

**MINUTES OF MILNTHORPE ART EXHIBITION ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
HELD BY ZOOM ON 26TH NOVEMBER 2020**

1. Welcome

Jim Robson as Chair welcomed everyone to the AGM. He said he felt particularly proud to be able to welcome Martin Greenland, our new Honorary President.

2. Apologies for Absence

No apologies were received.

3. Minutes of the AGM 2019 and Matters Arising

There were only two matters arising:

- a. Our search for a significant figure in the arts to become our Honorary President - this has been achieved as Martin has now taken on the role.
- b. Our aim to have an exhibition catalogue for every year since the first Milnthorpe Art Exhibition is still missing 1991. Therefore the offer of an award for receipt of a good quality 1991 catalogue remains.

The minutes were accepted as correct.

4. Chairs Report – Prepared and presented by Jim Robson

After the success of our 30th Anniversary Exhibition in 2019, we were extremely disappointed to be unable to hold the Exhibition in 2020 because of the Covid-19 pandemic. The restrictions placed on premises, gatherings and hospitality to combat the virus from March 2020 onwards made it impossible to plan or deliver our usual Exhibition without putting customers, volunteers and artists at risk and we did not feel it was appropriate to approach Sponsors and Patrons for support at such a difficult time for local businesses. We therefore felt we had no option but to cancel the Exhibition, however, looking back from where we are now, we feel it was the right decision in the circumstances.

The Management Committee felt that, after 30 years, it was time for us to invite an established artist to become Honorary President of Milnthorpe Art Exhibition. After some research, we approached Martin Greenland and were delighted when he accepted. Martin is a current member of The Lakes Artists Society and has a national reputation particularly for his fine landscapes. Martin is able to join us at the AGM, so we all welcome and thank him. Further details of Martin and his work can be found on his website, www.martingreenland.co.uk.

After last year's Exhibition, Lesley Gill and Jean Simpson were co-opted on to the Management Committee and confirmed at the 2019 AGM, Lesley as Secretary for the Exhibition and Jean as Treasurer. Lesley and Jean both live in Milnthorpe and responded to our call for volunteers at last year's Exhibition. Each has made a valuable contribution to the difficult discussions leading up to our decision to cancel the 2020 Exhibition, but both they and the rest of the Committee are looking forward to being able to organise the Exhibition in 2021.

One member of the Management Committee, John Chew, has indicated that 2021 will be his last Exhibition as a Committee Member, although he intends to remain a Member. John leads on liaising with existing Sponsors and Patrons to encourage their continued support for the Exhibition as well as identifying and contacting possible new supporters. John would like to pass on his knowledge and experience of the role by working this year with any Member, Artist or Friend who would be interested in taking on the role after his retirement. If you are interested in this opportunity, please let us know through our website, www.milnthorpe-artexhibition.co.uk.

Covid-19 not only caused the cancellation of this year's Exhibition, but it also prevented our partner, St Thomas' Church, from making progress with its improvement plans as, understandingly, prospective funders gave priority to addressing the direct consequences of the pandemic rather than less urgent projects. The proposed improvements to the community facilities will provide independent access to the lower and upper halls including disabled access to the upper hall, and improved toilets including disabled facilities at both levels. The kitchen facilities will be moved from the south side of the church to the north side and enlarged, bringing natural light into the lower hall through the existing lancet windows and the proposed glass doors underneath, which will give direct access to the churchyard. These improvements, once completed, will be a significant benefit, however, the time taken to create these new facilities may have implications for the Exhibition and we will be working closely with the Church to minimise any impact. The timing of the improvement work is subject to the Church raising sufficient funds to complete the works.

Looking forward, there is still a great deal of uncertainty about what we will be able to deliver in 2021; the recent news about potential vaccines is encouraging but there is not yet a guarantee that we will be completely free of Covid-19 by next summer. We would very much like to build on the foundations we have laid over the last 30 years, but it may be necessary for us to think more flexibly and creatively to ensure that we are able to provide our artists with an opportunity to exhibit, our customers with an Exhibition they can enjoy and exhibits they want to purchase. Also, we want our Sponsors and Patrons to continue to be proud to be associated with Milnthorpe Art Exhibition. The Management Committee will be working hard to meet these objectives, and, to this end, we would welcome any suggestions that would help to make the 2021

Exhibition as successful as ever.

We are pleased to confirm that both Graham Twyford and Jackie Hadwin, the Featured Artists from 2020 have agreed to be the Featured Artists for 2021. Further details of Graham and Jackie and examples of their work can be found on our website, www.milnthorpe-artexhibition.co.uk .

I would like to thank everyone involved for your continuing support at this difficult time. We will continue to keep you up to date with developments by circulating minutes of Management Committee meetings to Members, as well as newsletters to Sponsors, Patrons and Friends, and through our website.

5. Secretary's Report – prepared and presented by Lesley Gill

After moving to Milnthorpe 3 years ago and having attended Milnthorpe Art Exhibition each year since arriving, I responded to a call for volunteers in 2019. The Secretary role was vacant and as I had a number of the skills required, I offered my services.

The Committee were very welcoming and meetings were engaging and enjoyable.

David Forrest, one of the Committee Members who had previously carried out elements of the Secretary's role helped me find my way around the job and thankfully continues to offer guidance and advice when required. My thanks definitely go to him. He very patiently educated me in the ways we use Google to create and manage a range of databases and lists. He also introduced me to the website system and showed me how to update it.

One of the first jobs I did was to rewrite the text on the website with a view to making it more focused. Obviously before making the alterations, I shared the revised draft content with the Committee and I was pleased that they agreed it. Since the initial changes, I've added details about Martin Greenland, our Honorary President to the site, as well as this years (and next year's), featured artists, Graham Twyford and Jackie Hadwin.

Before Coronavirus hit we received many enquiries from potential new artists who wanted to exhibit and they were added to our artists' database, so that they would receive up-to-date information. We now have 288 people on the list. We also received a couple of emails from individuals who volunteered to help during the exhibition, but clearly we weren't able to take them up on their offer.

The Committee agreed that emailing a newsletter out to Artists, Members, Friends, Sponsors and Patrons would be an engaging way to keep everyone informed of our plans, as well as being useful for PR and marketing purposes. Therefore I very much enjoyed pulling the first newsletter together in March and searching through photographs we have on file to

Another newsletter will follow early in the New Year when the MAE Committee have discussed options for the 2021 exhibition.

6. Treasurer's Report – prepared and presented by Jean Simpson

Income and Expenditure Account 2020

INCOME		2020		2019
Sale of exhibits	0.00		23984.00	
Less payments to exhibitors	<u>0.00</u>	0.00	<u>19012.00</u>	4548.20
Sponsors and donations		0.00		2515.00
Catalogues		0.00		3460.00
Raffle		0.10		1760.10
Catering		0.00		2038.97
Members Subscriptions		0.00		0.00
Miscellaneous		<u>0.00</u>		<u>10.06</u>
		0.00		14756.13
EXPENDITURE				
Donations to charity		0.00		10000.00
Stationery, Printing, Postage		148.80		1043.09
Advertising		0.00		1305.80
Insurance		0.00		403.85
Catalogues		0.00		1075.00
Raffle		20.00		410.60
Catering		0.00		414.81
Construction work		0.00		598.26
New lighting displays		0.00		0.00
Commission on Card Reader		0.00		590.95
Marquee rent		0.00		736.80
Miscellaneous		<u>0.00</u>		<u>389.90</u>
		168.80		16969.06
Surplus (Deficit)		(168.80)		(2212.93)
Add opening balance		1667.12		3880.05
Closing balance in hand		1498.32		1667.12

Jean commented that we had a healthy balance and due to the exhibition not taking place this year, there had not been much financial activity. The accounts were offered for acceptance and this was agreed.

7. Election of Management Committee

All Committee members elected at the 2019 AGM put themselves forward for election again this year:

Jim Robson	Chair
John Chew	Deputy Chair
Lesley Gill	Secretary
Jean Simpson	Treasurer
Steph Sykes	Member
Val Robson	Member
David Forrest	Member
John Ricketts	Member

As no other nominations were received, Tony Hesmondhalgh proposed the group, which was then seconded by Jenny Andrews. All those present agreed with the nomination and the group was elected.

8. Membership Subscription

It was agreed that no monetary subscription is required at the present time.

9. Any Other Business

Nothing had been raised by members during the 7 day notice period.

10. Martin Greenland – Honorary President

Martin presented the piece he had prepared for the AGM entitled 'The Pandemic & Me'

I could say a lot about how the knowledge of the presence of the virus, where it came from and where it may be going and how we have all been changed by the authoritative rules which have been placed upon us but in doing so, I think that I would simply be repeating what most people have said or would say.

The virus has caused great disruption for me in a year, which was going to be so alive. My solo show in The Blue Gallery at Brantwood in Spring/Summer was postponed till next Spring (?). My solo part of the show at The Scottish Gallery in Edinburgh in September did go ahead but without all the vital crowds needed to generate more interest. I had just been invited to join the stable of artists at The Portland Gallery in

London. I hope to have a show there next year but who knows what next year will bring? The Lake Artists Show was cancelled and a show to which I have been invited to contribute, The Westmorland Dales, which was due to be held at The Gaddum Gallery at Brockhole has been postponed till...Spring (?). The Open Painting Prize exhibition at Castlegate House, for which I was a judge and should have gone off with a bang, did happen but quietly without a proper audience and of course The Milnthorpe Art Exhibition was cancelled when it was to have been my first year as Honorary President.

Artistically, we all have been changed. Those who continue to work as though nothing has happened are living in a bubble (a popular word, these days!). What we did see, despite knowing that climate change, pollution, ash dieback etc is all around us and is visible and invisible, was that the rest of nature was flourishing, oblivious to our trouble. What has hit home to me is how my paintings appear in the light of the pandemic. Apart from the occasional mythological beast appearing in my work, something which I have not done for a long time anyway, my landscapes have always been people-less.

Humanity is expressed in the works visible; roads, paths, buildings... To some, including myself, these are often seen as lonely places and I am aware of this as I work, as I am when I see my landscapes, as simply empty places for the mind to explore. In late March and through April, having to actually witness what would normally be places thronging with people but suddenly were empty was difficult and made me see my work as in a mirror. This was not easy but now I am seeing what I do as more important because solitude and even loneliness is around us all the time. I always need to be representing the emotions and states of the self in my paintings; they are always more than just landscapes. I also believe that we should attempt to show in our work that which is not always easy or that which we would otherwise shy away from.

The pandemic situation has impacted in different ways on all of us. In many ways it should have made us think and more importantly, think about others. I personally think that the virus, though perhaps inevitable, given our crowded, shrunken, careless world, also has the power to make us change. It should make us think about the way we look at life, death and how we need to evolve. I am no eco-warrior. Humans are part of nature, extraordinarily versatile; what our purpose really is here, we really do not know and may or may never know. I do see that the state we find ourselves in is because we want to protect ourselves and make ourselves comfortable. In doing so, we have made an overcrowded world and no end of 'green' policies is going to alter this. If humanity self-destructs, I believe, and always have that the world will right itself.