2016—another successful year for the Trust delivering Wheelyboat projects

COULAM WHEELYBOAT V20s were launched at: Connah’s Quay on the River Dee, Flintshire, by the Quay Watermen’s Association (above); at Randers Naturcenter in Denmark; at the Southampton Boat Show for Peter Langworthy; on the River Orwell, Suffolk, by The Woolverstone Project; and at Burghfield Sailability in Berkshire by Prior’s Court School. Mk III Wheelyboats were launched on Hillend Reservoir by Airdrie & District Angling Club and on the Hereford & Gloucester canal by Sailing 4 Disabled Rowing Pirates. A Coulam 16 Wheelyboat was launched on Ladybower Reservoir by Accessible Derbyshire.

Currently being built are Coulam Wheelyboat V20s and Coulam 16 Wheelyboats for: QE2 Activity Centre, Hampshire; Young Epilepsy, Surrey/Sussex; Draycote Fly Fishers, Warwickshire; and Forth Area Federation of Anglers at Linlithgow Loch.

Our Coulam Wheelyboat V20 demonstrator ‘The Anchorite’ has travelled widely this year and has been on display at the RYA Dinghy Show, Seawork 2016 and Southampton Boat Show all as guests of our outboard motor partner, Suzuki GB, whose support is very much appreciated. She has also provided demonstrations for Lymington Sailability, Queenborough Harbour Trust, Anderton Centre, Local Solutions/Liverpool Watersports Centre, Andrew Simpson Sailing Foundation and 1st Cuddington (Warspite) Sea Scouts all of which are now projects in hand for 2017 and 2018.

Other projects we expect to bring to fruition in 2017 include: 1st Jersey Sea Scouts; Caldecotte Experience, Milton Keynes; Assynt Crofters Trust, Sutherland; Mountain Ash Fly Fishers, Rhondda Cynon Taff; Sportfish/Haywards Farm Trout Fishery, Reading; Wilts & Berks Canal Trust; Cotswold Boatmobility; and Papercourt Sailability, Surrey.

Huge thanks to our principal boatbuilding partner, Jim Coulam (J M Coulam Boatbuilders), for his invaluable support. We also thank Joshua Preston Marine & Heavy Engineers who build our Mk III Wheelyboats and Mike Dore who repairs and refurbishes our used Wheelyboats.
Quay Watermen’s Association launch new river boat service with two V20s

TWO COULAM Wheelyboat V20s are playing a key role in putting Connah’s Quay on the River Dee estuary at the top of the list of must-visit places in North Wales. A once prosperous port is being revived as the Quay Watermen’s Association (QWA) carries out an ambitious restoration plan that includes the operation of two V20s as community Wheelyboats. Honouring the area’s rich maritime heritage, the Wheelyboats have been named ‘Kathleen’ and ‘May’ after the famous three-masted topsail schooner built in Connah’s Quay in 1900. Carl Sargeant, Welsh Assembly Member for Alyn and Deeside, was guest of honour for the Wheelyboats’ launch ceremony on 4 June.

Members of the QWA are keen to share their passion for boats and the river and the Wheelyboats are enabling them to provide everybody in the local community with access to the tidal River Dee – something that hasn’t been available for many years. The QWA secured a grant of £192,000 from the Big Lottery’s Coastal Communities Fund in 2015 and has already used part of the sum to fund the refurbishment of a disused Sea Cadets’ building into a new community centre. In 2016 almost £70,000 of the grant was used to acquire the two new V20 Wheelyboats. The specially designed boats, which offer safe and easy access for disabled people young and old, were the Association’s first choice. Powered by 90hp Suzuki outboards they can reach speeds of over 30mph. Sightseeing trips go upstream to Chester and downstream to Flint where ancient battles can be relived as they cruise past Flint castle. Nature watching trips take in the seal colony at Hilbre Island twelve miles down the estuary near Hoylake and to the internationally renowned bird reserve at Point of Ayr. Popular excursions include trips to Saltney and Chester, especially for cyclists who return to Connah’s Quay via the cycle path that runs alongside the river. The QWA aims to keep alive the history of the area and envisages a permanent heritage exhibition in its new Kathleen and May Community Centre. While plans for the future exhibition are not yet finalised, a live commentary pointing out the various sites of interest along the river is already in place for the Wheelyboat trips.

The project will benefit the region in many ways such as the three full-time equivalent jobs that have already been created and the expected growth in visitor numbers that will provide a welcome boost to the wider local economy. Jonathan Eeles, Director of the QWA, said “The Wheelyboats were a natural choice for the QWA. Like us, they are innovative, inclusive and exciting. We want everybody to come and try the new boats. Get involved, rediscover your river!”.

The QWA was formed by local fishermen and boat enthusiasts with the aim of preserving and restoring the Connah’s Quay dock area and to bring people to the river to enjoy it and appreciate its past. The Quay Watermen work to reconnect Connah’s Quay town with its maritime heritage and revitalise the waterfront. They organise activities that bring local people to the river to learn about its history and, above all, to have fun. The QWA is supported by The Big Lottery Coastal Community Fund, Heritage Lottery Fund and Flintshire County Council. To book a Wheelyboat trip go to www.quayrivertours.com. The QWA can also be contacted via Facebook at Quay River Tours.
First wheelchair accessible powerboat for Suffolk sailing charity

IN OCTOBER a Coulam Wheelyboat V20 was launched on the tidal River Orwell in Suffolk by the award-winning Woolverstone Project. The first wheelchair-accessible craft in the charity’s large fleet of adapted boats, she was launched by TV presenter Paul Heiney, Patron of the Woolverstone Project, and named ‘Egret’.

Up to ten adults, including six wheelchair users, can be accommodated on board and the drive-from-wheelchair helm enables wheelchair users to drive the boat themselves, making it a fantastic new asset for the group that focuses on providing sailing opportunities and tuition to people with disabilities. With the required funds raised in just one year, it is clear that the V20 Wheelyboat, which is able to reach a top speed of over 30mph with a 90hp Suzuki outboard, is going to be in great demand.

The Woolverstone Project is an RYA Accredited Training Centre and will, for the first time, be able to offer disabled people the opportunity to attain qualifications such as Powerboat Level 1 and 2 certificates and Powerboat Instructor. As well as helping members of the Woolverstone Project, Egret will also benefit a wide range of community groups across Suffolk, Essex and South Norfolk.

Providing as many disabled people as possible with the opportunity and freedom to participate in waterborne activities are the main aims of both the Woolverstone Project and The Wheelyboat Trust. The unique design of the Coulam Wheelyboat V20 with flexible seating, level deck and a watertight bow door that lowers to form a ramp means easy access not only for wheelchair users but anyone whose mobility is impaired. Paul Heiney said “I have been lucky enough to sail for most of my life and so I know the deep sense of freedom that comes from being on the water and the satisfaction it gives. That’s why I support the Woolverstone Project because I believe that kind of experience should be for everyone to enjoy irrespective of the hurdles that might be in the way.”

Egret’s launch was celebrated by a special four-tiered chocolate cake topped with a model of the boat kindly crafted and donated by The Outrageous Cake Company. As parents of a child with special needs, the company’s owners are keen supporters of the Woolverstone Project and they fully understand the frustrations that occur when disabled people are unable to access activities that able-bodied people take for granted.

Recognised in 2003 by the Queen’s Golden Jubilee Award for their services to the community, the Woolverstone Project is set to grow even further. At present, the project runs more than 260 sailing sessions each year and the addition of the V20 Wheelyboat to their fleet is expected to push this number significantly higher. John Wilkinson, Chair of Trustees of the Woolverstone Project, said “The Coulam Wheelyboat V20 was simply the perfect choice for us. The boat offers exactly what we were missing in our fleet and we can now provide new opportunities for people with disabilities to experience the freedom and joy of being out on the water.” Andy Beadsley, Director of The Wheelyboat Trust, said “We are very pleased to see the launch of the first wheelchair accessible boat in Suffolk. The Trust’s aim is to have as many Wheelyboats as possible throughout the UK to allow more people to enjoy taking part in waterborne activities, which is something we share with the Woolverstone Project.”

The Wheelyboat Trust raised funds towards the project and is very grateful to the following: Alfred Williams Charitable Trust, Annie Tranmer Charitable Trust, Aquarius Charitable Foundation, Bruce Wake Charitable Trust, Lionel Lyster 1980 Charitable Trust, Pennycress Trust and Mrs Marcia Brocklebank.

For more information about the services provided by the Woolverstone Project, including Wheelyboat trips, visit www.woolverstoneproject.org.uk.

L to r: Peter Hibberd (Trustee, Woolverstone Project) cheers as Paul Heiney declares Egret officially named and launched.

A delicious work of art!

Egret’s main base is Woolverstone Marina on the River Orwell.
V20 will benefit young people with autism

EIGHTY STUDENTS severely challenged by their autism will benefit from a Coulam Wheelyboat V20 helping them learn new skills and enjoy being active outdoors on a Sailability programme at Burghfield Sailing Club near Reading. The V20 was launched in October and is a joint venture between Prior’s Court Foundation, a charity supporting and improving life chances for young people with autism, and Burghfield Sailability, a charity that provides accessible sailing and boating.

Prior’s Court students have been sailing and boating with Burghfield Sailability for the past ten years, however they have had to share the Sailability boats with other organisations and this meant that only eight students out of the total eighty were able to take part. Although none of the students are wheelchair users, the V20 is particularly beneficial to them and their complex needs owing to its inherent stability and step-free access on and off—the watertight bow door that lowers to form a ramp means an easy and safe route on board for the students, some of whom find boarding from an unstable pontoon particularly challenging. The V20 will provide a new and more exciting sensory activity for the young people and will benefit their overall health and well-being. Enabling Prior’s Court students to enjoy boating on a weekly basis, the V20 will also allow the students to participate in the Sailability Achievement Scheme where they can work towards Certificates of Achievement as their knowledge and skills develop. Cara Brandi, Head of Fundraising at Prior’s Court, said “The new Wheelyboat will have huge benefits for all of the children and young adults at Prior’s Court and will now enable those with even the most challenging needs to participate and benefit from Sailability on a regular basis, building confidence and new skills.”

The Coulam Wheelyboat V20 was purchased with donations raised by Prior’s Court in partnership with The Wheelyboat Trust and Burghfield Sailability, the boat’s operators. When the new boat is not being used by Prior’s Court students, it will be available for the benefit of other groups who also participate in Burghfield Sailability’s sailing and boating programme. David Martin, Chairman of Burghfield Sailability, said “We are very excited about the new Wheelyboat as it is the first truly wheelchair accessible powerboat in our fleet. On average we work with between 25 and 50 clients plus their carers each week and this new addition means we can increase our capacity for Prior’s Court and others as well as offer an entirely new experience of powerboating for wheelchair users and others who find boarding from floating pontoons difficult.”

Andy Beadsley, Director of The Wheelyboat Trust, said “We believe that no-one with impaired mobility or a learning disability should feel excluded from getting out on the water and are therefore delighted to work with other charities such as Prior’s Court and Sailability. This is the 178th Wheelyboat we have launched but it is the first one to be based in Berkshire and it is gratifying that this Wheelyboat will benefit young people with autism who will enjoy the independence and freedom that you experience on the water.”

Mayor of Thatcham, Cllr Ellen Crumly, launched the Wheelyboat and named her ‘Dame Stephanie’ after Prior’s Court’s founding Patron Dame Stephanie Shirley.

Prior’s Court Foundation and The Wheelyboat Trust are very grateful to the following for generously supporting the project: Boston Foundation, Greenham Common Trust, Thames Water, Englefield Charitable Trust, Shanly Foundation, Sport England, Bruce Wake Charitable Trust, Rotary Club of Reading, Austin and Hope Pilkington Charitable Trust, The Worshipful Company of Shipwrights, Ammco Trust, Mr D Vickery, Mr and Mrs R Green, and Thatcham Town Council.

For more information about Prior’s Court Foundation and school go to www.priorscourt.org.uk. To take part in the activities at Burghfield Sailability, including powerboating and powerboat training in the V20, contact David Martin at davidandpatmartin@gmail.com.
THE TRUST has added another Wheelyboat to its fleet outside UK waters. Four Mk III Wheelyboats already operate in Denmark and, following its launch in August, a Coulam Wheelyboat V20 enables visitors to Randers Naturcenter to explore the River Gudenå Estuary. The centre, an educational and recreational resource located in the town of Randers in Jutland, has seen a major upgrade to its facilities including the building of a new harbour, boarding ramp and boathouse four years ago.

The Naturcenter is surrounded by hundreds of acres of wetland with an abundance of birdlife, making it a supreme location for educational and recreational trips on the River Gudenå. The V20 will join two Mk III Wheelyboats already in use at the centre since 2012. The V20 is designed for inland and inshore waters, powered by a 90hp motor outboard, and can accommodate up to ten adults including six wheelchair users. The design of the V20 makes it much better suited for trips into the River Gudenå Estuary, thus broadening the exciting offer for the centre’s visitors.

Lars Maagaard, Ranger at the Naturcenter who commissioned the purchase of the V20 from the Trust, said “Having previous experience with the Mk III Wheelyboats, we decided to extend our fleet with the newest model to allow us to take visitors further down the River Gudenå. The Mayor of Randers, Claus Omann Jensen, attended our launch event when we christened the V20 by taking a group of disabled children from a local school on the river. Seeing their excited faces proved to us that we couldn’t have chosen any better boat to operate at the Naturcenter.”

Since the launch of the first Wheelyboat more than 30 years ago, the Trust has mostly supplied boats to projects across the UK. However, its 178 strong fleet includes eight boats in the Republic of Ireland and five boats in Denmark, including the latest launched at Randers Naturcenter. The launches outside the UK and interest coming from other countries confirms the Trust’s belief that it is the only charity that designs, builds, funds and supplies craft like Wheelyboats in the whole of Europe.

Planning a trip to Denmark? The Naturcenter is well worth a visit. More info at www.randers.naturcenter.dk.

PERSHORE RIVERSIDE Youth’s Coulam Wheelyboat V20 was delivered late last year and has just finished its first full season. The Wheelyboat has been very busy and notable successes include an open day for local charity, Worcestershire Parents & Carers Community, during which 50 of its members enjoyed an idyllic trip along the River Avon deep into the Worcestershire countryside. While the centre works mostly with young people, Wheelyboat trips have been particularly popular with families and adult groups.

A local Mencap group has provided the centre with a grant to make boarding and disembarking the Wheelyboat easier. There is no slipway access to the river at the centre, only pontoons, so a low profile pontoon will be purchased from EZ Dock that will provide level access on and off the Wheelyboat via its bow door. The centre has also been awarded a grant from a local charity to subsidise trips for Wheelyboat users.

More information about the centre and its Wheelyboat can be found on www.pershoreriversidecentre.org.
Airdrie & District Angling Club upgrades its Wheelyboat

AIRDRIE & DISTRICT Angling Club took delivery of a brand new Mk III Wheelyboat to replace its Mk II Wheelyboat that had been in service on Hillend Reservoir since 2004. It was déjà vu for Andy Beadsley, The Wheelyboat Trust's Director, when he arrived with the Mk III in May as he had delivered the Mk II twelve year’s earlier. The Mk II has provided sterling service throughout its tenure at Hillend but was showing signs of wear and tear. Rather than have the older Wheelyboat repaired, the club decided to purchase a new one. The Mk II is no longer made, having been superseded by the Mk III in 2006. The Trust took the Mk II in part exchange and has had it fully repaired and refurbished and it is now awaiting a new home. Hillend Reservoir is a 345 acre trout fishery and has been run by the club since 1949. The club has recently built a new marina and slipway for its fleet of fishing boats and its clubhouse and car park have been extensively upgraded. There is excellent disabled access throughout. For more information visit www.airdrie-angling.com.

Dream comes true in the Peak District for Accessible Derbyshire

TWO WOMEN who have six children between them, three of whom are disabled, along with an unrelenting drive to make the most out of life, celebrated as their dream of a Wheelyboat on Ladybower Reservoir came true. Resulting from a project between Accessible Derbyshire, a charity set up by Gillian Scotford and Jane Carver, and Ladybower Fisheries, a Coulam 16 Wheelyboat was launched in October making the popular Peak District reservoir accessible for all.

The Coulam 16 Wheelyboat is a purpose-built reservoir fishing boat designed by its builder, Jim Coulam, and The Wheelyboat Trust. As well as supplying the Wheelyboat, the Trust helped Accessible Derbyshire and Ladybower Fisheries acquire the Wheelyboat by raising 50% of its cost. Many people supported the fundraising efforts, including local clubs, friends and anglers at the well-known trout fishery, who have all joined in to support the dream of providing hassle-free and independent access to the reservoir.

The unique design features of the boat are not immediately obvious—wheelchair users board the Coulam 16 Wheelyboat via a ramp from the pontoon onto a hydraulic platform that lowers from gunwale to floor level. Removable handrails around the platform help keep the angler safe while boarding and disembarking, a procedure that requires only one able-bodied helper.

Gillian Scotford, co-founder of Accessible Derbyshire, said “We are just approaching the end of our two-year challenge to make the Peak District National Park the most accessible national park in the UK and the launch is very special to us. We want everyone to be able to enjoy the great outdoors and one of the first things we dreamed about was a Wheelyboat on Ladybower as it is such a beautiful place. To achieve this dream is absolutely fantastic and we are so excited to have launched the boat.”

The Wheelyboat Trust is very grateful to Lord Leverhulme’s Charitable Trust for their grant towards the project.

For more information on the work of Accessible Derbyshire go to www.accessiblederbyshire.org. To find out more about the fishing and to book the Wheelyboat go to www.ladybowerfisheries.co.uk.
THANKS TO our PR team, Firebird PR, our media profile rose considerably in 2016. The year began with articles in All at Sea, the MS Society’s magazine New Pathways and the British Polio Fellowship’s The Bulletin. The year ended with articles in Waterways World and Sussex Living. In between there were articles in Ship & Boat International, Coast and Motorboat Owner. Publicity for each Wheelyboat launch was extensive across all formats—print, online and broadcast media and included news items on BBC Radio Wales, BBC Radio Sheffield and Radio Deeside. Online articles appeared on the BBC and ITV websites. An article in All Together Now! about the launch of the two V20s for the Quay Watermen’s Association has led directly to a new Wheelyboat project developing in Liverpool. That’s Solent TV broadcast an interview with the Trust recorded at the Seawork 2016 show, while publicity for Seawork 2016 and Southampton Boat Show featured Wheelyboats and the work of the Trust. In September the Trust played a minor but important role in the well-publicised, famous—but-bonkers Bramble Bank Cricket Match, an annual contest with teams from the Royal Southern Yacht Club and Island Sailing Club playing each other in the middle of the Solent when the Bramble sandbank briefly dries out on a low spring tide. Our role was to deposit national treasure, friend of the Trust, transatlantic yachtsman and wheelchair-user, Geoff Holt, onto the bank to play in the match. The V20 was the perfect tool for the job.

WHEELEYBOATS in the media

WHILE THE Wheelyboat Trust works to help groups and organisations acquire Wheelyboats to provide disabled people with the opportunity and freedom to enjoy water-based activities all over the UK, the accessible boats are also available for purchase privately by individuals for their own use. Peter Langworthy took delivery of his own Coulam Wheelyboat V20 at the Southampton Boat Show in September. Peter, who is a keen angler, has been a wheelchair user since 2002 following a workplace accident. He visited the Trust’s marina berth at the boat show in 2015 to take a closer look at the V20 and decided to purchase the craft after a test drive with Andy Beadsley, the Trust’s Director, who is also a wheelchair user.

Peter’s V20 is fitted with Suzuki 115hp and 6hp outboards, bimini cover, water-ski post, chartplotter and fishfinder among other features. Peter said “After the demo spin last September, I was confident that there can hardly be any other boat that would be more suitable to my needs as a disabled angler. It is the most versatile boat I have come across—the huge amount of floor space and a drive-from-wheelchair helm give me all the freedom and opportunities to enjoy the thrill of fast-paced powerboating and boat fishing I have always loved.” Peter has named his new boat ‘Caroline’ after his sister who died of breast cancer shortly after his injury.

Insurance policy for Wheelyboat operators

WE HAVE teamed up with insurance company IRCM to offer Wheelyboat operators a bespoke insurance policy for their Wheelyboats. It is very important that the work of the Trust has the support of a broker who fully understands the role Wheelyboats play, that they are purpose-built for the job and that being mobility impaired should not be a barrier to participating in waterborne activities. Some insurers perceive disabled people taking part in activities on the water as high risk and price their policies accordingly. Not only are IRCM’s policies tailored to fit the needs of Wheelyboat operators but they are also very competitive. We are very pleased to be able to recommend to Wheelyboat operators a policy we have absolute confidence in regarding its price and the cover provided. For more information contact Mark Elcocks at markelcocks@ircmsc.co.uk or on 01902 796793.
Welcome Ian Thornley OBE

WE SAY goodbye to John Fisher as Trustee and thank him for his six years of service and welcome new Trustee, Ian Thornley OBE. Ian received his OBE for services to disabled people in his role as a Non-Executive Director and Chairman of the Audit Committee of Remploy from 2006 to 2015. He is a Chartered Accountant and Non-Executive Chairman of Equal Approach, a diversity and inclusion consultancy. He is also a founder director of MB Education, a specialist corporate finance and strategic consultancy to the education sector. Welcome aboard!

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PLEASE DONATE—IT'S VERY EASY....

Our work is entirely reliant on income from donations, we receive no statutory funding. Donations can be made online via the Donate/Support Us page on our website, www.wheelyboats.org. We welcome legacies, so please remember us when writing your will (more info and a codicil form can be downloaded from our website’s Donate/Support Us page). Members of clubs/societies/fisheries—please nominate us as your charity to support.