day (Martin Howse ARPS)

I have been involved with our Distinction Advisory Days for many years and from memory this one had the lowest number of participants that I can recall. We had a total of 11 people bringing panels for advice, normally the figure has been nearer 20 with at times a reserve list in case anybody dropped out. We were due to have two members of the panels attending to give advice with one coming down from Scotland. After discussing the situation with Andy Moore, Distinctions Manager, it was decided to run with one very experienced Advisor. Pete McCloskey from Bristol agreed to attend and did a very good job on the day.

If we had not taken this action we would have been on a significant loss. However we did cover our costs and made a small profit.

It will be interesting to see how numbers turn out this year (2019).

24th November Advisory Day (Di Wilkins ARPS)

In the first instance the bookings for the November Advisory Day were very slow but speeded up in the summer.

In all there were 37 observers and 17 people booked to bring panels, 13 of which actually attended. A good number also stayed to lunch which helped support The Dolphin in letting us have the room for free.

Sue Brown and Ian Wilson were the assessors, and were able to consider L and A (Fine Art)

panels. I have since heard from some attendees who successfully went on to attain their distinctions.

Even without the usual number of helpers the day ran very successfully. A huge thank you to the team that supported me, especially Joy who always kept me in check to ensure we were on the same page, Sylvia and Maggie who took over the front desk, and also to Alan who, although not a member of the committee, has always been a brilliant support for these events.

I wish good luck to the person who takes over the running of the November Advisory Day this year.

Appendix 5. Special Interest Groups

1. RPS SW Visual Art Group Report (Linda Wevill FRPS)

The SW Visual Art Group continues to enhance the diverse activities for members of the Group and acts as a forum for like-minded photographers in the South West.

In March last year we had an excellent day of photography with Robert Canis. Robert is a professional nature photographer and he gave us his two lectures ‘Passion Projects’ and ‘Nature in Miniature’. His work is very creative and it was a very inspirational day and enjoyed by all those attending.

In January and August we held our Members’ Days, where participants showed their own work. These days are always well worth attending as we see some excellent photography on display.

In November we were delighted to welcome Andy Small. Andy is a professional Fine Art photographer and RHS course tutor who specialises in photographs of flowers, nature and landscape. It was another inspirational day enjoyed by all.

Looking to later this year, we are looking forward to welcoming Roger Ford FRPS and Angela Ford ARPS in April and Marianthi Lainas, a creative landscape photographer, in October, as well as another couple of Members’ Days.

We are sure this year will be another successful one for us in the South West.

2. RPS South West Region - Contemporary Group Report (Rod Fry ARPS)

The South West Contemporary Sub Group was formed back in 2007 I think we were the first sub group in the Society. The idea behind this was to enable Contemporary workers living in the South West, to meet locally in between national events put on by the main Contemporary Group. Over the years we have held exhibitions, and produced joint books. However the main and most enjoyable part of the group is looking at each other’s work at our regular meetings, which alternate between venues in Devon and Cornwall.

Our next meeting is on the 24th March at Carnon Downs Hall, Carnon Downs Truro Cornwall.

I have been coordinator of the SWCG since 2009 and I am also Co-Chair of the Special Interest Groups and Co Chair of the Representatives committee. I am happy to continue in post for 2019 but I will not be seeking re-election to any post with the Society and will be looking for successors for next year.

3. RPS South West Region - West Group (Vivien Howse ARPS)

This group is essentially for those in the far West of the region, as it is a 4 hour round trip to events held in Bovey Tracey. We meet bi-monthly at Heartlands, Pool, Camborne and have about 10-15 members who attend regularly. Of course anyone visiting the area are most welcome to join us.

We mainly meet to connect with other members in the area and to talk about all things photographic. We share ideas, working practices, study other photographers and encourage each other in a friendly, non-competitive environment.

We have had an interesting year that also included holding our own exhibition, within the Heartlands site, which had extremely good feedback. We are hoping to hold another one in 2020 and look forward to welcoming members from afar.

We anticipate that the group will continue to provide a variety of subjects of interest to those in the area and look forward to another successful year.

4. RPS SW Region Print folios (Margaret Hocking ARPS)

There continue to be three print folios in circulation in the region with 7 to 9 members in each. Two of them are general – in other words members can submit anything and the third is purely mono, but I would remind you that this can be digital *or* analogue. The images are sent round the relevant circle in a bag either by hand or by post. Folio members enjoy commenting on each others prints and seeing the comments on their own work. These are a critique, not a judgement and although people make their views known it is always done in a friendly way. There is room for a few more members; if you are interested please contact me on bosrowynek@btinternet.com. Any folio members present today will, I am sure, be happy to answer any questions you may have.