

Focus

The West Cumbria Photo Group

This month the *Journal's* occasional feature entitled *Focus*, which showcases a member or member-club, turns to one of the Photographic Society of America's (PSA) international organizations, the **West Cumbria Photo Group**, located in West Cumbria, between the Irish Sea and the Lake District in the United Kingdom. This English organization (commonly called "The Group") is not a camera club in the traditional sense: it is restricted to twenty to twenty-five serious photographers; there are no committees or programs; they do not compete among themselves, in fact, their aim is not to be tied down with camera club organization, but to be "all about pictures." Members are encouraged to join "real" camera organizations for traditional club activities and 50% of them do so. Rather than have an annual membership fee, each member must produce four prints to display in area hospitals. **The Group's activities are threefold:** pictures for the hospitals; entering images into International exhibitions; and suppers together with invited guests.

Pictures for hospitals: twelve years ago, when The Group was established, fifty framed prints were hung in local hospitals. At last count, that number has increased to 400 prints distributed among various hospitals and clinics. The images are there for the enjoyment of patients, visitors and staff and are replaced every three to six months with new pictures. Hundreds of people benefit from The Group's work.

Entering international exhibitions: **Tony Potter**, who is the **PSA Region Director** for Region 28 (UK and Ireland) explains, "Club members find exhibiting very rewarding: much



Helen Herbert changing the pictures at Workington Community Hospital

better than just competing among ourselves. In 2007 colleagues had over 1100 international acceptances and 120 awards in every part of the world. This helps members working towards individual distinctions such as PSA stars, *Federation Internationale de L'art Photographique* (FIAP), and Royal Photographic Society (RPS) distinctions. We have among our members Fellows of the RPS (FRPS); FIAP distinction holders such as EFIAP and many hold the three distinctions from the Photographic Alliance of Great Britain, the CPAGB, DPAGB and MPAGB. So far no one has the PPSA designation, but we are working hard towards that goal and that is one of the main reasons why we are members both individually and as a group of PSA."

Monthly supper together with an invited a guest: The Group meets in a small village hall, which limits occupancy to twenty-five diners (which explains why the group is restricted to twenty-five members). They meet on the outskirts of an old steel town called Workington. Tony Potter leads the group in a "benevolent dictatorial way"—in their non-traditional manner: there are no officers—and it is here that The Group determines the future of the club. Tony is very careful to tell us that the Invited Guest *shows*, but may not *lecture* about, his pictures. Following the showing, The Group discusses the images.

PSA is truly an international organization. Besides the West Cumbria Photo Group in the UK, PSA is represented in more than seventy countries throughout the world and this issue's *Focus* is an opportunity to learn about just one PSA-member club. 🌐



Christine Hodgson, Pax Garabedian, Mike Wood, John Williams with his PSA gold medal, Helen Herbert and Graeme Webb with the Limours International trophy awarded to West Cumbria Photo Group

Elena McTighe



Bas Montgomery, Kate Willmer and Jan Dockwray sorting pictures



Tony Potter
PSA Region Director

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