

Volunteer Frank Shortlisted for Tourism Award

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One of Didcot Railway Centre's longest-standing volunteers, Frank Dumbleton, has been shortlisted in the Unsung Hero category in the prestigious Beautiful South Awards for Excellence which are organised by Tourism South East.

Frank has been involved with the Great Western Society – the charity that operates the living museum – since its formation in 1961 and typically puts in over 100 days each year as the centre's photographer, recording activities on the 21-acre site and taking publicity shots to help promote the popular tourist attraction.

Chief Executive, Emma Jhita, said: "This is wonderful news and a much-needed boost at this really difficult time. Frank's work has been used extensively in recent years as our marketing team has switched to an image-led, largely digital approach. Having fantastic photos showing visitors what we were able to offer was invaluable during the pandemic-affected 2020 season.

"Reaching the finals is well-deserved recognition for Frank. Like many of our volunteers, he puts in countless hours to help out and also acts as a Museum Steward and educational guide when he can. His passion for the Great Western Railway and his knowledge, having been involved for sixty years, is also a fantastic resource."

Competition for the award will be strong as, despite 2020 being a very difficult year, the annual tourism awards attracted entries from around 100 businesses from Kent to Hampshire and from the Isle of Wight to Oxford.

Fran Downton, Chief Executive of Tourism South East, said: “We felt strongly that the Beautiful South Awards should go ahead this year. Recognising and celebrating the quality and excellence of our tourism business, in the face of adversity is really important to us.

“Tourism in the South East demonstrates national and world class offerings, and the entry standards to our awards are always high. This year was exceptionally challenging for our businesses and we are pleased to be able to deliver some well needed positivity and rewards.”

The winners will be announced at an online ceremony, hosted by Brighton’s famed Grand Hotel on 4 March.

Photo credit: Didcot Railway Centre