



Secretary's Report for AGM 2021

Duncan Locke LRPS

Last year's AGM, originally planned for the 4th April 2020 had to be postponed due to the Covid-19 restrictions. Later in the year, a short on-line AGM was held on the 31st October 2020 as part of the Chairman's Day; the Minutes of this Meeting were published in the Group eNews No. 12, February 2021.

The Committee had already successfully trialled the use of video meetings using Zoom before the Covid-19 restrictions came into place. Between the 20th April 2020 and the 1st March 2021, we have had 11 well attended Committee Meetings on Zoom including two specifically to discuss the Update of the Group Regulations.

Historically the Committee normally had two face-to-face all day meetings a year plus a third shorter meeting after the AGM. Moving to on-line meetings has resulted in greater flexibility as to when Meetings are held plus a big reduction in the mileage driven by Committee Members to attend them. The Group has made considerable financial savings in the cost of room hire and expenses and at the same time reduced the Group's carbon footprint.

Going forward, Committee Meetings will continue to be held on Zoom at about 6 to 8 weeks intervals unless there is an opportunity for the Committee to meet face-to-face, such as following the AGM. Once Covid-19 restrictions are over, I expect that face-to-face AGMs will resume at Smethwick as it is central and provides an excellent venue for the print Exhibition.

There have been no changes to the Committee during the year. We did not have a full-time Treasurer and so David O'Neill continued to act as both Vice Chairman and Honorary Treasurer. Ralph Snook, in addition to being Exhibition Secretary, also acted as Webmaster for both the Group pages on the RPS website and for the Nature Group Galleries website, which he created in the middle of last year and provides an excellent platform for Members to show their images. It can be found on:

<https://www.nggalleries.net/>

Ann Miles, as Programme Coordinator has kept the Events and News sections of our Group pages on the RPS website up-to-date.

I hope that Group Members are aware that we have a Facebook Group administered by Julia Wainwright, for you to share images and information about your nature photography. So please join the Group (you will need your RPS membership number), which can be found on:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/188690442327099/>

In September 2020, the Committee put a considerable amount of work into updating the Regulations that govern the operation of the Group. The previous Regulations had not been updated since December 2006 and were in urgent need of updating to reflect the move to more on-line communication, staff changes at the RPS, increasing Group membership and to update financial procedures such as the declining use of cheques. The updated, October 2020 Regulations, were approved by Group Members at the AGM on the 31st October 2020.

Communication between the Committee and the Group Members is an issue. The Iris is our longest serving communication and the only item sent by post to ensure that it reaches all Members; we have no plans to change this. However, the bulk of the Group's day to day communication is by e-mail and website and it is important that those Members who do have e-mail addresses, but have not registered them with the RPS, do so if they want to receive up-to-date information on Group activities.

I act as Membership Secretary in that I monitor the number of Members in the Group and send a welcome letter and a copy of the latest issue of The Iris to each New Member. The membership of the Group as of the 1st March 2021 was 919. This compares with 905 Members on the 1st March 2020. Over that period 176 New Members joined the Group and 163 Members left. This represents a turnover of close to 20%, which I find surprisingly high.

As of the 1st March 2021, the Group had 860 Members in the UK, Eire, the Isle of Man and Channel Islands plus 59 overseas Members. The biggest overseas Group is in the USA (12 Members), but they are well spread out.

As I said at last year's AGM, I believe that the aim of the Group is to inspire and educate its Members into taking better images of the natural world and so we must organise events for Members to get together – Covid-19 restrictions permitting – and develop their nature photography. We now have an ever growing programme of Field Meetings, Workshops and Residential Weekends. Even with periods of lockdown in 2020, we managed to run nine Field Meetings.

Ann Miles is doing an excellent job of organising events, but we can always fit in more especially in those parts of the country where none are held at present. So please think about whether you could organise an event that would be of interest to Group Members and talk to Ann.

Finally, the 2022 Spring Meeting, AGM and opening of the Annual Exhibition will, I very much hope be at Smethwick Photographic Society, in April 2022 (date to be advised). In the mean time, stay safe and hopefully by the time the summer comes, we will be less restricted in our photographic opportunities.

Duncan Locke LRPS
10th April 2021