

HMS Caroline Volunteer Programme

The 2016 HLF Project at HMS Caroline opened up many new possibilities for accessible, appealing and mutually beneficial volunteering but required the creation of a formal volunteer programme.

Our first step was to get our house in order, policies, health and safety, insurance etc., as well as preparation of spreadsheets to record expenses, hours given and training undertaken. While taking on volunteers can be rewarding, one has to be aware of and prepared for the ethical and legal implications.

We considered who would be likely to volunteer, who could be converted from a visitor to a volunteer and what groups may need more focused outreach. As may have been expected, young people and women were identified as target audiences (as well as traditional hard to reach groups for museums and heritage).

To date we have created three roles, Learning and Engagement, Visitor Experience and Curatorial. These role descriptions have been advertised on our social media and website, via third parties such as Volunteer Now and the Causeway Volunteer Centre, and through promotion at events and fayres.

We have received great feedback about our volunteers from a range of visitor's, including FIT's, schools, universities and community groups. The volunteers themselves have also found their experiences to be worthwhile:

"I enjoyed being involved, working with others to achieve something and just being on the ship... I really just love the objects, including the biggest one of all - the ship."

"It was a fun, engaging experience getting a closer look at the ship than a majority of the public enjoy and working with a range of nice people that I would never have met otherwise."

"A large portion off my life has been involved in the Caroline. I met my Wife on Board, my 3 children were baptized in the ships bell and I was connected to her for 29 years so when the opportunity arose I jumped at it."

During its first season we have benefitted from the energy and skills of 27 volunteers who have given over 655 hours' of their time. We have also achieved an almost 50/50 ratio of male to female volunteers.

Offering a range of short and long term roles helped increase the diversity of our volunteers, most notably our Curatorial roles, designed to help us to prepare for dry dock, in which the volunteers reported as having given them a sense of achievement. They also proved to be popular amongst men and women and provided opportunities for intergenerational volunteering.

Having a regular point of contact for the volunteers has helped to develop a personal connection with them and facilitated quick resolution whenever there was an issue.

The input of volunteers has been invaluable and the creation of a formal programme was crucial in facilitating this. Going forward we would like to explore more group volunteering, more ambassador roles and more opportunities for volunteers and staff to integrate as well as building on and strengthening the relationships we have already made.



Curatorial Volunteers Hannah McCartney and Arthur Halligey



Catherine Spencer and Victoria Millar with the October 2016 volunteers at their induction