

Rotary Youth Leadership Award for District 2430 in Turkey

Described by RIBI on their website as a RYLA with a difference was certainly true for 2007 but in spite of appalling conditions with rivers closed and changed routes the District 1060 Rotary Youth Leadership Awards were a huge success. This was the first trip out for the narrow boat 'Dream Catcher', sporting her new livery, sponsored by the Rotary Club of Royal Leamington Spa with the Rotary logo on the side of the boat.

7 International students from different countries had enjoyed the hospitality of Rotarians prior to the RYLA week on 13th July where they would lead the crew on a 70ft, 22ton, £100,000 canal boat. The students on all 3 programmes took the NCBA Canal Crew course during the RYLA programme.

The changeover from the International to the UK RYLA crew was on 20th July when the 3 counties were brought to a standstill by the biggest deluge of rain since 1947. Who says canals don't flood? The towpaths were a foot deep in water, many of the locks were impassable, the Stratford-upon-Avon Canal was closed and again 7 students were put through their RYLA paces under appalling conditions.

Fortunately the weather improved on 27th July when the crew from District 2430 in Turkey took over for the third D1060 RYLA programme.



On the second day our Turkish crew encountered a narrow boat with a broken gearbox stuck in a lock belonging to Douglas, a 68-year-old English/Australian and although he looked a strong fellow our crew of 7 came to the rescue. With 3 lads on the rope, 3 girls, the group leader Erhan Bakir, RYLA Chairman of D2430 and myself working the locks we traversed 9 locks in 45 minutes, a record for student power!

This is the second time Douglas had been helped by Rotary. In 1963 he emigrated to Australia without knowing a soul and Rotary paid for his accommodation whilst they found him a home.

Having seen Douglas on his way the crew went back down the flight to bring their own boat 'Dream Catcher' through the locks. Arriving at the top of the flight for the second time the crew met the series producer for TV's Water World programme starring Timothy West. The crew spent the next 3 hours accounting their Rotary experiences and filming for the programme.



Now that has to be the ultimate PR for Rotary. The Rotary Club of Royal Leamington Spa sponsored the Narrow Boat 'Dream Catcher' owned by the Warwickshire Association of Youth Clubs to support an International RYLA programme organised by District 1060 in the UK for District 2430 in Turkey helping an Australian in trouble. International Rotary at it's best.

A visit to the Rotary Club of Birmingham rounded off a fantastic 3 weeks when John Quinton District Governor of D1060 presented the richly deserved RYLA Awards to the Turkish Achievers.



Who said Canals were boring?