



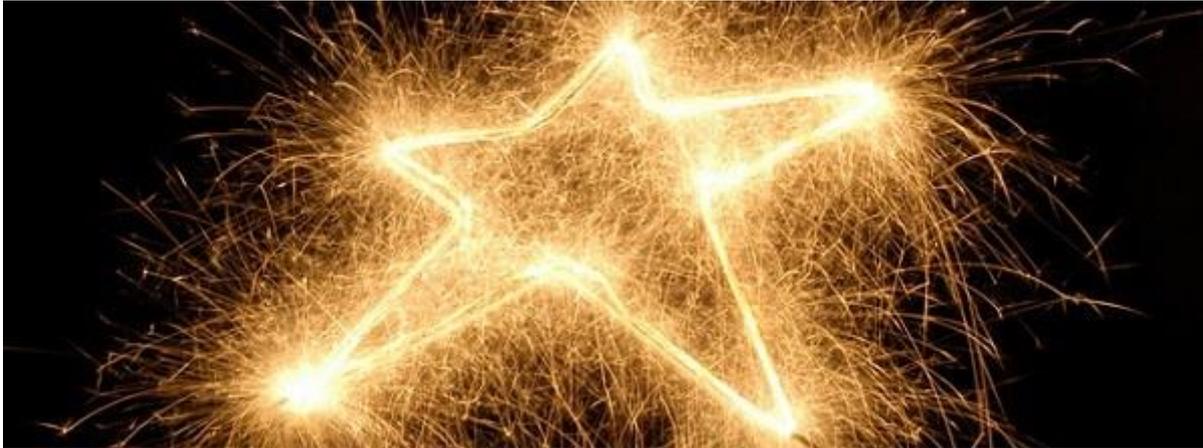
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West Midlands Volunteer Awards 2016

The Winners



The winners of the first West Midlands Volunteer Awards were announced at the Birmingham Hippodrome on 15 September. The evening was hosted by Sarah Falkland and started with a drinks and canapé reception.



Forro Social with their north Brazilian music got the awards off to a toe-tapping start. After the first four awards were announced Impropera brought the first 'act' to a close with improvised opera.



Guests tucked into bowl food in the interval including luscious desserts served from hawker trays in the auditorium, before Impropera showed even more versatility performing mini operas about random objects from museum collections. Five more awards were presented finishing with the overall winner before Eternal Taal, an all girl Bhangra group, brought the evening to a rousing climax.





Above and Beyond

Muriel Clayson, Tudor House, George Marshall Medical Museum, The Infirmary Museum

"Muriel Clayson is a remarkable woman because she gives 100% in supporting heritage in Worcester – not just in one museum, but in three! She was nominated for this award because of her amazing commitment. The Infirmary Museum, The George Marshall and Tudor House Museum have all benefited from her dedication, good humour, research skills and lovely rapport with visitors of all ages. Muriel is not someone who seeks out committees and the limelight, but quietly and efficiently gets on with things that need to be done.

"Before Muriel retired she taught nursing, and she brings this people-centred, practical, problem-solving approach to all her roles. Muriel has not faltered in supporting all three museums to the best of her ability, whether it is waiting on customers in the coffee shop, greeting visitors on the gate, helping with events or writing pamphlets on nursing history. She is a great asset: patient; humorous and observant; and we all love working with her." [Nominated by Elizabeth Pimblett]

[Tudor Museum](#), [George Marshall Medical Museum](#), [The Infirmary Museum](#)



Project Award

Volunteer Team, Waterworks Museum

"Opened in July 2015, the park took two years' hard work to create. A team of 20 volunteers contributed over 2300 man hours to transform an area of unused overgrown land at the Waterworks Museum – Hereford to become an environmentally sustainable outdoors exhibition space. Volunteers brought many different skills and hidden talents from design, stone masonry, carpentry and joinery, metal working and welding and environmental landscaping – all in addition to the engineering skills they bring to the museum week in week out. Only the below-ground civil engineering was done by outside contractors.

"The water park is based on living heritage and what the children interact with are real methods that people have used down the centuries to lift, pump, move and filter water. This project is helping to teach and enthuse a new generation of visitors about the age of steam and the importance of Victorian engineering to the way we live our lives today, which is so important to ensure that this small specialist museum has a resilient and sustainable future." [Nominated by Richard Curtis]

[Waterworks Museum](#)



Spreading the Word

Arty Tots, St John's Museum

"Arty Tots (get messy with their grandparents) at St John's Museum, Warwick, and previously at Market Hall Museum, is a group for grandparents and their grandchildren offering social and learning opportunities for both generations in the Museum. It developed from the Learning and Engagement team's desire to engage with new audiences - 'switching on' young people to museums as places to visit and be comfortable in. The team also noticed that many grandparents have caring duties for their grandchildren, and can become socially isolated without easy access to the social opportunities for parents and toddlers.

"The group proved an instant success and has now been running for three years. Every Monday morning there are up to 20 under 5's with their grandparents at the Museum, bringing the indoor and outdoor spaces to life. Each session has a different theme relating to the Museum collections; for instance fossils, sea creatures, butterflies, tools, transport, costume, hats, toys etc.

"The grandparents now meet together outside Arty Tots and offer each other friendship, support and advice, and gladly welcome and share their experiences with new grandparents."

[Nominated by Sarah Hann]

[St John's Museum](#)



Working Together

Faith in Birmingham Working Group

"The Faith in Birmingham Working Group enabled Birmingham Museums to develop a brand new inter-faith gallery with sensitivity, care and passion. The gallery explores faith practice in the city and has been developed by working closely with and alongside faith communities. The group is made up of 20 individuals representing six different faiths: Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Sikhism, Hinduism and Buddhism. Together the group attended monthly meetings throughout 2015 to inform the content, themes and objects on display in the gallery. Members of the group hosted meetings at their own places of worship and organised tours and visits. This volunteer team organised cultural performances for the gallery's launch event and now continue to volunteer for the project through spending time in the gallery and planning events for upcoming religious holidays.

"To say this group of volunteers has had a positive impact on the project is an absolute understatement. They were fundamentally crucial in enabling the museum to explore the topic of faith with sensitivity and understanding, whilst meeting the expectations of Birmingham's faith communities. The Faith in Birmingham Working Group is a powerful demonstration of what can be achieved when people of different backgrounds work together towards a positive goal."

[Nominated by Rebecca Fletcher]

[Birmingham Museums](#)



Special Awards: Audiences

Volunteer Team, Museum of Carpet

"Amongst the Museum of Carpet's visitor feedback, the most frequent comments received relate to the venue's excellent volunteers and the service they provide to visitors. The words 'friendly', 'knowledgeable' and 'informative' appear regularly throughout. There have been many occasions where volunteers have stayed longer than their designated shift or have popped in to simply say hello to those on duty and remained to show a visitor around, demonstrate one of the looms, or provide a short notice visit to the archives.

"Recognising that a quality customer service adds to a visitor's experience, the Museum's volunteers have driven each other and staff to maintain and exceed standards. The team's customer service is not just limited to those in a front of house or demonstrator role; archive volunteers also regularly provide an exceptional customer service. Upon requests to visit the archive to look at something specific, team members will search for additional objects related to the user's research of their own volition.

"Visitor feedback, as well as comments from staff who regularly work alongside the volunteers shows one thing clearly; the volunteers truly care about the museum's visitors and will do as much as they can to provide an excellent customer service." [Nominated by Elizabeth Broadway]

[Museum of Carpet](#)



Special Awards: Collections

Royal Leamington Spa Decorative and Fine Arts Society, Leamington Spa Art Gallery and Museum

"Leamington Spa Art Gallery and Museum (LSAG&M) nominated a group of volunteers from Royal Leamington Spa Decorative and Fine Arts Society (RLSDFAS) in recognition of over 11 years of dedicated work. The group has undertaken a range of collections care projects in this time, making an invaluable contribution to the documentation and preservation of the collections.

"After receiving training from a conservator, the volunteers learnt specialist handling and packing techniques, and how to reduce the environmental and pest related risks to the collection. They created detailed records of each object, adding more information to the 'description' field of the catalogue, and noting the condition of each object. They repacked the objects, using new packing techniques and also photographed every object, creating a new visual record of the collection. Limited resources at LSAG&M meant that this work could not have been carried out without the support of the RLSDFAS volunteers.

"The greatest benefits have undoubtedly been around collections care. The volunteers have significantly improved the storage of the textile, ethnographic and social history collections, which will aid the long-term preservation of them. They have created bespoke storage solutions for objects as varied as West African cooking utensils and a mayor's robe." [Nominated by Victoria Slade]

[Leamington Spa Art Gallery and Museum](#)



Special Award: Resilience

Margaret Thompson, Birmingham Back to Backs

"Margaret started her volunteering six years ago when she joined the craft team at the Back to Backs. Since then she has gone on to become a leading figure both in that team and at other National Trust properties. And thanks to her innovative thinking and entrepreneurial spirit, she has become a significant contributor to our retail efforts by generating much welcomed income for the museum.

"Five years ago, the Back to Backs launched a small retail area for visitors.

Margaret's entrepreneurial spirit immediately began to shine. Inspired by the "granny's apron" worn by one of her fellow craft team members, she started to research a wartime period wrap around apron. She produced a pattern, presented it to the management team and offered to make some to sell in the shop which were a great success. Margaret has spent five years researching 1930's fabrics, spent hours in fabric shops and scoured the country for bias binding. She now makes, by hand, around 60 aprons a year.

"Inspired by their success, Margaret and the craft team now create many other fantastic items for the shop. It is fair to say that her efforts make a significant contribution to our funds." [Nominated by Rheanna Edwards]

[Birmingham Back to Backs](#)



Special Award: Young People (Highly Commended)

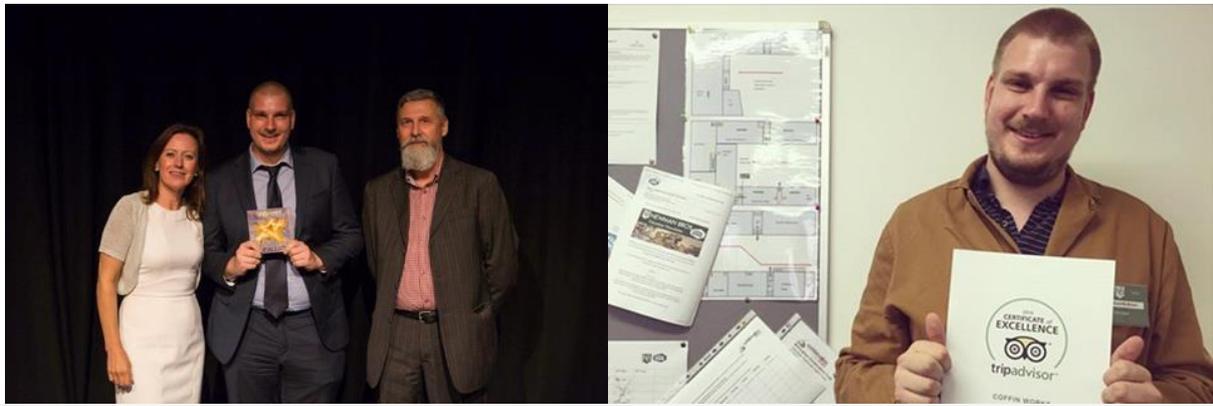
Thomas Corbett, Shropshire Regimental Museum

"Thomas began to volunteer in the role of interpreter in the spring of 2015. He is a recent Politics and Military History graduate from Aberystwyth University and a keen historical re-enactor. Through his re-enactment as a First World War soldier Thomas has helped bring our museum and history to life by providing a historical window into the life of our soldiers 100 years ago. During the summer months he can be found in full uniform patrolling the galleries and carrying out drill practice in the museum grounds, and even during his lunch break you'll find him eating ration biscuits while he continues to engage with our visitors. He has made a real difference to how welcoming and family-friendly the museum is.

"Since starting at the museum Thomas has branched out into various other roles within the museum, and continues to support the Curator and museum staff in all of their roles. He is keen to continually learn and try new things, and his support has recently extended to helping the Curator re-inventory and repack the collections store.

"He is a very proactive member of the museum and continually shares ideas and suggestions of what else we could do to improve our visitor experience. He has been a reliable and versatile volunteer and an undeniable help for such a small team of staff." [Nominated by Christine Bernath]

[Shropshire Regimental Museum](#)



Special Award - Young People

Adam Sutcliffe-Brown, Newman Brothers at Coffin Works

"Adam is autistic and has sensory integration dysfunction. Adam has just graduated with a first-class degree in Tourism from Birmingham City University and has a passion for Birmingham's industrial heritage. Adam brought a new idea to the Coffin Works to create an autism-friendly tour of the Newman Brothers museum. Adam originally joined the Coffin Works volunteer team to gain work experience in his summer holidays. Adam is autistic and has sensory integration dysfunction.

"He saw the possibility of creating an autism-friendly tour of the Coffin Works and shared soon got to work with colleagues and spent a number of months designing autism-friendly resources, including videos for the website with precise pre-visit information, exact timings and orders of events, what noises to expect in a factory – all vital information for an autistic person. He worked on creating a quiet room, a 'picture exchange' system for those not comfortable communicating verbally, a precise script and even an autism-friendly version of the 'Fred the Factory Cat' trail quiz for children. Finally [Relaxed@Newmans](#) was launched. It had an amazing impact on families involved, and for two of them this was the first tour they had been able to get the whole way through in years." [Nominated by Simon Buteux]

[Newman Brothers at Coffin Works](#)

Judges Award for Excellence

The Judges Award for Excellence was awarded to the overall winner from the eight category winners.

Adam Sutcliffe-Brown, Newman Brothers at Coffin Works

Adam says:

"Newman Brothers at Coffin Works see autism for what it is - a neurological difference with strengths and weaknesses – and it is this attitude that has given rise to opportunities for me.

The success (of the autism-friendly tour) has helped me immensely. It's given me a project that I can use to show that I am knowledgeable in some of the challenges of adapting a museum to autism needs, and that I have the skills and experience to help other tourism sites and companies adapt. The Coffin Works is an example I can use in the campaign to change the culture in the UK from one of merely awareness to one of fully accepting autism not as a disability but as a difference."



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