

Queen's Award



On Monday 10th September 2018, the Wirral & West Cheshire Expedition Committee Operating Authority of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award was presented with the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service by Her Majesty's representative, the Lord Lieutenant of Merseyside Mr Mark Blundell. Awarded for outstanding commitment over 60 years, the citation honours the many years of service of the volunteers who make up the committee. Receiving the Award on behalf of the committee was Brian Roberts, who has been a member since the very early days. Award Manager Jason Comber told of his pride in the volunteers in his welcome address: "We are extremely fortunate to have had so many enthusiastic, dedicated volunteers over the past 60 years, who have worked, and continue to work, tirelessly with young people providing quality expedition and DofE experiences to participants of the Award and this is our opportunity to celebrate and thank our volunteers for their commitment.

"Our current volunteers are a mix of people aged between 18 – 70+ years, covering many roles such as issuing Award Entrance Packs, validating Awards, finance and account auditing, expedition planning, training and supervision, First Aid and Safeguarding Training, Staff DBS Checking, insurance and AALA Licence Management, just to name a few of the roles that are undertaken outside of personal work and family commitments.

"I am extremely proud to be the Award Manager of this team of volunteers, who run one of the most successful Operating Authorities in the North of England, many of whom have completed the Gold Award themselves, who need no motivation, who constantly shine with enthusiasm and who always provide terrific support for the young people undertaking the Award."

A short extract of the history of the committee explains that towards the end of the 1990s, as numbers of participants trained, supervised and assessed rose to around 400 each year, and a further 300 were asking for support with the whole DofE Award, Wirral & West Cheshire Expedition Committee (W&WCEC) was granted the status of Operating Authority (OA). This was quite unique as W&WCECOA is the only OA in the UK which is not a local authority, national organisation or school, and is the only one to be entirely run by volunteers, not in receipt of any grants or financial support. At the same time, the requirements required of expedition providers meant that all the volunteers needed more formal recognition and qualification in Mountain Leadership and First Aid. W&WCEC then proceeded as one of the few voluntary groups to obtain an Outdoor Activities (Mountain) Licence through the Adventurous Activities Licensing Authority (AALA). This is a very stringent process and is renewable every three years.

With the granting of OA status, more work was involved in checking and authorising Awards on behalf of the DofE and this needed more volunteer time and input. Although most of the activity with young participants is at weekends, there is considerable planning and preparation throughout the year – on average the core group of volunteers probably have some form of activity or participation equivalent to alternate weekends throughout the year.

In 2018, some 62 years after the DofE was launched, W&WCECOA is proud still to be volunteering and a number of the volunteers have been doing so for varying numbers of years – in some cases having gained their own Awards and then seen their own children do so too.

A conservative estimate indicates that in excess of 800 years of service to the DofE has been achieved by volunteer members of the OA. The young people who have been directly trained and supported over the 60 years is over 23,000 and many more have passed through the OA in the course of having Awards validated.

Wirral & West Cheshire Expedition Committee Operating Authority is still going strong and wishing to serve and support the next few decades. The OA is honoured to receive the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service.

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Back Where We Belong



A book celebrating Tranmere's first promotion since 1991 has been penned by a Heswall author.

Back Where We Belong, written by Radio City Talk presenter Matt Jones, chronicles the club's three years outside of the Football League, culminating in that famous day at Wembley on May 12th 2018.

Featuring exclusive and candid interviews with manager Micky Mellon, chairman Mark Palios and goal hero James Norwood, the book tells the story of how Rovers came from the depths of despair to pure jubilation. They had spent nearly two decades in

decline, suffering three relegations in fourteen years, while the cup runs the club were famous for became less and less frequent.

And that's what made beating Boreham Wood 2-1 in the National League play-off final all the more sweeter. For many fans, it was the first time they had seen Rovers achieve any kind of success.

But it did not come easily. *In Back Where We Belong*, Micky Mellon reveals the trauma he went through after Tranmere were beaten by Forest Green at Wembley twelve months earlier.

"It took me to a dark place," he admits, adding how he has never known a bus journey home from a game to be so quiet.

Mark Palios also details his thought process behind buying the club in 2014, while James Norwood admits he had never even heard of Tranmere before making the move to Prenton Park a year later.

And then Connor Jennings reveals the serious illness that hospitalised him just days before the play-off final – only to return and make a telling impact at Wembley.

Author Matt Jones says: "Winning at Wembley was an extremely special day. I had been watching the club for 23 years and had never seen them win a promotion. The same goes for any other fan my age or younger.

"After years of suffering, the club had bounced back and there was a story to be told. This was more than just a promotion. It was an escape act. It was history. It was a step back to where Tranmere belongs.

"It was extremely enlightening speaking to all of the interviewees who were very generous with their time.

"And I hope this book appeals to not only Tranmere fans, but football supporters from Merseyside who want to read about the success story of a local team who are very much on the up."

The book is available for £12 from the Tranmere Rovers club shop or mattjones90.wordpress.com.