



Press Release

Norfolk Wherry Albion is first Flagship of the Year runner-up.

Photo Opportunity: 13 May 9am Ludham. National Historic Ships will be awarding the runners-up certificate on board Albion.

The 112 yr old black sailed trader, the wherry Albion, has been named the first ever 'runner up' in the 'Flagship of the Year' adjudication carried out by National Historic Ships.

In previous years there has only been one outright winner but this year the honour was created for the first time due to the high level and quality of applications received.

Martyn Heighton, Director of National Historic Ships, said: "Competition was fierce – however the entry from Albion was so strong and comprehensive that the adjudication panel decided to award a runner up prize and a cheque for £250 for Albion."

Built in 1898 and rescued from impending oblivion in 1949 the 60ft Albion has been in the care of the Norfolk Wherry Trust ever since. She is one of only two trading wherries remaining from an original fleet of over 300. Her huge black sail, measuring 1,500 s ft, has become an iconic feature of the Broads.

Over the last 10 yrs a rolling programme of restoration has been carried out by the Trust which this winter saw the replacement of her tabernacle knees. The technical shipwright works were in the hands of Maynard Watson and his assistant Kim Dowe, but the preparation and after care were carried out by volunteers of the Trust.

Trustee and volunteer project co-ordinator Roger Watts said, "We are delighted to have this exceptional award and see it as recognition of all the support and hard work we receive from our members and volunteers in keeping Albion afloat, in increasingly good condition, and available for cruising and viewing by the general public throughout our waterways."

The application was compiled by Paul Henry Gowman, a trustee, skipper, and the press contact for the Trust. He said, “All I did was to articulate the amazing amount of hard work and dedication that has gone into maintaining this grand old lady for over 60yrs – the majority of the work has been carried out by our band of volunteers with the monies being provided by our members and supporters combined with our charter income. It is enormously gratifying that all our efforts over the years have been recognised by such a distinguished body.”

Mike Brett, the Chairman of the Norfolk Wherry Trust said, “We are delighted. The fleet of wherries would have disappeared had it not been for the dedication of a small band of enthusiasts who rescued Albion. Their spirit lives on in the volunteers who give so much time and care to Albion today – and do it so well that we have received national recognition.”

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