

World famous in a Yorkshire phone box



A friendship which began at a village railway station in Britain is behind a portrait of two beloved New Zealand Police veterans featuring in the world's smallest art gallery.

Senior Sergeant Mark Davidson, OC Wellington Dog Section, and the late patrol dog Ike feature in a line-up of frontline workers

during COVID-19 painted by British artist Julie Sobczak. And the gallery displaying them is a former telephone box in Yorkshire.



Mark and Ike in

2019.

The path to the phonebox begins with Julie McDougall, a senior policy advisor in the Leadership and Capability group at Police National Headquarters (PNHQ).

Yorkshire-born, she moved to New Zealand as a child but went back and forth several times as an adult. One such time was 2006, when her daily commute from Settle Railway Station in Yorkshire brought her into contact with artist Julie and the two became friends.

Fast forward a few years and the friendship between the Julies presented the opportunity to include a New Zealand frontline worker in an exhibition which features mainly National Health Service staff. Enter Constable Jane Dunn, Wellington forensic photographer, whose work with police dogs is widely known.

"Julie called and asked if I could help an artist friend in the UK who wanted a photo of a uniformed officer with a dog," she says.

"I mean, do you know me? Our dogs are beautiful animals who do so much for us. Mark took on Ike when he retired and when I sent the photo I sent a bit of a blurb as well.

"I think she liked the story of two old men together..."

Mark offers more flattering descriptions - 'handsome' or 'debonair', or 'swashbuckling'. And for Ike, the adjectives are even more positive.

“Other people would have no idea of the things that dog has done – he was special to Junior [Douglas, his handler for many years] and special to me. He was a one-off.”

Ike had a terrific working life “and it was good to be able to give something back”.

Mark wasn’t quite so sure of the merits of the gallery when Ten One told him it was a phonebox. “Well, I guess it’s better than the back of the toilet door.”

More seriously, he’s delighted that he and Ike are still doing good work – the exhibition is also a fundraiser for COVID-19 frontline workers.

And Julie McDougall notes that the gallery, despite its size, is quite the tourist attraction, along with the Victorian railway station where the story began.



Some more of artist Julie Sobczak's COVID heroes.

Related information

[Gallery on the Green website](#)

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