

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**WHAT LINKS A COFFIN AND A VICTORIAN NOVEL? IT'S ELEMENTARY -
THE ASSOCIATION OF CHARITY SHOPS' ANNUAL AWARDS GO TO THE
WONDERFUL (AND WEIRD) AGAIN**

The Association of Charity Shops' Awards ceremony on 6 July again recognised the sheer dedication of staff and volunteers, as well as the quirkiest side of the sector.

And, proceedings were kicked off by Mary Portas, whose BBC2 series, *Mary, Queen of Charity Shops*, attracted up to 3m viewers in June. Speaking to delegates at the Awards dinner on 6 July, Mary Portas said;

"The energy and the spirit in this room tonight have made me believe even more in the potential of the charity retail sector."

Kath Schofield, a Director at Corporate College (Derby College), sponsors of the awards for 2009, said;

"Much of our business is helping charity shops to gain that competitive edge. So I am delighted that we can support these awards, which recognise charity shops' achievements, and the dedicated staff and volunteers behind them".

The *Young Volunteer* Award went to Rosie Kilburn, of British Red Cross.

Sue Azzopardi, Head of Retail at British Red Cross, said;

"I'm absolutely delighted for Rosie. Her dedication to the Red Cross, whilst coping with a serious illness, is amazing, and we are immensely proud of her.

I'm also delighted that British Red Cross young volunteers have taken this award two years in a row. Without dedicated volunteers, charity shops simply wouldn't exist".

The *Most Unusual Item* award went to St Luke's Hospice in Sheffield, which received an offer of some furniture and...two coffins. Although the Hospice wasn't able to take the coffins, it was – nonetheless – such an unusual offer that it was a clear winner. And, the *Most Valuable Item* award was picked up by Oxfam, which sold a first edition of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's first Sherlock Holmes novel, *A Study in Scarlet*. The novel, printed in *Beeton's Christmas Annual*, raised an astonishing £15,300 at auction.

A new award recognised innovation and imagination in the sector. The new *Innovation* award went to CLIC Sargent, which took its converted Routemaster bus to

Glastonbury to sell vintage clothing, which was a great success. The bus will now be visiting other music festivals across the country.

Other winning charities were *Cancer Research Wales* (for volunteer contributions), *Sense Trading* (for excellence in eBay trading) and the *Trussel Trust* Re-store team in Salisbury (for shop team of the year).

Force Cancer Charity, the *Compton Hospice*, *St Peter's Hospice* and *Oxfam* won awards for the highest profits for different categories of charity size.

Lekha Klouda, Director of the Association, said;

“Year after year, our awards highlight the very best of charity retailing in the UK, and this year is no different. Whilst charity shops are not immune to the effects of the recession, especially in keeping stock levels up, the sector continues to raise vital funds for charity and engage the support of the public. Our awards recognise, motivate and celebrate the tremendous contributions made by staff, volunteers and the charities themselves”.

ENDS

Notes for Editors

1. In 2009, the Association of Charity Shops has 280 member charities which, together, operate more than 6,800 shops in the UK (see www.charityshops.org.uk). In 2008, charity shops raised more than £120m for vital causes
2. The Association's conference runs from 6-7 July at the Keele Conference Park in Staffordshire. The conference is being attended by 400 delegates, exhibitors and guests
3. Full details of the Awards winners and runners-up are available (contact as below)
4. Corporate College specialise in helping organisations gain a competitive advantage through bespoke business solutions. The College currently works with many national charity shops providing training in retail, customer service, team leading and other areas

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