

# RPS Contemporary Group

## Annual General Meeting 2021

Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> March 9.30am by videoconference via Zoom

Minutes: Romney Tansley

### 1. Welcome and apologies.

There were 36 members present. The Chair, Alan Cameron welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies for absence were noted from Sean Goodhart.

### 2. Minutes of the AGM 15th March 2020

The minutes were agreed, as proposed by Paul Ashley, and seconded by Ken Holland. There were no matters arising.

### 3. Reports

Chair

It seems only yesterday that I had the privilege of taking over as Chair of the Contemporary Group at the end of Avril Harris's long tenure.

AGM 2020

After last year's the AGM we heard from the wonderful Teresa Eng who shared her very personal and traumatic story of an attack on her in Calais. With violence against women so much in the news, listening to so personal a story was difficult but I believe is necessary, as such things have been and continue to be hidden to the detriment of our society. Her other fascinating stories were about her trips to China, the place and the young people who live there and how social media have shaped their behaviour. We were unable to shake hands at the time because of concerns of what was heading our way just a week later.

Reacting to the pandemic

What we've experienced in the last year has been world altering. The isolation has been felt by many and I certainly did. My late winter mild Seasonal Affective Disorder became an isolation lassitude that took me some time to shake off. This meant a slower than ideal start to my time as Chair.

By early summer the Committee had determined that we should take action to use the opportunities presented to us by modern technology. In some ways our freedom to associate

pre-pandemic had tended to limit our horizons to how we had met in the past. Suddenly the shackles of past thinking were removed. Could we actually come out the end the pandemic in a better state than we entered it? This led to two activities at a Group level, our blogs and the online talks and online meetings within our sub-groups.

### Blogs

I would like to thank all 27 contributors (at the time of writing) to our series of Blogs during the pandemic, but particular mention goes to two people without whom this would not have been such a success. Avijit Datta FRSA FLS FTSP, our retiring Deputy Chair (see below) has worked with Webmaster Sean Goodhart ARPS to bring us a widely read set of blogs. I said in an email to Avijit, "The variety of input that you and Sean have gathered and posted has been in turns amazing, touching, informative and insightful." I can't think of a better way to put it.

### Online Talks

The committee suggested that we needed to increase our online presence through free talks and I took that on with some, unfounded, trepidation. In setting these up I have tried to avoid the cliché of using all male middle class men of a certain age and I intend to continue to try to inject some diversity into the mix. We have had some household names such as Chris Steele-Perkins HonFRPS and Paul Hill but also among others young Egyptian photographer Rehab Eldalil too. Coming up is your British photographer Donna Bridgewater who will talk about her Getting Through This project. I will continue to widen my net as I really enjoy these talks. If you can think of any speakers please let me know.

### Publications and Social Media

I look forward to receiving our regular communications as I am sure do you all. Regular as clockwork Concept is posted on line and Contemporary Photography pops through my letterbox. The content comes in part from you the members, the regional organisers and the wider photographic world. I hope you find them stimulating, I certainly do, and all contributions are welcome,

The publications don't magically coalesce but are produced by the hard work of the teams - Paul Ashely LRPS and Brian Steptoe FRPS for Contemporary Photography and Romney Tansley ARPS and Ken Holland ARPS for Concept. I'd like to thank them all but I'll particularly mention Ken, who has been laying out Concept now for nearly three years, but who wishes now to relinquish the role. Ken is a member of the LRPS Distinctions Panel and has fitted our work into his busy schedule. We are in discussion with a potential replacement who should be in place by the autumn when Ken steps back.

Our website is expertly managed by Sean Goodhart ARPS who has seen us move to amongst the most visited Special Interest Group subsite within the RPS. He and the Facebook Group Moderators keep an eye on our social media presence including our Instagram account. Feel free to contribute.

### Online Exhibition

During the year we decided that an online exhibition should be mounted from Group Members. I'd like to thank everyone who submitted entries and to our selectors and collators of the work. Thanks go to David Grimshaw ARPS for organising the exhibition, Sean Goodhart ARPS for making it available on the Website <https://rps.org/groups/contemporary/exhibition2020/> and to selectors, Tessa Mills FRPS, Brian Steptoe FRPS and Sean Goodhart ARPS.

### Sub-Groups

We have a number of regional organisers who have also found new life in their groups thanks to Zoom. Regions tend to be large and so face to face meetings tend to attract only people closer to the venue. I predict that, as home working is becoming the norm, virtual meetings will be the dominant method for meeting, with fewer physical meetings.

I would like to thank the Regional Organisers for their time and to welcome Steff Hutchinson ARPS as regional organiser for the newly formed Central Region Joint Contemporary and Documentary Group.

If there is no regional group near you, why not consider volunteering? Contact me at [contemporary@rps.org](mailto:contemporary@rps.org) if you would like help to set up a group.

Finally I must thank Duncan Unsworth who organises the postal Portfolio Group who continue to circulate boxes as before. They have also started their own book club on Zoom and I'm told it's very popular.

### Membership

At the time of writing our Membership stands at 373 and I am pleased to say that the latest list shows an increase of 30 members since last March. I hope that our continued activity on the blogs, talks and publications will help us to continue our growth. Contemporary Photography isn't widely understood but I think the shorthand that our genre is about things rather than of them should make it attractive to many. Please help to spread the word.

### Committee

No voluntary organisation prospers without the work of its committee. I have already thanked the Regional Organisers, our Deputy Chair, Webmaster and editorial teams for their hard work but I also thank David Grimshaw ARPS our Honorary Treasurer who holds our purse strings.

Earlier I mentioned that Avijit Datta FRSA FLS FTFS is stepping down as Deputy Chair and for the best of reasons. He has recently been appointed a Trustee of the Society and has joined the board. I am sure Avijit that you will bring your energy, insight and commitment to bear to the benefit of all the Society's members.

Romney Tansley ARPS is not only Concept Editor he is also our Honorary Secretary and I thank him too for holding these dual responsibilities.

### The Next Year

With a fair wind and vaccines Covid should be under control in the near future and we can stop measuring our life in Lockdown Days. New technology has helped us continue to communicate and I hope that we can continue on this positive trajectory, continuing with its use while finally

being able to meet, remembering that there is scope for hybrids that allow us to widen our circle while holding physical meetings.

If I'm re-elected I will continue to carry out my duties including playing a part in the new governance structure of the Society. I am the conduit to the Management Board for group members and volunteers through the Standing Committee of SIGs and Regions and I will continue our interests as best I can.

Finally, I am here to listen. If you need to contact me my email address is above and is also available on the website. Thank you for your confidence in me last year and I look forward to working with and for you next year.

Alan Cameron LRPS

Chair

## Financial Report, 2020

For: AGM on 27<sup>th</sup> March 2021, convened via video conference.

### Introduction

This report covers the calendar (financial) year 2020: the year of the Covid-19 pandemic with consequent challenges for meetings and travelling.

### Banking Issues at RPS

The RPS have reviewed the banking process and have decided to combine all SIG and group accounts into one. In practice we still have a “virtual account” that we control and report on. The possibility of moving to a more ethical bank is still under consideration.

Currently there is an electronic system of sharing bank statements and transaction spreadsheets, thus avoiding posting paper copies. Electronic copies will be available from 2019 onwards by any future treasurer using the generic email address:

[contemporarytreasurer@rps.org](mailto:contemporarytreasurer@rps.org)

### Summary of Key Facts

- At 31<sup>st</sup> December 2019 there was a closing balance of £11032.85
- At 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020 there was a closing balance of £12170.49
- Total income for 2020 was: £7019.40 (see Table 1 for details).
- Total expenditure for 2020 was: £5911.76 (see Table 2 for details).
- Net surplus for 2020 was: £1107.64

### Commentary on 2020 Financial Position

The accounts are in a healthy state. More activities have been arranged but due to travel and meeting restrictions we have used digital platforms thereby reducing travel costs. This has also had a positive effect of reducing our carbon emissions.

### Outlook for 2021 Financial Position

We start the year with a higher balance compared to the start of 2020. The main risk to our finances remains a potential decline in members. It is vital to keep the membership numbers and try to find ways to energise and involve everyone. We can feel comfortable continuing to use video conferencing for meetings. The online exhibition could be repeated with an allowance for software to facilitate easier uploading of images.

**Table 1: Analysis of Income**

	Admin (blank)	Financing	Grand Total
Life Member Subs		£120.00	£120.00
VAT refund (blank)	£29.89	£27.49	£57.38
Member Subs		£6,872.02	£6,872.02
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>£29.89</b>	<b>£7,019.51</b>	<b>£7,049.40</b>

**Notes:**

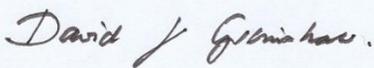
1. Member subs represent 97.5% of income.

**Table 2: Analysis of Expenditure**

	Admin	Publications (blank)	Financing	Events in current year	Committee	Grand Total
Postage		£1,722.75				£1,722.75
Printing		£2,823.22				£2,823.22
Travel (blank)				£72.23	£388.70	£460.93
VAT payment			£0.58			£0.58
Lecturers Fees & Expenses				£350.00		£350.00
Subsistence					£12.88	£12.88
Accommodation					£231.95	£231.95
Stationery		£151.18				£151.18
Software	£158.27					£158.27
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>£158.27</b>	<b>£4,697.15</b>	<b>£0.58</b>	<b>£422.23</b>	<b>£633.53</b>	<b>£5,911.76</b>

**Notes:**

1. The cost of the Journal (postage and printing) represents 76.9% of expenditure.
2. Software costs are a new entry this year and are mainly to cover video conferencing.



18/03/2021

Dr David J. Grimshaw MA, ARPS

**RPS Contemporary Group Treasurer** E: contemporarytreasurer@rps.org

## Secretary

Since last year's AGM held in Bristol, all Contemporary Group activities have been conducted virtually, mostly via Zoom. This has forced on us the need to embrace the new skills required for communication and debate by videoconferencing. The result has been a series of four meetings, under Alan's chairmanship, over the past year via Zoom which have all been highly effective in terms of attendance and quality of debate.

There has been a welcome new addition to the membership of the Committee during the year, Steff Hutchinson, who chairs the new Contemporary & Documentary Central group.

One highly effective activity of the Contemporary Group is the RPS Contemporary Facebook group. It is a popular group with a membership of not far short of 800 which is steadily on the rise. I am an Admin of the group along with three other of my Committee colleagues. Membership is open to all comers. Applicants are asked only to answer a couple of questions. This has resulted in a diverse membership and an interestingly varied selection of postings every day.

I have been Secretary for one year now. I service the Committee by helping plan the agenda, taking and communicating minutes and setting up the AGM. I'm grateful to my colleagues for their support over the year as I've gradually found my feet during a testing time.

Romney Tansley,

Secretary

## Contemporary Photography journal

Four issues of *RPS Contemporary Photography* have been published since the last AGM; in fact, the first issue after the last AGM (Spring 2020) showed work by Teresa Eng, who spoke at the AGM itself. As a reminder, I have listed here the main contributors to each issue.

Judy Goldhill & Fay Ballard	<i>Travelling Companions</i>
Bharat Patel	<i>Hijras, Red Sari White Sari</i>
Teresa Eng	<i>Self/Portrait</i>
Luis Cobelo	<i>Chas Chas</i>
Agnieszka Sosnowska	<i>Myth of a Woman</i>
Paul Hill	<i>Richard Sadler</i>
Moussa Kalapo	<i>Other Worlds</i>
Elizabeth Cowle	<i>Behind Every Mask</i>
Sam Gregg	<i>See Naples and Die</i>
John Evans-Jones	<i>Trail Talk</i>
Daniel Niedermeier & Jan A Staiger	<i>Simili Modo</i>

Farshid Tighehsaz	<i>From Labyrinth</i>
Nadja Ellinger	<i>Path of Pins</i>
Meg Jackson	<i>Subject 01</i>
Sine Zheng	<i>Wild Dwelling</i>
Noel Bowler	<i>Above the Fold</i>
Armando Jongejan	<i>The Battle of Hürtgen Forest</i>
Dafna Talmor	<i>Constructed Landscapes</i>
Mykolas Juodele	<i>Fragile Peace on Nagorno-Karabakh</i>
Shahria Sharmin	<i>When Home Won't Let You Stay</i>

I am grateful to all these contributors who willingly offer their work for inclusion in the journal (for free!). In my four years as editor, I can remember three people who have declined my invitation, and perhaps another three who did not respond to my inquiry.

The covid-19 epidemic has had little impact on the preparation and production of the journal except that it limits the research I can carry out: gone, for the moment, are my enjoyable explorations of obscure galleries, visits to photo festivals, or, especially, the annual *Free Range* graduate shows in London. I am grateful for the suggestions from a number of group members pointing me to photographers whose work I should look at, and I would welcome more – please keep your eye open among the photographers you know. All I ask is to encounter someone with a fresh idea, the creativity to express it, and the craft to turn it into a memorable body of work!

Paul Ashley, Editor

## Concept e-newsletter

I have been editing Concept for a little over a year. It is published every two months, and is the result of a collaborative effort between myself and Ken Holland. Ken does the layout and design, while I handle all the editing including liaison with contributors, and the commissioning of articles.

All of this involves a close working relationship between us, requiring good communication. I am pleased to say that we have worked really well together and I continue to be grateful to Ken for all his positivity and for being a great colleague.

Some of the regional groups have unfortunately been forced to reduce their activities during lockdown. It's clearly not always been easy to migrate meetings online. Overall this has meant a reduction in the number of reports for publication. However it's also allowed a greater amount of space for features. Up to now this has always been restricted to our own members. But with the increasing collaboration between the Contemporary and the Documentary groups I'm pleased to say that we will increasingly be publishing features from that membership too.

We want Concept to represent the life of the Contemporary group in all its facets, including our collaborations with the Documentary group. The principle focus in the past has been mostly on the reports of the meetings and activities of the regional groups. But it is important that it also acts as a showcase for the photographic projects of members.

It's important to say therefore that I am always keen to receive offers of articles from members about their work in all its aspects. Help and advice of course is always on offer too when this would be welcome.

Romney Tansley, Editor

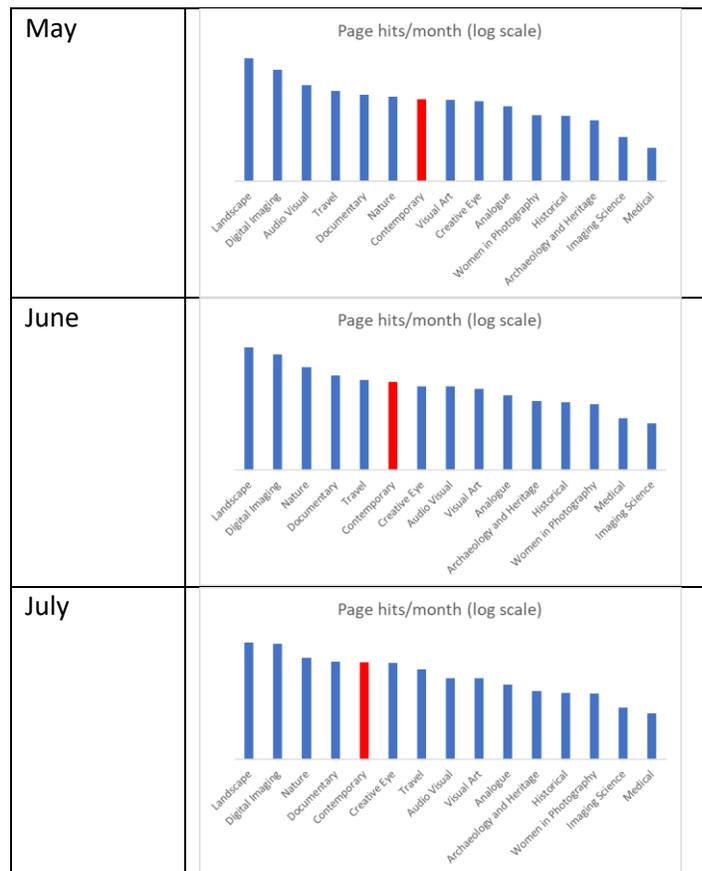
## Webmaster

<https://rps.org/groups/contemporary/>

We've made a massive effort since the last AGM – at the time of writing we have published a series of 27 blogs highlighting people's experiences through the COVID-19 pandemic, a great effort from Avijit Datta ([avijit.datta@rps.org](mailto:avijit.datta@rps.org) with a little help from me [contemporaryweb@rps.org](mailto:contemporaryweb@rps.org)).

The graphs below show the page visits for the SIG's microsites on rps.org. We clearly made a massive jump through all the blogging work. It's clear that web engagement is clearly driven by new content. Taking a look at progression since our last review of page-hits in May – just before we started the COVID-19 blog series through to the most recent statistics I have received (December 2020) it's clear we've moved up the ranking in terms of the number of page visits. If we were to scale the data according to SIG size it would be even more clear that we're making an impact.

Many of the blogs have been featured on the rps.org homepage. An article on the blogs appeared in the recent Concept <https://rps.org/media/ud2jhedl/concept-2021-02.pdf> (page 26-27)



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Another significant amount of web development time work this year has been the presentation of our Contemporary Exhibition 2020, <https://rps.org/groups/contemporary/exhibition2020/> . The call for participation and the management of the images was managed by our Treasurer, David Grimshaw [contemporarytreasurer@rps.org](mailto:contemporarytreasurer@rps.org).

<https://www.instagram.com/rpscontemporary/>

Growth continues, these are the figures as of today 14<sup>th</sup> March 2021.

	images posted	followers
October 2018	14	80
March 2019	22	638
March 2020	41	1142
July 2020	50	1183
October 2020	64	1241
March 2021	86	1348

If anyone spots a great contemporary photographer on Instagram please let me know and I can link to one of their images and share to our community.

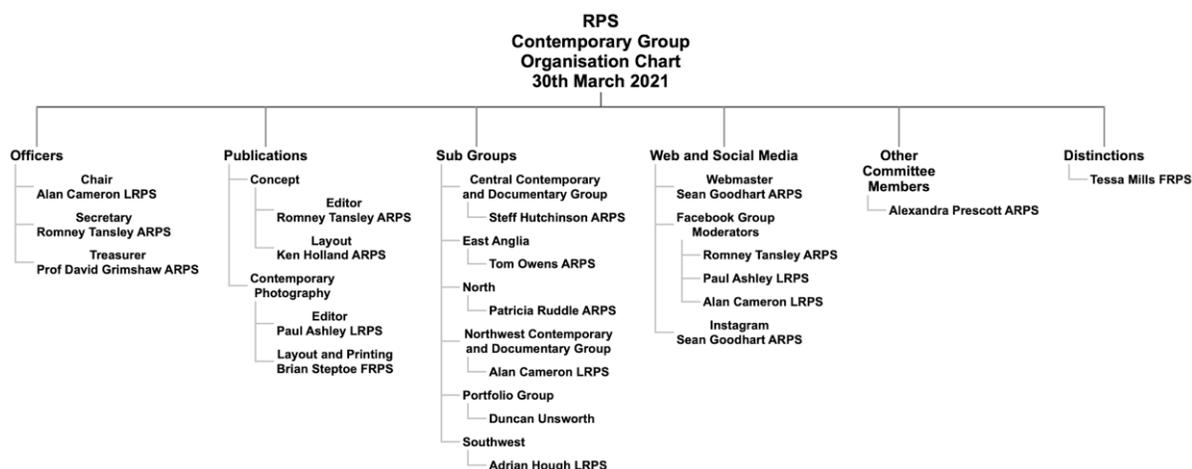
Sean Goodhart

Webmaster

## 4. Election of the Officers and the Committee

Separate elections were held (using the Zoom Polling function) for each of the three officers and for all nominated as Committee members. This resulted in an overwhelming 'yes' vote in all cases, barring a small number of 'no' votes and abstentions, the present three officers all retaining their posts.

The personnel and roles of the Committee are now as follows:



## 5. Regional reports

## Southwest Contemporary Group report

In common with our activities during 2019, The Southwest Contemporary Group again met three times during 2020 with a typical attendance of around ten members at each meeting.

However, in common with just about everything else this year, our life was very different. Whilst our first meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> March was held in person and we enjoyed the usual and excellent buffet lunch and poured over prints from both the darkroom and computer, all was about to change. When Ken Holland and I attended the National Contemporary AGM in Bristol on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> March I didn't realise that I had just one more day in the office before spending my remaining nine months of employment sitting at home. I thought that 'Zoom' was an ice-lolly from the 1960s.

However, Zoom came to the rescue. Indeed, Zoom seems to have transformed participation in many aspects of the life of the RPS. A year ago who would have thought that the Society would be attracting three hundred participants to talks every week and that a hundred or more would attend our RPS talks in the south-west. It has to be said that our own Southwest Contemporary efforts were rather more modest with ten people turning up to share their images and ponder their meaning and significance.

We've had aerial photography, something on Wuhan, Covid in Australia, social distancing in Cornwall and rainbows in Teignmouth. We've been to Greenland, travelled on the top deck of buses and even spied on our neighbours (well, one of us has). We've explored Art Galleries as Art, been to prison and a concentration camp and written limericks on walls. We've seen the seedy side of Tenerife, chased shadows, visited IKEA and wondered how one person's set of furniture has remained assembled given the number of spare parts left over for them to photograph. We've been to Whitby, confused ourselves by trying to work out what constitutes a landscape and even been to the End of The World (it's in Switzerland in case you wondered) during a lull between the first and second waves.

What will we do next, who knows! However, we will certainly enjoy finding out.

Adrian Hough LRPS

## East Anglia Contemporary Group report

A planned public exhibition as part of Photo East 2020 in Ipswich Town Hall for May 2020 suffered from Lockdown 1. No attempt has been made to re-book with public spaces still being subject to access constraints through serial lockdowns.

Virtual meetings are taking place monthly via Zoom which is has to said is more frequent than physical meetings ever were so this is a positive thing.

Meetings will continue like this for the foreseeable future.

Tom Owens ARPS

East Anglia Group Coordinator

## Contemporary & Documentary Central Group report

This was set up last summer, and has met monthly since September via Zoom. We have about 25 photographers on our mailing list at present, and are always open to more. There is a core of about 8-10 people who meet every month, and others join whenever they are able.

So far we have been enjoying sharing our work with each other, with 3 or 4 members sharing a small portfolio of work at each meeting. We are just about to embark on a new phase, with each member suggesting an activity we can share over the coming months. This could be a shared theme to photograph, an article to read and discuss, or perhaps a photographer to research and spark ideas and conversation.

For some of our members, the group has rekindled their interest in photography and for others it has provided a regular place to talk about their passion.

Steff Hutchinson

## Contemporary North Group report

Despite the many hardships caused by Covid-19, Contemporary North has flourished. Thanks to the use of Zoom we have been able to host monthly meetings without the constraints of geographical borders. With an average of 26 members attending, we have enjoyed the participation of members from around the UK and the EU. This has included getting five new members for the CG (with two new to the RPS) as a result of our open boundaries.

There have been two other significant highlights. We now have our own platform on the CG webpage, *Contemporary North Newsletters*. It has given us the opportunity to share our meetings with the entire CG membership.

This March see the publication of our book *2020 Vision*, which contains diverse projects by 14 members during quarantine. Simon Hill, RPS President, who has written the Foreword, has asked for a copy for the RPS Library.

As organiser, I want to say thank you to our members who have worked together to make us a thriving, inclusive subgroup. Our success has been the result of teamwork.

Patricia Ruddle

## Postal Portfolio report

Apart from the continued circulation of postal portfolio boxes we have been meeting regularly online during the past year. The meetings now alternate between those reviewing work by each other and a

'book club' where we discuss the images and ideas of a chosen photobook, such as Sally Mann's 'Hold Still'.

As always new members to the postal portfolio would be welcome. Please contact: [duncan.unsworth100@gmail.com](mailto:duncan.unsworth100@gmail.com) for more information.

Duncan Unsworth

## Contemporary & Documentary NW Group report

In a difficult year we have had more meetings with more attendees than we had before lockdown. Since last AGM our group has met ten times on line.

The reason for the increased number of meetings is simply that we are now meeting on line, initially through Webex but since last October using Zoom. The continued impositions of lockdown make our meetings a welcome chance to interact with people we only see at our meetings. Moving the meetings online has meant that remote members such as Keith Launchbury FRPS have been able to join virtually whereas face to face meetings are too far for him to travel. Other members were very reluctant to join us on line but have been persuaded to contribute and they are now enjoying this approach.

As numbers have been low I discussed the possibility of creating a joint group with members of the Documentary SIG. Since December we have had ten people on our calls including a previous member of Contemporary NW who has now rejoined our SIG and is thinking of working towards his Fellowship.

Discussions have been wide ranging and it is interesting to see work from two members which overlaps. We have had some lockdown images including such things as empty Blackpool Promenades, blocked towpaths in Salford, captured images from the past, containers in all settings and lines of silicone gloves hanging out to dry.

Our pandemic has been stimulating and interesting and I thank everyone for continuing to attend.

While we look forward to a time when we can venture out into the world with fewer restrictions, I think the model for the future in our region will be to have most meetings on line with fewer, more activity based, face to face meetings around the region.

Alan Cameron LRPS  
Regional Organiser

## **6. Adoption of the proposed Constitution**

This was proposed by Adrian Hough and seconded by Tom Owens and unanimously agreed subject to the following motion proposed by Adrian Hough and Tom Owens: That if the new By-Laws of The Society, as approved at today's EGM or as amended by Privy Council, result in the name of any committee or similar body of The Society being different from that contained in the Constitution of the Contemporary Group whilst still serving the same function, then any such reference in the said Constitution shall be suitably amended without any need for further consultation.

This was unanimously agreed.

## **7. Any other business**

Alan mentioned that Stewart Wall runs a Contemporary Group within East Midlands Region. He will discuss bringing the East Midlands group within our structure.

There being no further business, Ken Holland seconded by Romney Tansley, thanked Alan Cameron for chairing the meeting and for his work for the Group over the past year.

The meeting was brought to a close.