

News story: Sellafield leader awarded by the Duke

Dorothy Gradden, head of legacy ponds at the nuclear site, was presented with her medal in recognition of her services to the nuclear industry.

She attended Buckingham Palace with her son Josh and partner Paul Stewart, who also works at Sellafield Ltd.

Dorothy said:

It was an incredible day.

To walk through the Palace gates, under the Royal balcony and up through the steps into the ballroom, knowing who has walked up those steps before you was just mind boggling. I'll never forget it.

The Duke of Cambridge expressed an interest in Dorothy's work to decommission the legacy ponds, during a private conversation while presenting the award.

He said he'd never actually visited Sellafield but had skirted around its no-fly zone on several occasions while serving with the RAF.

When asked how she managed to do a job which involves moving legacy hazards on a daily basis, Dorothy replied "safely".

It was while in the cloakroom of Buckingham Palace that Dorothy found herself standing next to the author of the world's best-selling book series, Harry Potter.

Dorothy said:

I was adjusting my hat and there was JK Rowling in the mirror standing next to me adjusting hers. It brought home just how big a day this was.

Dorothy is in charge of decommissioning the two open air nuclear storage ponds at the Sellafield site, a programme that has taken huge strides forward under her watch.

She said:

I really do feel that this is what my career has been all about. I have the best job on site, technically challenging, leading a large culture change programme and delivering risk and hazard reduction

every day. It really is a privilege to do this job.

A total of 60 people received their awards on the day, from the fields of education, business, theatre, music and the diplomatic service. After visiting the Palace in the morning, there was a treat of afternoon tea at the Savoy.