

Anne Swearman's Obituary

It was a very sad day when the club learnt of the passing of our most respected member, Anne Swearman.

Anne has been involved in photography for most of her life starting at school where she won a photographic contest in the school magazine. Using her father's plate camera, she developed her technique, with some help from her father in the art of printing, which also included making an enlarger using a spiral from the dining table to provide a means of adjustment.

In the 1950s, Anne joined the Newcastle Photographic Society, but with her independent spirit, she found it was not for her. Indeed, for many years, she could see no benefit in joining a photographic organisation, but photography was still in her heart.

As with most people, hobbies must take a back seat when they get married. It was no different for Anne when she married the love of her life, Morrice. The next few years were spent raising a marvellous family, but the photographer was waiting in the wings.

One of Anne's other passions was fell walking which provided material for her pictures. Again, that independent spirit surfaced, and organised walks were dropped in favour of personal outing where she could dictate the pace and location.

Another, Art Appreciation, would have given her ideas and inspiration, reflected in her work.

Her main outlet for her images was the Women's Institute. Here, she gave talks illustrated by slides which eventually developed into Audio Visual productions. So successful was she that she represented the Area W. I. in a National competition. Anne also had many pictures accepted for the W. I. calendar. Later, advancing her AV talents, she became an active member of the Northern AV Group, showing some wonderful presentations.

History was another passion, especially the pre-Norman period and Saxon architecture. This, together with fell walking provided material for her pictures as well as her AVs ranging from historic documentaries to comedy sequences. Anne always enjoyed writing the scripts for these along with the necessity to research the subject.

Two dates stand out in the Whitley Bay Photographic Society's history, 1951 when the club was formed & 1981 when Anne joined (although it was only to support her son, Andrew, in his new hobby). Anne threw herself into the club scene winning the Beginners Championship. Her son's interest was short lived, but fortunately for us, Anne decided to stay, enjoying the competition and the judges' comments. Anne continued her success in club competitions in the following years, winning the Intermediate & Advanced sections. She was also to hold many positions on the administration side of the club, becoming President from 1987 to 1989 and was still an active member of the committee right up to the end.

She was also very active at Federation level: Area Representative, Social Secretary, Editor of "Northern Focus". Here she transformed the publication from a newsletter to a proper magazine which won a prestigious award from the PSA. Later she became the President of the Northern Counties Photographic Federation from 1996 to 1998.

During all this time, she was also engaged in gaining photographic awards including an ARPS, submitting work to exhibitions, member of the UPP folio circles, judging at various levels, and giving presentations to clubs in the North of England.

In 2012, Anne was awarded the APSA for her excellent service to photography not just within the PSA, but other photographic organisations such as clubs, councils, federations, national and international societies, and exhibitions as well as to the general worldwide community; a well-deserved award.

Anne was a rarity in photographic circles, always giving new ideas a chance, never afraid of change. She embraced digital photography-learning the techniques and teaching others as well as forming the Monthly Digital Group at WBPS. Always very generous with her time, she had the ability to encourage others in their photographic endeavours, her extensive knowledge was an encyclopaedia to other members. She was a perfectionist but above all, an enthusiast for photography in all its forms and a very good friend to all who knew her.

Not only were Whitley Bay Photographic Society fortunate in having such a great member but Anne's influence was spread throughout the Northern Counties.

A very sad loss to the photographic world which will probably never be replaced.

Alan Porrett & Peter Reynolds, Whitley Bay Photographic Society.

We have set up a facebook page "Memories of Anne Swearman" for any tributes you care to leave.