



ROYAL PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY

Contemporary North

A Subgroup of the RPS Contemporary
Group

March 2022

Report of the Zoom meeting. Saturday
19th March 2022, 1:30-4:00 PM.

Text: **Gary Morgan**

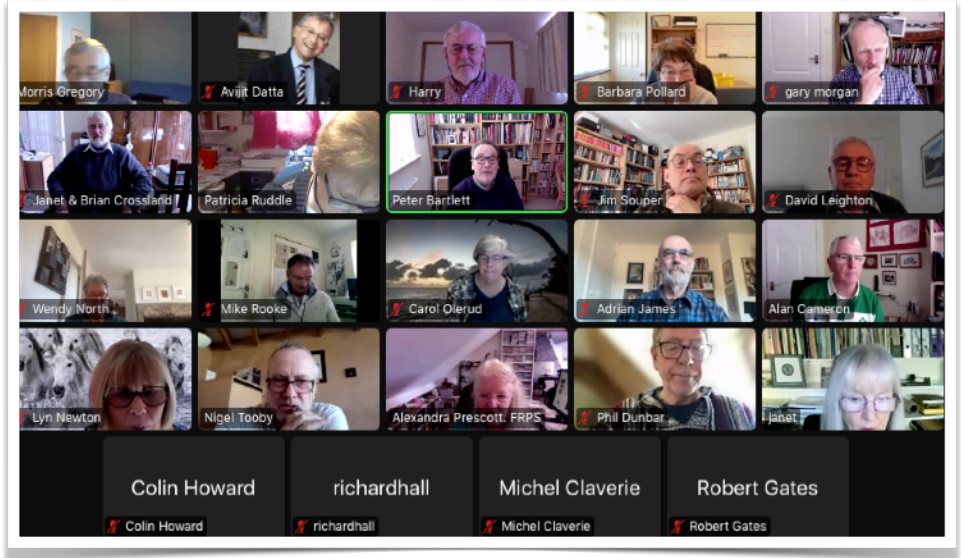
Coordination and editing: **Patricia Ruddle**

Layout and design: **Wendy North**

Zoom hosted by: **Morris Gregory**

Although the restrictions around
Coronavirus continue to be relaxed, this is a
Zoom meeting thereby enabling us spread
our net a little wider.

A total of 25 people attended with ten
apologies.



Prabir Mitra intended to talk about his photographs taken on the Silk Road but had cancelled because he's currently in Poland providing medical help to the Ukrainians.

As you know, at the last meeting **André Bergmans** gave us the talk about "the iconic image". Has anyone tried the exercise that he set? If so, then what is the feedback? Could we discuss this in a later meeting? André is currently testing his concept with a camera club in Holland and we hope that he'll update us on the success of the idea.

We should also mention that **André** has adopted *Photography for Everyone*, organising several workshops for the local psychiatric hospital. You can find out more at the following link.

https://rps.org/media/45bcfdbg/rps_photography_for_everyone_29_4_21.pdf

The results will be presented at an outdoor exhibition. André and *Photography for All* are an inspiration. It's tempting to ask if there's anything that the rest of our group can do...

André's work on the prison cell in *Hotel Orange*, which he presented to us a few months ago, has been made into booklet and the *Nationaal Monument Oranjehotel Museum* will publish it to sell in their shop.

<https://www.oranjehotel.org/en/>

New members

We were joined for the first time by **Michel Claverie** from Reading. He's a recent member of the RPS – checking us out!

Announcements

The big news is that the Contemporary Group's magazine *Concept* is back! The new editor is **Suzi Darse** and design and layout are by our very own **Christine Pinnington**. Please let's all support *Concept* by submitting items on books, shows, talks and whatever else you have that is relevant.

The first issue will be published at beginning of May and the deadline for articles is April 11th. Please send submissions to **Suzi Darse**.

suzidarsa@gmail.com

Currently we need to use her private email address, although this will change to an RPS address when one is available.

Also, don't forget to check

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

to see what upcoming events there are.

Our Dutch member, **Carol Olerud**, is giving a talk about her Fellowship panel on April 25th. You can find out more at the following link.

<https://rps.org/events/groups/contemporary/2022/april/18-days-a-time-of-great-sadness/>

Last but not least, please come to the CG AGM on April 2nd. Full details can be found at

<https://rps.org/events/groups/contemporary/2022/april/contemporary-sig-agm-2022/>

After the AGM there's a talk by Scottish photographer **Peter Cairns**, followed by CG members' contribution to the theme of *Recycle, Reuse or Repurpose*. You can find out more here.

<https://rps.org/events/groups/contemporary/2022/april/reform-recycle-reuse-or-repurpose/>



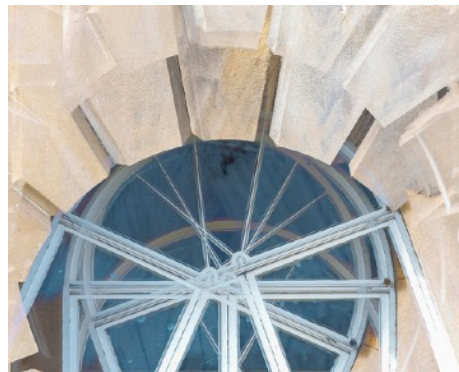
Wendy North - Discovering Connections: 'The Huskar Pit Disaster'

Wendy showed us a concertina book she had made. She used some photographs of Wentworth Castle Gardens that she'd shown us at the November meeting.

<https://issuu.com/royalphotographicsociety/docs/cn-november-2021>

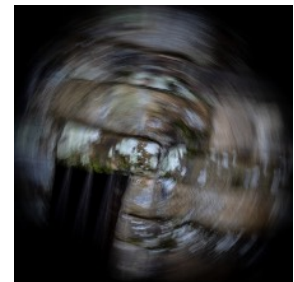
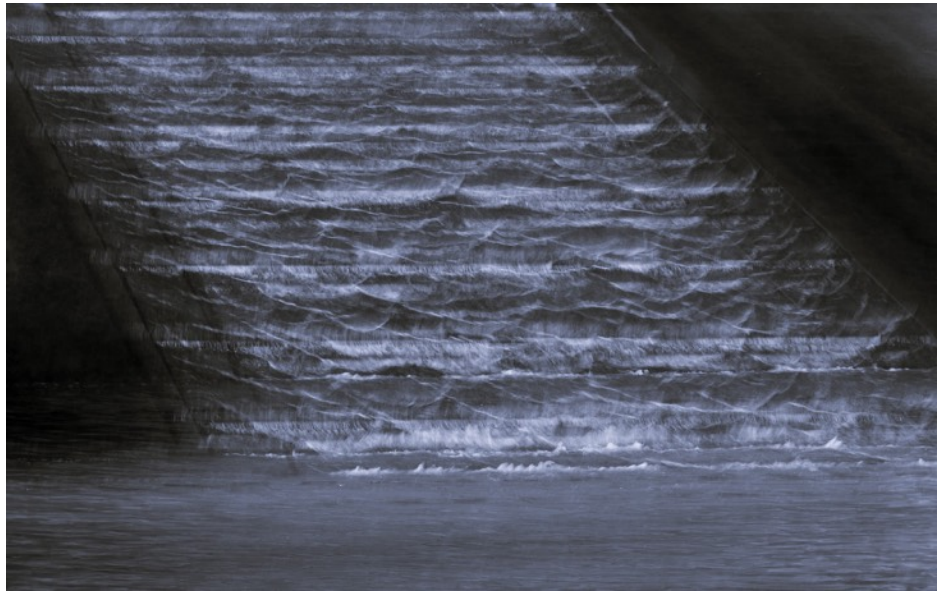
Many of the photographs were multiple exposure experiments but reminded her of pithead wheels, especially as her grandfather was a miner. This thought subsequently inspired her to link the initial project to the Huskar Pit Disaster.

<https://penistonearchive.co.uk/huskar-pit->



Wendy lives in the upper catchment area of the Rivers Dove and Dearne where occasional flash rain storms can cause roads and dried up streams to become surging torrents. In 1838 a storm caused flooding that was so great the furnace for the winding machine at a nearby mine was extinguished meaning that the lifting gear no longer worked. The miners, including child labour, were asked to stay put below, but some children panicked and went through a tunnel to the Huskar Pit in order to escape.

The pictures attempted to convey the darkness of underground. The children were trapped by a closed ventilation door, where water accumulation caused their deaths.



The children (and adults) were working underground to build up someone else's finances and this money was used to build the grand houses that the owners lived in. Wendy had images of the owner's expensive houses next to those of dark statues hinting of deaths in the dark throwing into relief the inequalities of this system.

Writing in my blog on 9 March 2022

'A seed of an idea might be developing ... that I can use some of my in-camera multiple exposure images in a project that has wealth at its centre but impacts most strongly on those who have nothing. ...I thought about the inescapable tragedy endured by a local community when a flash flood accounted for the lives of 26 children who were drowned while underground. So whereas 'the rich man in his castle' could afford to indulge himself with a magnificent home and a show of his wealth (built on the proceeds of coal-mining and slavery) the poor of the district, some as young as seven, laboured away underground and risked their lives and health just to put a small amount of food on their table. I'm not sure I can pull this off as a visual idea at the moment, so I need to think about it. It will probably need to have two contrasting sides. '

Wendy North

<https://www.blipfoto.com/viewpoint>

Queen Victoria heard of the accident and a commission stopped women and children working underground. However, this caused a loss of income for the families involved forcing children instead to work in the textile industry, which was also poorly regulated and, on the whole, also used to line someone else's pockets.

**Ann Moss Aged 9 Years.
2nd Grave,
Elizabeth Hollings Aged 15 Years.
Ellen Parker Aged 15 Years.
Hannah Taylor Aged 17 Years.
3rd Grave,
Mary Sellors Aged 10 Years.
Elizabeth Clarkson Aged 11 Years.
She lies at the feet of her Brother James Clarkson.
Sarah Newton Aged 8 Years.
Sarah Jukes Aged 10 Years.**



One of the most significant factors in influencing the direction that this project took was the explanation given by Tessa Mills when she unpicked the differences that she saw between the Contemporary and Documentary approach. Her description was so much more meaningful to Wendy because of its emphasis on capturing the 'emotion' of the subject.



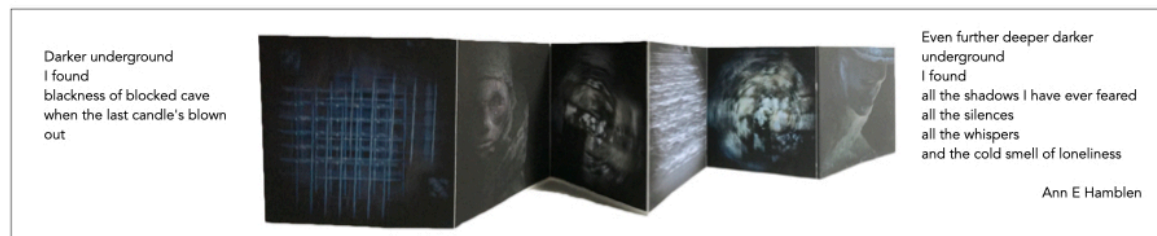
Tessa Mills responds to the question, 'what might be looked for in Contemporary Photography ...'

I agree you can't tie the name (of contemporary) down as a formula

We want the genre to be as open as possible. We're looking for emotional thoughts, we're looking for visual metaphor.

It's important that we read the images as the photographer presents them to us and not look for what we expect to see.

... I think the excitement comes when the work we see gives us a surprise, gives us something to think about, gives us the thoughts of the photographer so that we can learn what the photographer is sharing with us as well as appreciating how they have shown us.



Transcribed from the discussion, 'Challenging the status quo' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=46TDp917iml>

The comments by **Tessa Mills**, current Chair of the Contemporary Group, are transcribed from *Challenging the Status Quo*, a panel discussion on Contemporary Photography organised and hosted by **Avijit Datta**. The event was a celebration of the 80th birthday of the founding Chair **Paul Hill** MBE.





Peter Bartlet

Peter gave a presentation called *You Can't Park Here*. It was inspired by an Instagram account called *NoParkingLondon*.

<https://www.instagram.com/explore/tags/noparkinglondon/>

Peter wanted to expand upon this theme, collecting images of the frustrating signs that forbid one from parking when arriving in a strange place. He showed us examples of no parking signs but with a car parked across the sign, manufactured and hand-written signs – many in an advanced state of decay. At the moment it's a work-in-progress and will continue to grow. Peter's web site is here

<https://www.peterbartlettimages.co.uk/index.html>



David Leighton

David is involved with Bingley's Little Theatre. He had hoped to share his photos with us and get advice. However, technical troubles prevented this. He was able to show us three photos from productions of *The Darling Buds of May*, *Death of a Salesman* and *Dry Rot*. Included here to give us a taste of what's to come at our next meeting.







Alan Cameron

Alan is the Chair of the Contemporary Group and joined the meeting to show us his latest book project, called *Twelve is Still Here*. It documents the lockdown experiences of his favourite restaurant, which is called *Twelve*. His objective was to record how *Twelve* stayed in business during the pandemic. Therefore, he asked the owners if he could record changes to the restaurant in the period July 2020 to November 2021. They agreed and he was allowed to photograph in any part of the restaurant, provided that masks were worn and tests performed.

Initially, Alan wanted to make the book twelve chapters of twelve images and to include interviews with staff and customers. Paul (one of the restaurant's co-owners) suggested also including recipes and the Head Chef was kind enough to produce six recipes resulting in a final book of three sections: images, interviews and recipes.

One of the problems in photographing in a restaurant is the low light level. Alan used a Canon EOS-R camera and found it to have excellent performance at high ISO only occasionally needing a flash and diffuser. *Lightroom* and *Sharpen AI* were also used to enhance the images.





The *Affinity Publisher* software was used to lay out the book and *Mixam Printers* were used to produce the paper copy.

Initially, the book was mocked up in order to verify text, image quality, sequencing, etc. before being printed A4, using 200 gsm semi-gloss paper inside and 300gsm covers. The result was 124 pages long and £10 per copy for an initial run of 30 copies.

The book was launched in the restaurant at an event where the people in the book were invited along with their friends and members of the local camera club. Copies were sold, with a discretionary price tag, and the takings donated to the *Trinity Hospice* in Blackpool.





You can find out more about the restaurant at

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



Alan considered submitting the book for an Associate, but wasn't sure which Distinction. Should it be Contemporary or Documentary, prints or book? The consensus in the meeting was that the Documentary category probably worked best.

Alan then described some of his experiences with an RPS review as a book for feedback. The reviewer said that it contained too many images pointing out that a lot of images makes it more likely that the assessors will find images that they don't like. He was also advised that a digital submissions can be a problem because assessors use high-resolution projectors which can result in "pixel snooping".

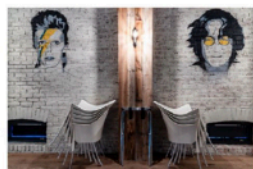


Richard Hall (who is on the new Book Distinction panel) was disappointed with Alan's experience with the RPS. The idea that you need to have a small selection of images, better suited to a panel, is not what they are trying to achieve. Richard said that you should not be frightened of too many images, but that you must also be careful of making the book too long. Not all images need to be blockbusters, some images are "punctuation", but technically poor images will stick out. Richard's own ARPS book contained 178 images, for example.

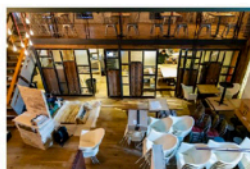
ASSOCIATE Presentation Layout



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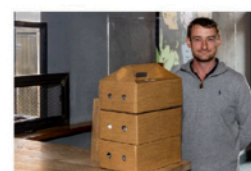
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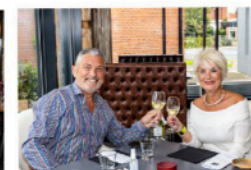
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Applicant Name: Alan Cameron

Membership Number: 57471

Assessment Date: 30th March 2022

Genre: Documentary

Alan decided that he would submit these 15 prints rather than a book for his ARPS and today we are able to congratulate him on his successful submission. We're pleased it worked out well for you Alan Cameron ARPS.



Barbara Pollard

Barbara Pollard showed us a 5-minute video that she had recently created for her local camera club. Although a keen photographer, she had been criticised for snapping without intent. In response she took related photos working around a canal area looking at the detail of the boats and their surroundings.

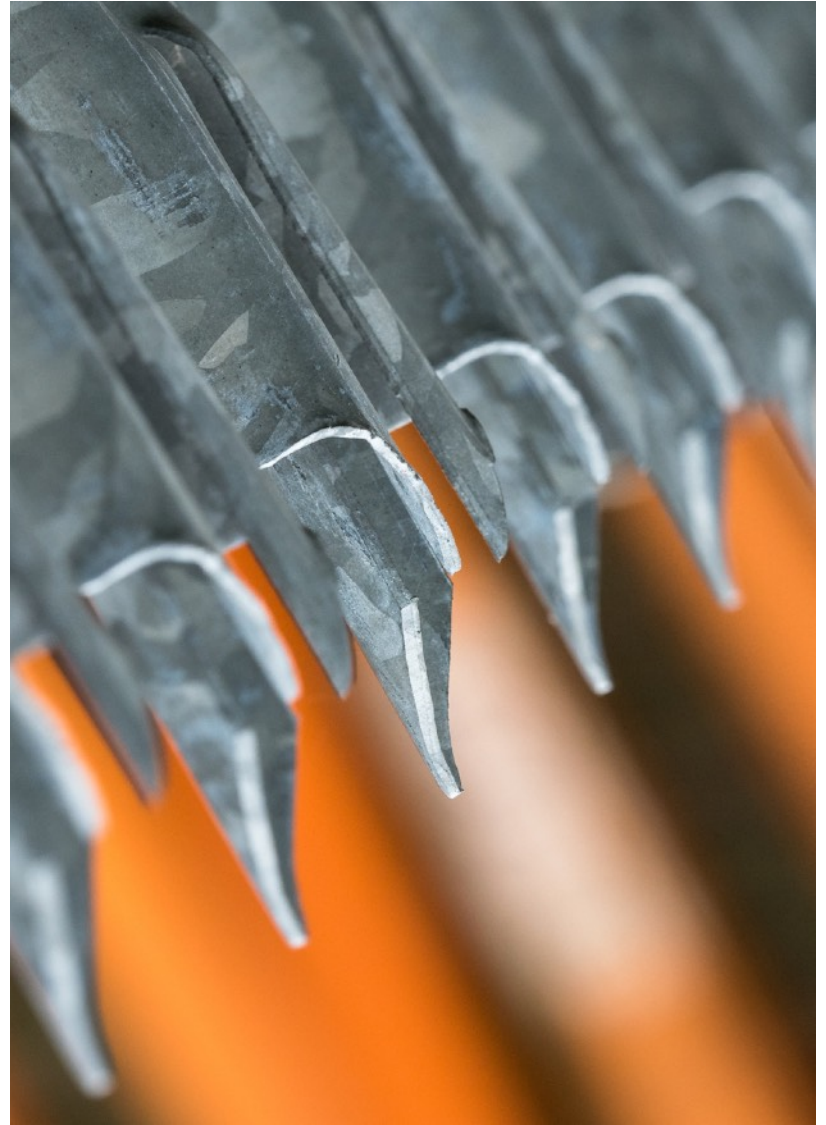




The area she chose was the Rochdale Canal at Hebden Bridge. She showed us many images of canal boats, their fittings and the decorations applied to them. Although not explicitly mentioned, a theme of rust and decay, peeling paint, antiquated lock equipment and old canal infrastructure emerged, well represented in her images.

The software used to create the video was *Final Cut Pro*.

On the video theme, **Avijit Datta** stated that the Annual Conference of the AV Group will be in Leeds Trinity University in September 2022.





Next Meeting

There will be no meeting in April due to Easter.

The next meeting will be in Clements Hall on the 7th May, followed by a Zoom meeting on May 21st.