



PRESS RELEASE

Issued: 13 November 2017

END OF AN ERA FOR NORTH WALES & BORDERS WATERWAYS AS THREE KEY STAFF RETIRE

This autumn marks the end of an era for the Canal & River Trust's North Wales & Borders Waterway with the retirement of three key staff, who collectively have notched up nearly a century of service to the canals.

Waterway manager Wendy Capelle, who is based in the charity's Northwich office, leaves in December after 18 years' service, just before her 60th birthday on Christmas Day. As a qualified management accountant, she initially joined the Trust's predecessor organisation British Waterways in the finance department, but for the last eight years has been at the helm of North Wales & Borders, leading a team of up to 60 staff looking after canals and navigations in Cheshire, Shropshire and North Wales.

She said: "I have loved working for the Trust. I've worked with some great people and I've appreciated all the opportunities I've been given in different roles. The charity is doing some great work to improve the nation's waterways and make them a special place to visit, and I will miss being part of the enthusiastic team making this happen."

Howard Griffiths (59) has just retired as the Trust's customer service supervisor for the Llangollen and Montgomery canals. Based out of the Trust's Ellesmere office, he has lived all his life on the Montgomery Canal, mixing work and pleasure in a career spanning 39 years caring for his local waterways.

His father was also a canalman for 24 years and Howard has remarkably spent his entire life living in the same lock keeper's cottage at Aston Locks, near Oswestry, where he was born, raised, married and brought up four daughters of his own.

Howard said it was the people – friends, colleagues, customers – who have helped to make his job extra special. “All the teams I have worked with have been top notch. Our job involves the Llangollen Canal which is one of the busiest waterways in the country and the Montgomery - one of quietest and most peaceful, well-known for its nature. You get to know everyone and when the sun's shining and everything is going well, it's hard to beat it.” His colleague Roger Birch now steps up to be supervisor.

Neville Preece (62), who will retire in early 2018, is the supervisor for the southern section of the Shropshire Union Canal, based out of Norbury. He first started working on the waterways 41 years ago as part of the dredging fleet on the River Weaver Navigation, which was then still used by commercial cargo vessels.

Over the years he has taken on a number of roles from length foreman and harbour master to a supervisor in Chester. He recalls: “The waterways were very different when I first started work. Hundreds of coasters travelled along the River Weaver to ICI at Winnington, near Northwich, every year, carrying soda ash, chlorine, cement and raw talc. They then went via Marsh Lock into the Manchester Ship Canal and sailed to Scotland, Ireland and beyond.

“I love talking to people. Every day is different. It is the sort of job that if you like it, you're here for the rest of your life.”

Experienced waterway manager David Baldacchino will take over from Wendy, with interim responsibility for North Wales & Borders from 1st January 2018.

- For more information about how to volunteer or donate to the Canal & River Trust, check out www.canalrivertrust.org.uk or call the customer services team on 0303 040 4040.

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Notes to editors:

The Canal & River Trust is the guardian of 2,000 miles of historic waterways across England and Wales, caring for the nation's third largest collection of listed structures, as well as museums, archives, and hundreds of important wildlife sites.

We believe that *living waterways transform places and enrich lives* and our role is to make sure there is always a place on your doorstep where you can escape the pressures of everyday life, stretch your legs and simply feel closer to nature.

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