

Longstanding Railway Volunteer Frank Scoops Unsung Hero Award

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Didcot Railway Centre's volunteer photographer, Frank Dumbleton, has been named an "Unsung Hero" at Tourism South East's prestigious Beautiful South Awards for Excellence in an online ceremony.

Frank is one of the Centre's longest-standing volunteers having been involved with the Great Western Society – the Charity that operates the living museum – since its formation in 1961. He was recognised for the countless hours he puts in taking photographs that contributed to the success of the image-led marketing strategy adopted last year, along with his efforts as a guide, museum steward and compiling the popular "On This Day in History" posts for the Centre's Facebook platform and his input into the successful online blogs launched on the organisation's website in 2020.

Like many other recent events, the awards ceremony switched to an online format – in his short acceptance speech, Frank (suitably attired in DJ and bow tie) thanked his fellow volunteers and the staff at the Railway Centre and said he is looking forward to helping welcome back visitors when the Centre reopens next month.

Head of Visitor Experience and Marketing, Graham Hukins, said "We are delighted that Frank has received

this accolade; it is extremely well deserved and a very welcome boost after a very difficult year.

“Frank is one of the 400 or so wonderful volunteers whose work is invaluable in running the Centre. He typically puts in over 100 days on site every year and posts really informative historical snippets on our Facebook page every day” he added.

Fran Downton, Chief Executive of Tourism South East, said: “Congratulations to all our finalists. Achieving excellence is not easy, particularly in the year we have just navigated. All the finalists can be extremely proud of what they have achieved. I was blown away by the quality, positivity, and innovation of the tourism businesses we have across the South East. Many of the winners are truly world class. I am extremely grateful to the sponsors and voluntary judges who make the Awards possible. We look forward to celebrating with our winners and working alongside them as they lead the way in a year of recovery.”

Andrew Mosley, Headline sponsor, The Grand Brighton said “What a line up! Huge congratulations to all of the winners and nominees, we’re sure these awards are made even sweeter after a year of such highs and lows. It’s a pleasure to be part of such a positive celebration amongst many friends and colleagues within the hospitality industry. Here’s to 2021 and continuing to support our industry, celebrate successes and help each other bounce back bigger and better than ever.”

Subject to the Government’s easing of coronavirus restrictions easing as planned, the Centre will reopen with steam trains running at weekends and Wednesdays from 14 April - full details can be found at www.DidcotRailwayCentre.org.uk

Photo credit: Didcot Railway Centre