

Volunteer presented with British Empire Medal for services to community rail

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One of **Greater Anglia's** rail station adopters has been presented with a British Empire Medal.



The Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Essex, Nigel Spencer MBE, presented Julia Prigg, Wrabness rail station adopter and community 'legend' with the honour at Wrabness Community Shop, Café and Bar to the delight of assembled guests including Julia's friends, family, local residents and representatives from Greater Anglia and the Essex and South Suffolk Community Rail Partnership.

Julia, 85, was recognised for her years of dedication and service to Wrabness in this year's Queen's Birthday Honours list.

She was awarded the British Empire Medal (BEM) for 'services to community rail' for her care of Wrabness rail station's garden, transforming it into a wildlife haven and community garden that has been used by residents and schoolchildren for all sorts of community activities.

She said: "I feel a bit overwhelmed because of all the other people that have been involved – from the ladies who started the garden as a millennium project for the village over 20 years ago, to the man who has cut the lawn for 22 years.

"I'd love to continue the work. Had we had Open Gardens in the middle of lockdown I was thinking I would make that my swansong and then I'd give up. But I couldn't do it. So I hope that I can just carry on as I'm doing, with a little bit more help.

"It's a lovely village, lots of support, and it's lovely to be part of it."

Julia is a member of Greater Anglia's Station Adoption Scheme, which sees volunteers working with the train operator to improve their local rail station.

She lives over the road from Wrabness station and became a station adopter because her own house has only a small courtyard garden, so it was a way for Julia to continue her love of gardening.

She also loves the social aspect of being in the station garden as there are always so many visitors – either people getting off the train to go walking in the area, or children coming to play on the pretend railway that runs through the garden, and people who come to just sit in the garden and enjoy the refreshments they've bought in the community shop.

Julia also works with two local schoolchildren who are helping her in the garden to work towards their Duke of Edinburgh Award and with a group of volunteer students who attend a school for people with particular needs who attend weekly to help in the garden.

She has now tended the garden for over a decade and worked in it with local schoolchildren to create wildlife homes and pottery. As a keen environmentalist, she also created a wildflower garden in the lower station area.

This led her to receive the Personal Contribution Award at Greater Anglia's Station Adoption Awards in 2019.

Julia has been described as a 'true legend for Wrabness' for her involvement in and enthusiasm for village life, her community and its residents, and her decade-long commitment to the station garden, ensuring it remains beautiful and welcoming.

Greater Anglia's Customer and Community Engagement Manager, Alan Neville, said, "Julia's honour is very well-deserved and we are extremely proud of her, and so grateful for her unwavering energy, enthusiasm and dedication to the community and its station garden."

Community Rail Partnership Officer Terri Ryland, said of Julia, "She is constantly moving, always enhancing the station garden, ensuring it looks perfect for everyone to enjoy, from local residents to tourists from afar, often working in the station garden from dawn until dusk – sometimes even with a torch!

"She has a permanent smile on her face, is always there with a cup of tea and offers a warm welcome to all visitors in the station garden and points out the plants, birds and insects to children."

"Julia gets involved in other community rail events, helps on our event trains and leads some of our guided walks, is an excellent advocate for community rail and is keen for everyone to play a part in the station garden. She is a true legend for Wrabness and I am delighted that she has been recognised at the highest level for her commitment to the station and the community."

Photo credit: Greater Anglia