

GRAND TRUNK



November/December 2019

www.trentandmerseycanalsociety.org.uk

Chairman's Bit

Our first talk of this season (October 18th) was held at Kidsgrove Town Hall, because Red Bull Hotel is closed for refurbishment. It was a really interesting (if rather technical at times) explanation of why there is so much salt underground in Cheshire, and how its extraction has left the area riddled with caverns and underground brine runs. The caverns have proved very useful for storage of a national emergency supply of natural gas. However the underground brine runs have already caused much dramatic subsidence, and more must be expected. The talk finished with a map of how the planned route of HS2 runs right across the affected area!



Since that talk (unfortunately, as we could have told attendees otherwise!), we have found out that the refurbishment of Red Bull won't now be finished until 19th November. This is after the date of our second talk, so Gillian has booked Kidsgrove Town Hall again, and we will be back there for our second talk on November 15th.

The landlord at Red Bull assures us that our Christmas Meal (December 6th) won't need to be moved, and that our future talks (January 17th onwards) can be held as planned.

As I was typing this missive, I received an email from CRT announcing that "on Monday, 28 October" they will "install a temporary footbridge to replace Bridge 172A, Big Lock Footbridge". A big hurra, especially as they have already announced that "As part of the planned winter works, the existing footbridge will be transported off-site to be fully refurbished during the summer ready for repairs to the abutments and reinstallation of the bridge during Winter 2020".

With that good news, I will close and wish you a rather early "Happy Christmas", and not too much ice for those (like us) planning a New Year cruise.

Stop Press– Important Announcement

*Red Bull Public House will **not** after all be available for the November Talk (on 15th) by our favourite Patrick Marks.*

The meeting will take place (as in October) at:

**Kidsgrove Town Hall
(also known as Victoria Hall)
Liverpool Rod
Kidsgrove
ST7 4EL**

*Parking at rear, down right-hand side, or on street.
Enter through the bar*

Editorial

Hello everybody,

Please see the notice above– we were very comfortable here at the October talk and are grateful to the town hall for accommodating us again. Please come if you can, Patrick is an excellent speaker and is always worth listening to.

On the subject of Red Bull, our Christmas meal arrangements remain unchanged (and I'm really looking forward to it). Unfortunately the refurbishment means the menu had to wait! Please see page 20 and contact me or Roger if you would like to attend this special festive event.

As the nights draw in and the leaves fall, Christmas items appear in the shops and yuletide panic begins. *The Lady Beth* is snug under her covers awaiting our departure immediately after Christmas day. Once again stoppages foil our plans to head up the Llangollen, but we'll find some New Year peace, never fear!



Front cover– see page 15!

Cruising Franch Style (part 2)

We had to make our own way to Paris where our holiday started being picked up by coach outside the Gare du Nord, Everyone was there on time but the driver decided to wait half an hour because the traffic was in a gridlock. This didn't help and after an hour and a quarter we had gone round the block and were still within 200 yards of our starting point. The result was arriving in Briare much later than planned.

The itinerary for the week was basically the same every day, first breakfast followed by a morning excursion, back to the boat for cocktails and lunch followed by a cruise, moor up before dinner with time to wander round. This worked well as you could relax after the lunch time wine.

On our first morning we had a sightseeing trip around Briare on a mini road train. This was better than a coach as we were able to pass under the aqueduct along the towpath of the old canal and ended at the town's small but well equipped maritime museum. Back at the boat we cast off to cross the Loire river on the 662 metre Briare Aqueduct. At one time this was Europe's longest aqueduct and the masonry was built by Gustave Eiffel, builder of the Eiffel Tower. It must have looked splendid when it had lanterns on every post.



Again, as you can see, our boat is gauged just to fit.

That afternoon we cruised as far as Léré.

A wander round the small town revealed not only the old church but also an *old house with a round tower on the front of it*, these seem quite common in this area of France.



Saturday morning and the weather had taken a turn for the worse with a bad forecast, we should have taken umbrellas with us when we went to the coach but we didn't. Our first destination was the hilltop town of Sancerre where we had a walking tour in the rain that was now falling quite heavily at times. The views from the town are quite spectacular with the Loire River running through the valley. Again the external towers were in evidence, it seems the houses were built before they put staircases in passing through the floor above so they built external stair towers to get from one floor to the next.

After our visit we went to a nearby goat farm, this area produces a lot of goats cheese. To be granted the appellation the goats must have a certain amount of space and all food stuffs must come from within a certain area. While we were there the goats were inside and they were controlling the amount of daylight into fooling half of them to kid at the wrong time of the year so they had a constant milk supply. The visit ended with a cheese tasting session of different ages of cheese from 1 week to fully mature hard cheese. It was then back to the boat for Cocktails and lunch as we trav-

elled to Ménétréol-sous-Sancerre and our next mooring. We had a bit of time before diner so again wandered round the village, some of the houses are in a very poor state of repair.



Before mains water was available the village relied on wells and pumps for clean water, these were quite ornate and made from cast iron and were rotary pumps so fairly easy to operate.

The village also has a splendid viaduct that carried the railway across the village and valley.

Sunday and we went to Pouilly-sur-Loire where we visited The Tower of Pouilly-Fumé. This turned out to be the town Tourist Office where we first saw 2 videos about grape growing and how they protect the grapes from frost in the winter months, micro global warming. This was followed by a visit downstairs where the room was set out with lots



of **smelling jars**, these contained things like a selection of fresh fruit, honey, etc to allow you to identify the fragrances, there were also two darkened glass jars with mystery items to identify. They also explained how the composition of the soil affects the flavour of the wine. Once that was done it was

off to a vineyard to see it in practice where we visited different fields of vines and how the soil varied even from one side of the road to the other, it was quite striking, thankfully the weather had improved today but still not that warm. From the vineyard to the winery to see how the grapes are turned into wine and the all important tasting.

In this winery all their *fermentation tanks* are underground with precise temperature control on each tank to ensure the correct fermentation. The lady that owns it all did her work experience while studying in the UK so spoke very good English and was able to explain things very well.



As soon as we were back on the boat we were off once more, 3 of us jumped ship in one of the locks to walk the 5Km to the next lock. Before the boat left the lock the captain tried clearing the prop with his boat hook, I should add that the bows are right up by the cill at the head of the lock, so not much space. We hadn't walked more than a couple of hundred metres when I disturbed a snake, the largest I have ever seen in the wild about a metre long and 3cm thick. We rejoined the boat at the next lock and carried on to Herry, our mooring for the night. The crew have got deploying the gangplank down to a fine art, sliding it down from the top deck, latching it onto the main deck and then just lowering it to the bank. Once we were securely moored up the crew decided to clear the propeller properly, this involved Kevin the deck hand going in with the bread knife and removing a short piece of old rope.

On Monday our coach took us to La Charité-sur-Loire to visit the old Abbey on the banks of the River Loire. There is only about half the original building standing but inside is a model of what it was originally like. It's a very large building some 120 metres long and was consecrated in 1107, in 1559 it was partially destroyed by fire and in the 17th century four bays were rebuilt with a new facade. After the French Revolution houses were built against the

remaining 6 bays standing on the remains of the church.

Our next visit before returning to the boat was considered to be the least interesting where we visited a farm that had some non indigenous species of animals, but we did get a small glass of red wine and some nibbles before rejoining the boat. We were away in good time and before we sat down for lunch we spotted a pair of deer in the canal. The boat slowed to a crawl as they swam ahead of us until they reached a shallow part where they could climb out, then disaster nearly struck as one crossed the road in the path of a van, literally jumping over the bonnet, seeing this the second one took fright and jumped straight back into the canal, swimming from side to side ahead of us, eventually it turned back and swam towards where its partner had climbed out.

After lunch we came to the only stretch of towpath suitable for cycling so the braver ones set off on the bikes, one local resident has seen it all before! Our mooring for the night was Marseilles-Les-Aubigny on the edge of a bank side boatyard. Tonight was a special meal referred to as the Gala Dinner, this would normally be the last night of a cruise, but tomorrow night we all go into Nevers after dinner.

Welcome to New Members

Mr Mike Skelhorn

Of Wheelock

and

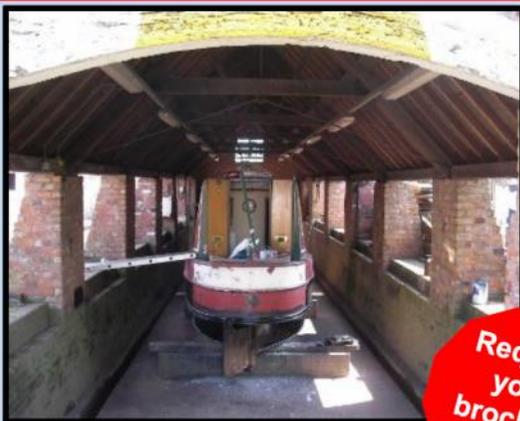
Cathrene Rowell

Of Northwich



We hope you enjoy being members of the society

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More on Big Lock Tail Bridge

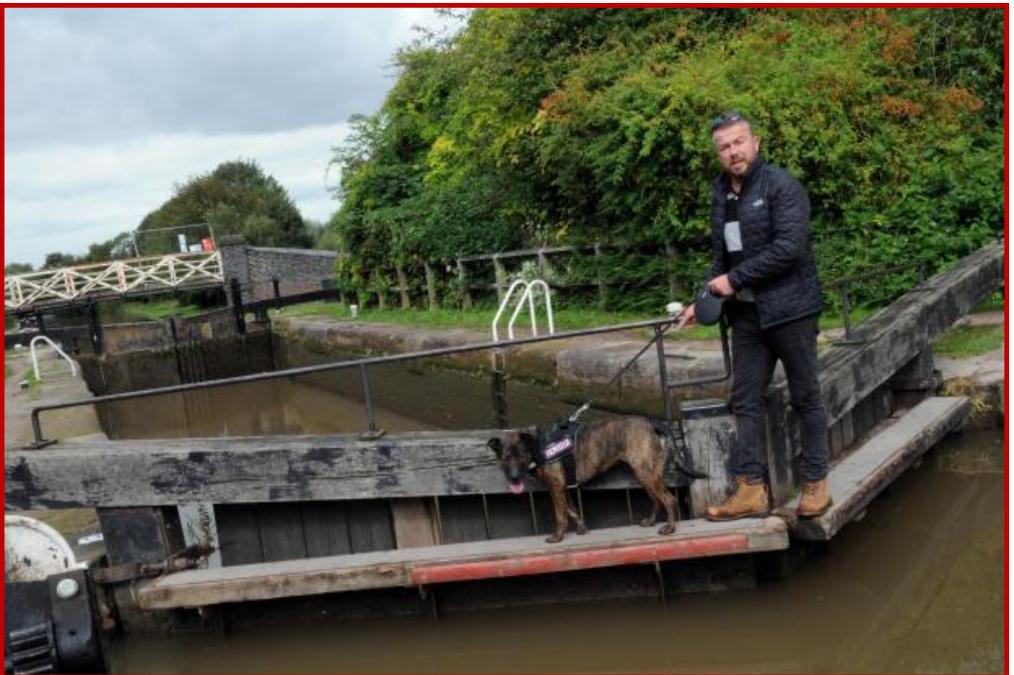
A MIDDLEWICH businessman is campaigning for the repair and reopening of a damaged footbridge over the Trent and Mersey canal.

Simon Lincoln, of Pennymoor Drive, is calling on fellow residents to sign a Change.org petition to repair the canal bridge at the Big Lock which has been closed to the public since February.

The 47-year-old dad of two, whose family regularly uses the canal to head into the town or walk their two pet dogs, says he was prompted to launch the petition after his wife Victoria almost slipped into the canal when using the narrow lock gate plank bridges to cross the water.

Simon said: “This bridge has been closed for almost eight months and needs sorting now. It’s not only causing a massive inconvenience for residents, but it is also extremely dangerous, given the only way to cross the canal is to shimmy across the lock itself.

“Cheshire East Council and the Canal and River Trust really need to get this sorted before someone gets seriously hurt.”



The original traffic notification from Cheshire East Council in February stated the bridge should only take 21 days to repair but in April the Canal and River Trust confirmed there was no fixed timescale to repair the bridge. Simon, who runs Simon Lincoln Recruitment Solutions, added: “It’s not good enough really which is why I thought I’d take to the internet and set up the petition. Hopefully with the power of many voices we can do something about it. If we don’t speak up, then it just won’t be a priority.”



Canal and River Trust said: “Our scaffolding contractors and their specialist designers have been working hard to overcome challenging site constraints in order to design and install the temporary bridge.

“As this is a bespoke structure accessible to the public, we are obliged to ensure that the design meets stringent safety criteria. The bridge design has been complicated by site ground conditions and underground obstructions and this has impacted the duration of the design and checking process.”

*Middlewich Guardian
18th September
By Gemma Sproston*

[See page 21 for information as we were going to press!](#)

Stone's Crown Wharf Development makes Good Progress

-but with no mooring provision for visiting boaters.

Development work by the Joule's Brewery company on the long-disused Crown Wharf site in Stone just north of Wyatt's Canal Cruising Co.'s docks and boatyard, is well in hand with the steel work of the new pub and theatre being finished and the cladding and roofing expected to be completed by the end of this year. The large site will incorporate a large "Taphouse" pub and a multi-function 140-seat theatre plus a Heritage Centre for Stone Town Council and will be of substantial benefit to the town and become a much liked canal-side attraction to boaters.



The Crown Wharf development in early October showing the proximity to the canal with the steel framework for the octagonal community theatre centre and left, and the main hall of Joule's Taphouse 'pub to the right.

However, the off-side moorings immediately alongside the development will be occupied, as now, by long-term moorers and will not be available to passing boaters, who will have to use the current well-used facilities nearby. This is a pity but access by foot via Workhouse Bridge and Crown Street is readily available.

Joules has funded and managed the whole project themselves and have generously made the theatre shell available to a recently-launched charity who will fit out and manage the building themselves. They have also renovated the old Fire Station on the site for use by Stone Town Council as a heritage centre.

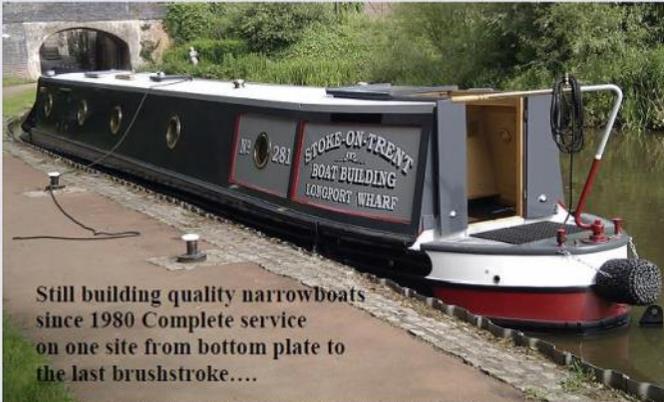
During the earthworks a run of pipes were discovered that possibly transferred beer from the original Joule's brewery in near-by High Street to the canal-side bottling plant upstream of Crown Wharf; it is hoped that the big Joule's painted sign on the extant plant overlooking the canal and familiar to boaters and walkers, will be repainted as part of the development project.

Completion of the pub element is expected in about 12 month's time with the theatre following in early 2021, once it has raised the considerable amount of money needed for the fit-out.

David Dumbelton

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Due to popular demand.....

For the coming season , **all events** will continue to be held in the upstairs room at:

**Red Bull Public House
Congleton Road South,
Stoke-on-Trent
ST7 3AJ**



***Talks are 7.30 for 8.00pm
(Get a drink and come on
upstairs!)***

***For further information
contact: Gillian Watson
01606 835 606***

There is no charge for attending and no need to be a member. Gillian recommends the food– she eats there before every talk!

Some speakers will bring objects or products to be viewed or bought– we positively encourage interaction!

The room will be open from 7.30pm, talks start at 8.00pm in two forty minute parts with a comfort break (and raffle) between.

Friday 15th November (See page 3 for late change of venue!)

Down the Tidal Severn by Narrowboat

Patrick Marks

Sharpness to Portishead with a pilot, Followed by ‘bonus footage’ from Portishead to Bristol under a famous bridge.

Friday 17th January 2020

Down South

Phil Clayton

London, River Thames, Lee and Stort and River Wey

Friday 21st February 2020

Women and Children living and working on canal boats

Bill Walker

Bill will take us through the significant changes experienced by women and children when they had to leave their cottages and live on the boats instead.

Friday 21st March 2020

CRT– speaker TBA

Brian's Mystery

On Tuesday November 20th 2018 member Brian Holt wrote in his blog.....

‘We passed another puzzle today beside Clear Water Lock 63 Malkin’s Bank. It must be 6 metres tall but the tubular bit at the bottom is probably about a metre tall. It looks like a giant pump but I wouldn’t fancy working the handle.’

nbharnser.blogspot.com

Brian is still unsure about the mystery object– a larger picture is on the front cover.

Can anyone provide the solution to this conundrum?

Possible answers will be published in Grand Trunk (as long as they’re not rude!).





Join Us on a Canal Work Party

Cheshire Locks, Trent & Mersey Canal
Monthly work party on the third Thursday each month
Jointly with IWA North Staffs & South Cheshire

Why not join us for our monthly work parties, on the Cheshire Locks between Kidsgrove and Wheelock, carrying out vegetation management and other tasks in the fresh air and good company?

Work parties run from 10am to 3pm on the third Thursday each month (except December) and volunteers are welcome to come for a couple of hours or all day. The meeting place varies each month, so please contact us for details.

All tools and equipment will be provided. Volunteers are advised to wear old clothes, stout shoes and to bring waterproofs in case of rain and a packed lunch if staying all day.

Contact: John Lawson
07940 878923 John.Lawson@waterways.org.uk

October Cheshire Locks

A couple of photos from October's work party when we commenced work on Lock 66 Wheelock Bottom Lock.



Eight volunteers spent another dry day preparing and painting lock ladders, strapping posts, top gate rails, paddle gear and balance beams along with some vegetation management alongside the lock and beyond to Lock 65.



John Lawson

FIREWORK SPECTACULAR SET TO WOW SPECTATORS AT CHESHIRE'S ANDERTON BOAT LIFT THIS AUTUMN

One of the most iconic sights on British waterways, the Anderton Boat Lift, often referred to as the 'Cathedral of the Canals' connects the Trent & Mersey Canal to the River Weaver near Northwich, Cheshire



Anderton Boat Lift's spectacular firework display in action last year

One of Cheshire's leading firework displays was back with a bang on Saturday 26 October. In an explosion of sound and colour, the Canal & River Trust's iconic Anderton Boat Lift, known as the 'Cathedral of the Canals' staged its annual musical firework display against the dramatic backdrop of the picturesque River Weaver. Blitz Fireworks, one of the country's top multi award-winning firework teams, aimed to exceed even last year's extraordinary display. On the night, gates opened at 6.30pm and family fun included a number of exciting fairground rides as well as the opportunity to buy affordable and tasty food. Big savings could be made by pre-booking advanced tickets online at visitcheshire.com/whats-on/box-office The event was sponsored by David Wilson Homes.

Special pre-booked tickets cost just £7.50 for adults, £5.50 for children and £22 for a family (two adults plus two children). All under three year olds go free but will still require a ticket. On the night, gate price was £9.50 for adults, £6.50 for children and £24 for a family ticket.



Multi award-winning pyrotechnic team, Blitz Fireworks from Crewe, who are known for the excellence of their synchronised musical display, as in previous years set off the fireworks from floating pontoons in the River Weaver. This technical challenge means visitors got an enhanced experience because they could watch the fireworks reflected in the glittering water from the lawned terraces of the Boat Lift.

As well as enjoying the fairground rides and play area, children could buy a series of imaginative glow-in-the-dark toys and gadgets. Delicious, freshly prepared, affordable food, including burgers, hot dogs

and chips were available on the night and there was a fully licensed bar in the Lift View Marquee.

Graham Wood, Duty Manager, Anderton Boat Lift, said: “The Lift’s musical firework display is really something special and is one of the highlights of the Lift’s calendar. Visitors find the setting magical with the giant lift overlooking the water and the wonderful interplay of music and sound as the fireworks and music synchronise. It really is an unforgettable night out for family and friends and a ‘must see’ event.

Press Release

Please send contributions for the next issue to me, Margaret English, by e-mail to margaretetlm@hotmail.com, by post, or by hand. Remember, this is *your* magazine. Contributions from the South especially welcome!

Last date for inclusion in the January/February 2020 edition is **01/01/2020**.

Trent and Mersey Canal Society Christmas Meal



Friday 6th December
(7 for 7.30pm)

At Red Bull Public House
Congleton Road South
Stoke-on-Trent
ST7 3AJ



Waterways menu

Starter

Broccoli & Stilton soup (v&gf)
oOo
Mozzarella sticks tomato relish (v)
oOo
Breaded mushrooms (v)

Main course

Butternut squash & rosemary risotto(v&gf)
oOo
Turkey breast in a honey & mustard sauce(gf)
oOo
Braised beef & onion (gf)

Sweet

Chocolate fudge cake (v&gf)
oOo
Cheese & biscuits
oOo
Christmas pudding

£19.95 pp



Plus the usual exciting quizzes, free raffle and excellent company.

***If you think you would like to attend, let Margaret or Roger know by
November 30th***

(phone numbers and emails are on page 23)

The following notification from CRT was received on 18th October.....

Lock 75, Big Lock

Monday 6 January 2020 08:00 until Friday 31 January 2020 16:00

Works to Lock 75 include repairs to the bottom gate cill, gate planking and chamber masonry. We will also be taking the opportunity presented by this closure to remove the damaged footbridge downstream of the lock.

The bridge will be transported off-site to be fully refurbished during the summer ready for repairs to the abutments and reinstallation of the bridge during **Winter 2020**.

Please be aware the towpath may need to be closed during the lifting of the bridge.

And on 25th October....

Please be advised our team will be onsite Monday, 28 October to install a temporary footbridge to replace Bridge 172A, Big Lock Footbridge on the Trent & Mersey Canal.

Lichfield IWA New Year Walk

Wednesday 1st January 2020 - New Year's Day Walk:

Alrewas and the Trent & Mersey Canal.

This is an easy 4 ½ mile walk on level ground, with no stiles. Meet 10:30 for a 10:45 am start in the car park of The Crown Inn, 7 Post Office Road, Alrewas, Staffs. DE13 7BS. Leaving the pub car park we walk through the pretty village of Alrewas and cross the A513 with care. Close to the site of the village's annual country show we pick up a footpath that leads us towards Fradley. Here we turn west and at the end of a quiet residential street we walk across open farmland to a road junction. We proceed along Hay End Road for a short distance and then join the Trent & Mersey Canal at Keeper's Lock. From there we return along the wide towpath, past three locks, back to our starting point.

**Contact Clive Walker on 07866 201873
or clive.walker@waterways.org.uk**

Barton Marina Artisan Markets

Enjoy a great day out at Barton Marina Artisan Market for quality local produce, bespoke crafts & goods. These are held on the last Sunday of each month from April to November, 10am- 4pm.

The Christmas Market will be held on the 14th & 15th December

Barton Marina, Barton Turn, Barton-under-Needwood, Burton upon Trent DE13 8DZ

Directions by Road

North: Leave M1 at J28 and take A38 south. Four miles past Burton-on-Trent, turn off for Barton-under-Needwood. Brown sign for Barton Marina first left after ½ mile.

South: Leave M1 at J19 and take M6 to J4. Take A446 until it joins A38 and 8 miles north of Lichfield turn off at Barton-under-Needwood.

M6 South: Leave M6 at J15 and keep on A50 until turning off for A38. Travel 10 miles south and turn off at Barton-under-Needwood.

M5 North: Leave M5 at J4a for M42 and continue until coming off at J9. Take A446 until it joins A38 and 8 miles north of Lichfield turn off at Barton-under-Needwood.

By Canal



We are situated on the Trent & Mersey Canal between Alrewas and Burton upon Trent, just above Barton Lock (No. 10) and bridge 38. The Trent and Mersey canal, surrounding countryside and picturesque villages can all add up to a whole host of beautiful scenery just made for a country walk or for the more energetic a cycle ride!

Make a day of it and take a well earned rest and refreshment stop at one of the Marina's fine restaurants and bars!

TRENT AND MERSEY CANAL SOCIETY

Registered Office: 10 Long Lane, Middlewich, CW10 0BL
Telephone: 01606 834471

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|--|---|
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*The Trent & Mersey Canal Society is proud to
support Burslem Port*

Bringing Boats Back to Burslem



Disabled boat Beatrice (now based on the Caldon) wins the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service, pictured here with our patron.