

The 2005 District 1060 "Warwickshire Rotary Ring", a Rotary Youth Leadership Award (RYLA) Youth Exchange Camps and Tours programme was a huge success and enjoyed by all those taking part.

Eight overseas candidates were accepted onto the 2005 programme aged between 18 - 20
Jonathan Blondeau (BELGIUM): Radka Sobotova (CZECH REPUBLIC): Stefano Ruggeri (ITALY):
Ieva Gričiute (LITHUANIA): Dominika Kwiatkowska: (POLAND):
Katherine Amezaga (SPAIN) Myra Kamber (SWITZERLAND) and Emre Mergenci (TURKEY)



David Robinson and the Achievers - Outing to the Llangollen Eisteddfod

The programme for our Achievers was to travel on and learn about the inland waterways of the United Kingdom, operate the boat, the locks and to take the Helmsman's course. The course would give the Achievers a purpose besides enjoying a narrow boat adventure on the Inland Waterways in our District 1060

The first learning curve was to understand why it is called a Narrow Boat. Looking at the length of the boat it seems very big but once inside to their complete surprise, they see how narrow a narrow boat really is. The programme had been arranged so that with four bunks in each compartment and only three occupants there was plenty of room for bags and the usual clutter

Being a self-catering programme one of the Achievers was appointed head chef assisted by one other on a particular day. The Achievers already knew they would be responsible for cooking and feeding the volunteers so had prepared their recipes prior to coming to the UK and as one of the volunteer helmsmen, I can say without doubt that this was the finest and most varied culinary delight I have ever experienced.

At various times during the programme the appointed leader had to ensure they operated as a team in order to complete the route. Leadership qualities were shown throughout the programme together with skill and determination most fitting for this event to be a Rotary Youth Leadership Award (RYLA)



Radka steers the boat on the famous Hatton Flight whilst the team are sent to open the locks

Saturday and the crew were told they had to negotiate the Hatton flight of locks, part of which is called the "Stairway to Heaven" because they were designed to line up with St Mary's Church in Warwick (see background), a total of over 40 locks with an overnight stop arrival time of 6.00pm. A bar-b-q with the International Fellowship of Motorcycling Rotarians was planned for that evening but the team were running late and determined to get to the overnight stop. They eventually arrived in Hockley Heath at 10.30pm. The best laid plans on the waterways rarely run to time. Locks are often set against the boat with others waiting. So apologies to those who may have missed the boat (so to speak), the times on the programme were often beyond our control

From Hockley Heath the crew moved to Gas Street Basin in Birmingham. The basin was deserted as the previous night Broad Street had been evacuated following a bomb scare. The canals were peaceful and the crew were unaware of the crisis until they moored although the previous day's London bombings had been reported on the radio. Fortunately everything had been cleared and the boat called in to Earle Whiteman's boatyard for a pump-out before proceeding down the Farmers flight and the Aston flight of locks

The following day was a short journey to Drayton Manor. David Bowyer PDG had arranged a surprise for the crew and presented them with nine complimentary tickets courtesy of Rotary's very good friends at the Drayton Manor Theme Park. The Achievers were delighted as all they had to do was cross the road and there it was

Only two days left with just the theory part of the Helmsman's Course to go. All the crew had completed the training and safety procedures to enable them to drive the boat leaving Andy free to instruct the Achievers on the last part of the course whilst one of our WAYC volunteer helmsmen was aboard to help out if necessary

Finally Dream Catcher made her way to the mooring at Willow Wren in Rugby where the Achievers were presented with their RYLA certificates and collected by their hosts for the final day before their flight home