

PRESS RELEASE

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AWARDS CELEBRATE WATERWAYS VOLUNTEERING IN WALES & SOUTH WEST

Waterways and wellbeing charity Canal & River Trust, together with Marsh Charitable Trust, is pleased to announce that long-standing volunteer Thelma Edwards from Devizes has been recognised in its annual volunteer awards which celebrate volunteer excellence along the nation's waterways.

Retired health professional Thelma has been with the Trust since 2012, starting at the iconic Caen Hill flight where, as a Volunteer Lock Keeper, she helped boaters navigate the 29 locks. Since then she has given the charity over 2,500 hours of her time, developing her volunteering in many different roles including becoming Lead Volunteer for The Admiral Welcome Boat, developing new activities (including the Junior Lock Keeper project) and mentoring and training other volunteers.

Marsh Charitable Trust Awards are being given to teams and individuals across the Canal & River Trust's waterways in England and Wales over the coming weeks, reflecting the fantastic range of volunteering that takes place.

Steve Manzi of Canal & River Trust Wales & SW, said: "Our volunteers make a tremendous contribution to our waterways, bringing their skills and experience to a vast array of activities and tasks and enabling us to accomplish so much more. These national awards showcase the range of their talents and celebrate their enthusiasm, passion and sheer hard work.

"Thelma is passionate about the canal and a dedicated ambassador for the Trust. She loves giving something back to the community and inspiring young people to get involved. I'm delighted and proud to have Thelma on our team."

Thelma received the award for Wales & South West from Canal & River Trust chief executive Richard Parry at a ceremony at the Trust's National Waterways Museum, Gloucester. She said: "As I start my tenth year with the Canal & River Trust I realise how varied my role has been and

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how it has evolved. I previously worked in health promotion and, since our canal is so important for our health and wellbeing, I find myself drawing on my skills and experience, which is very gratifying.

“I’ve also been able to develop the Admiral Welcome Boat and my team in a way which I know meets the needs of our many visitors. I’m a very keen listener and use what I learn to help people get the very best from our experience with us. I am also someone who, excuse the waterways pun, ‘goes with the flow’ and I’m grateful to Steve Manzi at the Trust for his support in helping me grow the role to something I’m proud of. And this award really is a wonderful way to start my next volunteering chapter!”

Christine Mellor, head of volunteering at Canal & River Trust, said: “Volunteers are incredibly important to the Trust. The past 18 months have been challenging, with the coronavirus pandemic affecting volunteering, and I was so thankful to see our volunteers back in force as the restrictions eased. We are reaching out to communities to act now for canals and have this opportunity to recognise some of our volunteers who have made such a significant contribution in maintaining the beauty of our waterways. I’d encourage anyone who is interested in volunteering for the Trust to get in touch, there are so many opportunities on our website in your local area. Come along and get involved!”

Brian Marsh OBE, chair at the Marsh Charitable Trust, said: “We are pleased to be able to work with the Canal and 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.”

Award ceremonies will be taking place in each of the Canal & River Trust’s six regions in the coming weeks.

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

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