

SPS AGM 3 May 2022

Little did I know when Richard asked if I would be president after him what lay ahead. I think he asked me at the end of 2019 when Covid was probably around but had not been identified. So when I took over as president last May we were still having virtual meetings but gradually lockdown restrictions were beginning to be relaxed. By July it was left to groups to decide how to best manage their particular situations. With a number of members still feeling vulnerable and St Peter's PCC wanting a full risk assessment, it was decided that virtual meetings would continue until Christmas.

As we started the new season membership was down slightly on the previous year although we did gain new members after Christmas. Membership is 78 at present including three honorary members.

It took some time to work out the best way to run hybrid meetings and so in February this is what we started having. Perhaps not 100% successful but a start back to the new normal.

At this point I must thank John Ferretti for his hard work dealing with the programme. Some changes had to be made depending on whether speakers would use Zoom. Well done, John. It has been an excellent varied programme with some outstanding speakers. Thank you. One of the advantages of Zoom was inviting speakers from further afield than usual and this is something we may continue occasionally.

One of the highlights at the end of last year was that we were able to have the Perspectives exhibition in the Winter Gardens. A big thank to Linda for the work this involved, organising drop-off points for the prints and getting the exhibition up and running. It was really good to see actual prints.

As two rounds of the member's competition had been digital we decided to stay with this format for Rounds 3 and 4. The number of entries was disappointing and it is difficult to know if this was because it was digital or members were unable to get out to photograph. Certainly many holidays had been curtailed. Hopefully next season we will have print competitions again and this will encourage more entries. Thank you to Sue Richardson for managing the competitions on line.

We have got a Summer programme this year. Thank you to John Beadman who took over this role during the year. Details were sent out over the weekend and are also on the website.

Thank you also to Secretary Dave Elliott, Treasurer Dean Symonds and Membership Secretary Judy Smith for their hard work. These jobs are very largely administrative and so often undervalued, but they are absolutely vital to the smooth running of the club. Dave has kept going in spite of ill health and I wish him well.

John Gorman worked hard with publicity, keeping the name of the club in the local media and raising our profile. Lots of members' photographs have been published so they have been viewed by many more people than otherwise would have been the case.

Some Council members have played a key role in maintaining and developing the Society's presence online and keep members in contact through the internet. Mike Newman looking after Forum and Critique groups, and Steve Dorey our webmaster not only keeps the website up to date but dealt with what seemed like insurmountable problems with changing to emails through the website with Mike's help as well. Gareth Morgan and John Ferretti monitor Facebook and Instagram accounts respectively for SPS and although their use is quite limited there has been some interest shown.

This brings me to the President's Award. I am giving this year's award to someone who has worked quietly and steadfastly. Not only dealing with my queries and problems in sending emails and looking after the website but been at every meeting since February to set up the projector and laptop with the modem to ensure we can run the hybrid meetings as smoothly as possible. Thank you Steve for your patience and calmness especially when I have felt out of my depth.

Now another pleasant task for me as outgoing president. Ray Brightman asked the council to consider his proposal that Judy Smith be made an honorary member in recognition of her long and outstanding contribution to the Society. The council agreed and I take it that all members are in agreement with that. Judy is not here this evening but I will let her know and hopefully we can formally acknowledge this when Judy is present in September.

My thanks and best wishes to Mike McManus as he takes up the duties of President, a role which I have been honoured to fulfil. I hope you have a year as near normal as possible where it is only eventful in ways that are planned and expected.

Finally, I would like to say a big thank you to all you, the members, whether you have chosen to come in person or take part on Zoom. The Society is dependent for its vitality on your input. I hope in the autumn most of us will be able to start meeting together in the 'new normal' remembering some members may still not be able to do this. We need build on the experience of the last two years to create a more cohesive society. I do have concerns about the reducing membership and if we look at the age demographic of the society, although I have not studied it in detail, I am pretty sure there are more of us over 60 than under 40. I think we need to be adaptable to attract younger members, whether that be embracing more digital or having mobile phone images competition.