



SHARE Museums East: SHARE Volunteer Awards 2017

Case study Museum jobs aren't often glamorous. Whether we're knee-deep in the dust of a neglected store, clearing up after school visits or painstakingly packing 5,000 types of hat, ours is rarely a line of work for dressing up.

One of the exceptions came in June at the SHARE Museums East Volunteer Awards, held on a lovely summer evening at the Museum of East Anglian Life in Stowmarket. Volunteers have a tendency to get stuck into even more humdrum (but no less vital) tasks than staff. Rewarding them with a regional awards bash is a great idea. We at the Centre for Computing History in Cambridge were first-time attendees to the event, nominating four of our excellent volunteers for awards. We didn't dress up as such, instead donning matching museum T-shirts.

Upon arrival, we were directed to Abbot's Hall, the manor house at the heart of a very fine museum, and served with drinks and canapes. I found it particularly appropriate that the Museum of East Anglian Life was running an exhibition profiling the volunteers who work there. It was a great example of how people from different backgrounds can contribute in all sorts of ways to a real community museum. Soon enough we were summoned to a marquee for the ceremony itself. After some live music and a few short speeches, the first award was upon us.

As the gongs were dished out, it was wonderful to hear about the efforts of all the nominees involved. There was a real effort to include everybody, not just the winners. The winners took home a glass plaque, but other nominees were given 'highly commended' status, and everyone got a certificate. We were lucky enough to have one outright winner (Sam Doye, Outstanding Young Volunteer) and one highly commended volunteer (Chris Monk, Learning Volunteer) from our nominations. All that was left was photos on the lawn with all the fantastic volunteers from our region. After that, we all made our way home to our respective museums, with those dusty stores, messy school visits and 5,000 hats.

By Jeremy Thackray, Assistant Curator, Centre for Computing History

The awards were organised by SHARE Museums East and are a great example of how regional groups can work together to enhance the volunteering experience.

For more information visit <http://sharemuseumseast.org.uk/volunteer-awards/>

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