

PRESS RELEASE

29 November 2019

WATERWAY AWARDS CELEBRATE VOLUNTEERING EXCELLENCE

Waterways and wellbeing charity Canal & River Trust, together with Marsh Christian Trust, is pleased to announce those recognised at this year's volunteer awards which celebrate volunteer excellence along the nation's waterways.

This year awards were given to a team and individual in each of the Trust's six regions, reflecting the fantastic range of volunteering that takes place across the Trust in England & Wales.

Richard Parry, chief executive at Canal & River Trust, said: "These awards showcase the fantastic contribution that the Trust's volunteers make, carrying out a vast array of activities and tasks, bringing their wide and expanding range of skills and experience, along with their enthusiasm, passion and sheer hard work; I offer my congratulations to them all. The award-winners encompass the team of volunteer lock keepers who go beyond the call of duty on the 21-lock Wigan Flight and those who delivered creative transformation of their local stretch further along the Leeds & Liverpool Canal; the small team that undertook the massive task of cataloguing our historic casting patterns at Ellesmere Yard for the National Waterways Museum; those who widened the navigation for boaters at Derwent Mouth on the Trent and those who led a wide-ranging project to restore paddle gear on locks on the Kennet & Avon Canal; and the crucial operational role that a volunteer team plays in London. Along with the exceptional achievements of the individual volunteer award-winners across the Trust, they each demonstrate the vital role that volunteers continue to play in the life of the waterways.

"Volunteers are tremendously important to the Trust and I'd like to thank all those who gave their time, together amounting to over 670,000 hours, to the Trust last year. They have made a significant difference to the Trust and the work we do, and their efforts are appreciated by the millions of people who visit and enjoy our waterways. They help us to make life better by water, for all those who use them, so they are attractive, safe and welcoming places to be. Our volunteers also demonstrate how our canals, rivers and towpaths can deliver greater wellbeing, showcasing how they improve their own physical and mental health by spending time with us. If

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others are interested in joining our growing band of amazing volunteers, I'd encourage them to get in touch with their local team or just come along and get involved."

Brian Marsh, chair at the Marsh Christian Trust, said: "We are pleased to be able to work with the Canal & River Trust once again to deliver these Awards, recognising those who give their time to volunteer on our nation's waterways, enhancing their heritage and supporting the wellbeing of those that use them. This year we have been able to celebrate the achievements of more volunteers, both individuals and teams, across six regions of the UK and we hope to continue to highlight these invaluable commitments in years to come."

For more information about the work of the Canal & River Trust including how you can volunteer or donate visit www.canalrivertrust.org.uk

The awards were as follows:

North West

Team award: *Wigan Lock Keepers (Paul Haughton, Joanne Bowers, Graham Carlson, John Evans, Andrew Finch, John Gallimore, Steve Price, Peter Baxter, John Roebuck)*

The Wigan Flight Lock Keepers have been active for over five years. Together they not only facilitate passage for boaters, but are an essential team maintaining water and functionality of the flight and therefore the canal that proceeds it. They all go above and beyond the call of duty. The sense of comradery between them and with employees is excellent, and they work fluidly with colleagues in a mutually beneficial way. They are a positive and essential asset to the Trust.

Individual award: *Ted Thompson*

Ted has volunteered for a staggering 35 years, and he epitomises the Canal & River Trust's values. Ted and his wife Christine Thompson campaigned tirelessly to secure funding to restore the Anderton Boat Lift to full working order in 2003 and he continues to enthuse and engage visitors with facts and memories of the lift's life.

The presentation will be made on 5th November at 11am at Anderton Boat Lift, Lift Lane, Anderton, Near Northwich, Cheshire CW9 6FW

Yorkshire & North East

Team award: *The Saltaire & Shipley Taskforce (Keith Robbins, Linda Barber, Rick Sorge, Lucia Sorge, Miles Timperley, Carol Graham, Alan Morris)*

The team's vision is a bold one: to transform a four-mile stretch of the Leeds & Liverpool Canal. The aim is to improve the space over time, creating an interlinking series of beautiful gardens, interesting sculptures, murals, wildlife habitat and interpretation boards. The overall impact will enrich the lives of both the group and the many hundreds of towpath users. This team is greatly appreciated for their commitment and going over and above what is required of them. They are innovative and uphold the Trust's values.

Individual award: *Ian Kelshaw*

In 2019 Ian has led a team of volunteer lock keepers in Sowerby Bridge to cover the entire season in a self-sufficient manner with minimal involvement and oversight from the area team. Ian is greatly appreciated for his commitment, going over and above what is required from a volunteer; for his innovation and excellence; supporting other volunteers and upholding Trust values. Ian is a seasoned volunteer having worked with the Trust since 2015, mainly working on the Rochdale canal during the summer months. In winter time Ian also volunteers his time to move workboats around the network on behalf of the Direct Services team.

The presentation will be made on 11th November (11.30am – 3pm) at Standedge Tunnel Visitor Centre, Waters Road, Huddersfield HD7 6NQ

West Midlands

Team award: *The Pattern Casting Cataloguing Team at Ellesmere Yard (Dr Maurice Ward, Keith Scargill, David Morris)*

Maurice, David & Keith have been chosen for the mammoth effort of cataloguing a collection of casting patterns at Ellesmere Yard. Giving over 800 hours in total, they have taken 2,000 photographs and added 1,500 records to the National Waterways Museum database. They have carefully recorded all the patterns, some from the late 1800s, which represent an invaluable collection.

Individual award: *Ralph Gaskin*

Ralph has been volunteering for the Trust since 2012 and is liked by colleagues and fellow volunteers all over the West Midlands due to his involvement with so many teams. He is a qualified Lock Keeper, Helmsman & CAATS assessor and more recently has started assisting with administration too. He regularly leads practical volunteering events, joins in at festivals and gives talks to community groups. Ralph is the complete all-rounder and you will regularly see Ralph on Twitter promoting and supporting the Trust.

The presentation will be made on 20th November (c.7pm TBC) at the Council House, Victoria Square, Birmingham, B1 1BB

East Midlands

Team award: *South Derbyshire Towpath Taskforce (core team members: Luke Butler, Julie Hayrich, Julie Lockett, Chris Marriott, Bob Chapman, Dave Hooper, Ian Webb, Mike Taylor, Sue Quigley, Charlie Welford, Neil Welford)*

South Derbyshire Towpath Taskforce has made a big difference to waterway users by tackling a large project at Derwent Mouth on the River Trent. The team of volunteers' hard work has enabled a stretch of navigation, that was only wide enough for one boat to pass, to become five metres wide. The team did this by removing sunken and rooted vegetation and silt from the river. The team has made the Trust more visible within the area. The team showed impressive

grit and determination to complete the works in a very short time scale with testing weather conditions, even breaking ice to get the boat out.

Individual award: *Neil Page*

Neil has consistently demonstrated going above and beyond his role as a volunteer lock keeper, for example helping stranded boaters to attend local shops to gain supplies. Neil is clearly valued by colleagues and waterway users and has a great impact, showing commitment and support to the team on many occasions.

The presentation will be made at 7th November (12noon-3pm) at Voluntary Action Leicester, 9 Newark St, Leicester, LE1 5SN

Wales & South West

Team Award: *Paddle Gear Engineering Project Team (Dave Newman, Chris Hodnett & Nick Hopkins)*

This Team has shown tremendous dedication to restoring paddle gearing on the Kennet & Avon Canal. They have utilised their hydraulic engineering experience to establish a paddle gear engineering workshop at Newbury. They have tracked down documentation from various vaults and libraries and have created a centre of excellence for our unusual hydraulic gear. The team has also delivered the spindle replacement programme for the hydraulic barrels.

The presentation will be made on 30th October at 10:30am at the Acland Memorial Hall, Hermitage Rd, Cold Ash, Thatcham RG18 9JH

Individual Award: *Robin Jones*

Robin has been running along the Gloucester & Sharpness Canal in his lunch break and spotted the invasive species, Himalyan and orange balsam, popping up along the banks. As a keen naturalist, when he realised the balsam was spreading, he took action and started to pull up as many of the plants as he could every day. Robin is driven to stop the spread of this invasive species because he is aware of the damage it can do when left unchecked. He also wants to protect the Wildfowl & Wetlands Slimbridge reserve next door as these habitats are home to the over wintering birds which make the Severn Estuary internationally important.

The presentation will be made on Wednesday 6th November at 12noon at Canal & River Trust, The Dock Office, Commercial Road, Gloucester, GL1 2EB

London & South East

Team award: *Aidan's Wonder Team (core team members: Rhys Musker, Joe Green, Kate Long, Gerry Woodcock)*

As the Trust's local team leader (employee) Aidan Slater has a highly regarded team of volunteers lovingly named 'Aidan's Wonder Team'. Their support has been crucial to operational works within Central London. The team is dedicated to making a real difference to the canal

system and have surpassed the boundaries of what constitutes 'regular' volunteering, really breaking the mould to show what is possible.

Individual award: *Jennifer Martin*

Jenny's sincere dedication to volunteering with the Trust has been proven time and again. Her capability to be warm and welcoming to the public makes her a remarkable ambassador. She is a breath of fresh air and it is impossible to not have your wellbeing improved if she is at your side.

The presentation will be made at Thursday 28th November (6.30pm-9pm) at The Pirate Castle, Oval Road, London NW1 7EA

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For further media requests please contact: Fran Read, national press officer on 07796 610 427 or fran.read@canalrivertrust.org.uk

Notes to editors:

The Canal & River Trust cares for and brings to life 2,000 miles of canals and rivers across England & Wales. We believe waterways have the power to make a difference to people's lives and that spending time by water can make us all healthier and happier. By bringing communities together to make a difference to their local waterway, we are creating places and spaces that can be used and enjoyed by everyone, every day.

www.canalrivertrust.org.uk

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The Marsh Christian Trust is a grant-making body supporting registered charities. The Trust also runs the Marsh Awards scheme, to recognise the achievements of those who strive to make our world a better place through volunteering or academic excellence. Founded in 1981, by Brian Marsh OBE, the Trust now runs over 80 Awards with a number of partner organisations and supports a growing number of smaller charities through its grant making programme.