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**Notes from your RO** Dear regional members,



As Covid restrictions ease, the committee has been busy putting together a calendar of events and activities for the upcoming year, including a relaunch event at Sheffield Hallam University later in the year, regional workshops, photo forums, not forgetting advisory days.

At the last regional AGM we agreed to open up the RPS Regional Committee Meeting to members of the region. This will give visibility of the work that the committee undertakes on behalf of the members. Members will be able to contribute to the discussion and are encouraged to provide ideas on activities and outings that we may want to consider adding to the regional calendar going forward. The first one

will be on the Jun 28, 2021 at 11:30am, if you would like to attend, please book on-line using this link: <https://rps.org/yorkshire/june-cm> and you'll be given the Zoom meeting details.

I was really excited to see recently the launch of the new Photobooks genre in Distinctions, which is the result of great efforts by the wider RPS team. Please do take a look here for additional details: <https://rps.org/photobooks> And whilst on the subject of photobooks, please do read the fascinating new blog article by Simon Hill, HonFRPS, President of the RPS celebrating the work of Anna Atkins. <https://rps.org/news/bristol/2021/june/photobook/>

Don't forget that the Documentary Photographer of the Year competition closes on 5 August. There are Open and Student categories and prizes include support from MPF and Simon Roberts HonFRPS, and FujiFilm. More information can be found here [rps.org/dpoty](https://rps.org/dpoty)

Kind regards,

Mark Slater  
RPS Yorkshire Regional Organiser  
[yorkshirechair@rps.org](mailto:yorkshirechair@rps.org)

## **There's a new group in town.....**

There's always potential to expand your mind, hold that thought, as a new Visual Art North Group is emerging.

Following a call out to RPS members asking if there would be any interest in a Visual Art sub group in the North of England, there was a tremendous response, with over 50 declaring interest in events and looking forward to another special interest group supporting our members in the North. That said, we are flexing the boundaries somewhat as anyone above Birmingham is deemed 'North'.

Outline plans laid, the work started and we needed to broach the sensitive issue of a committee, but again you came through and we now have members who are willing to step up to the challenge to organise and run the group.

Let me introduce to you in no particular order –

Peter Gleeson – Organiser/Chair  
Mary Crowther ARPS – Co-Chair  
Anne Haile – Webmaster/social media  
Chris Goodacre LRPS – Treasurer  
Dr Brian Law ARPS CAPGB – Secretary  
Peter Knight LRPS CPAGB BPE2\* – News Editor

There is one position we have not yet recruited for - a researcher.

Obviously the RPS, as you would expect, is predominantly photography dominated, we hope to be able to share information about associated visual arts, anything appreciated, including exhibitions, books and events.

Lastly, an invitation will shortly go out to all those who expressed initial interest, requesting attendance at an online discussion about 'What is Visual Art?' and what you might like to see happening. Interested? Please get in touch

Regards

**Mary P Crowther ARPS**

**Valerie Mather ARPS**

Like many people, I have loved photography all my life. The act of picking up a camera, pressing the shutter, freezing a moment in time has given me immense pleasure, especially on my travels.

In 2016, I determined to take control of my camera, and move away from shooting in Auto. This did not come easily but I persevered and succeeded so that I now run workshops on how to take creative control of one's camera. That same year I enrolled in the OU Digital Photography 3-month course, run in association with the RPS. This led to me becoming a member of the RPS - and in 2020 I became a volunteer too.

In 2017 I travelled to Cuba, with photography travel company Creative Escapes. Lectures in the morning were followed by solo shooting assignments, a quick bit of editing (with cocktails) late afternoon, and then an evening of show and tell, critiqued by a Pro photographer. It was during this trip that I was encouraged to photograph people, something I had previously shied away from, and to my surprise I discovered a new love.

I successfully gained my LRPS in 2018 with a panel consisting of 9 images of people and one horse! My initial panel was referred in 2017 for technical issues. Not getting my L first time around was a knock to my confidence. However, as a result, I was determined to improve my editing and printing skills and importantly, to develop my own eye. Achieving my L second time around was very encouraging. My hard work had paid off.

During the 2020 lockdown I decided to pursue an ARPS in the Documentary genre. I was, by then, shooting mainly people as part of a project about the succession crisis in British farming since 2019. Inspired by the work of James Ravilious, who photographed his local community in North Devon in the 1970s, I had been shadowing farmers close to where I live in Yorkshire. The seed of this project was sown when I read in Country Life that the average age of a farmer is 59, and only 3% are under 35 years of age.

Howard Tate, then President of PAGB, kindly agreed to look at my images to see if I had enough for a panel and to scrutinise my prints for technical issues. He also helped me debate the order of my hanging plan, which was frequently changing as I added more images to my project.

At my online 1:1 advisory with an RPS documentary assessor the most helpful advice was to think of the 15 images as 15 sentences and to use each one wisely. This piece of advice helped me to decide which images were telling a new story, and which did not materially add anything to the panel. Editing out images, or 'killing your darlings' as it is called, is hard and requires discipline. Ideally seek input from those who didn't witness the 'decisive moment' and as such do not carry the emotional baggage that you the photographer might.

The panel was successful and I was delighted to be awarded my ARPS last October.

**Please respect the copyright of all images**

The project still felt far from complete and I was encouraged by a portfolio review with Magnum human rights photographer Emin Özmen in the summer of last year, where the feedback was: this is a story worth telling. So, I approached a number of publishers and whilst there was interest, I hadn't appreciated how far ahead publishers work - up to two years! So, I decided to self-publish around 50 odd images from the project to date. The book is titled Yorkshire Born & Bred: Farming Life and it is available to buy from my website ([www.valeriematherphotography.co.uk](http://www.valeriematherphotography.co.uk)).

In order to promote the book, I submitted a photo essay to Country Life, The Yorkshire Post and Yorkshire Life. Over the last few months they have each featured images from the book in their printed and online publications. Photography requires the accompaniment of words be it a 150-word statement of intent for an RPS Distinction, or an introductory text to editors of newspapers and magazines as to why they should print your images.

For the book I debated key questions with myself, (it is hard without an editor as all the decisions and mistakes are yours!). For example, did I follow the traditional photobook route of images filling the page, without titles or explanatory text or something different. I also debated whether my images should be chronological, seasonal or grouped into livestock types. Ultimately, I decided to write titles and a short piece of text for many of the images. My reason being, the purpose of the book was to educate the public, so sharing some of the things I had learned about farming was in keeping with that aim. The image layout was designed to promote a flow of energy and to capture the periods of calm, joy and melancholy associated with the profession. Mirroring the rhythms of life seemed to me to sustain interest throughout the journey in the book, and it fitted well with the life-cycle of farming.

What next? The National Trust have just offered to curate an exhibition at their gallery in Nunnington Hall in autumn 2023. As part of the overall exhibition experience, I am in talks with both the National Federation of Young Farmers Clubs and the NFU to include an educational element for schools. I am also hoping to be working with some of the National Trust's tenant farmers, looking at the way these custodians of our countryside are taking steps to meet environmental initiatives, and including images to reflect this in the exhibition.

In terms of storytelling in photography it is essential to find a project that sparks your curiosity. The 'why' is essential and if you aren't connected to the story, your viewer won't connect either. One of my mentors, Pro-photographer Jon Cunningham of Creative Escapes, uses the phrase 'attract the eye before the why' in his Creativity Live series for the RPS. With 1.4 trillion images taken last year alone, it is essential advice!

**VALERIE MATHER ARPS**

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Samples from Valerie's LRPS panel



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**Sample images from Valerie's farming project**



Please respect the copyright of all images



### **WHAT YOU SHOULD NOT MISS**

Please check the RPS website for details, updates, cost and any essential booking information, which may change at short notice due to the pandemic.

Explore all the RPS online events at:  
<https://rps.org/what-s-on/>

**North York Moors** - 23rd August: from £62  
**Autumn Woodland** - 26th October: From £62  
**Falling Foss autumn colours** - 30th Oct: From £62

### **The Yorkshire Region continues to grow. Welcome to our new members:**

**NOTE:** Due to the current virus situation, and some RPS staff being on furlough, information from HQ has been limited.

### **Congratulations on your Distinction:**

Leanne Hunter ARPS & Graduate  
Imaging Scientist.  
Adrian James LRPS

**NOTE.** If anyone has been missed, or there are any errors, please email the correct details to the editor for checking and correction.

## **Documentary Photographer of the Year (DPOTY) Competition.**

As mentioned in the latest issue of The RPS Journal.

### **It is free to all RPS members.**

You can also enter the Student or Open awards if you wish, but there's a small entry fee.

This year's main prize for members is a **Fujifilm X100V camera**, as well as free RPS membership for one year to the winner and two commended photographers.

All winners and commended entries will be part of a touring exhibition. This year we have a distinguished panel of judges, including two major international newspaper picture editors and judges in UK, Italy, France, South Africa and India.

We are working with FujiFilm House of Photography to host the Awards event (hopefully in November) and the opening leg of a touring UK exhibition (continuing during 2022).

### **Entries can be made until 23:59 on 5 August.**

The competition website can be found here:  
<https://rps.org/groups/documentary/dpoty-2021/>

**Shared by the Chair of the Documentary SIG for all members and others external to the RPS, please feel free to forward.**