

# EAST SUSSEX

*News from and about members*



## And a thousand voices sang...

**Below:** With soprano Kirsty Hopkins, Veronica Christophers, Harry Christophers CBE and former High Sheriff Kathy Gore OBE DL after The Sixteen Christmas Concert at Glyndebourne

**W**HAT A privilege to be High Sheriff in 2014/15, one hundred years after the outbreak of the Great War. I shared in many commemorations across East Sussex and on the Western Front, and whether in city, town or village, each event carried its own poignancy, a reflection of the losses felt by every community. It has been a pleasure to participate in many of these events alongside Peter Field, Lord-Lieutenant of the county.

The enormity of the conflict and its global nature were perfectly illustrated at the Chattri Memorial on the downs north of Brighton when 600 people gathered in the presence of the High

Commissioner of India, on a hot June day, to pay their respects to Hindu and Sikh soldiers who died of their wounds in Brighton hospitals and were cremated here. They died in a land so distant from their own, fighting out of loyalty rather than understanding.

I wanted to add to the initiatives aimed at raising Great War awareness among the young. I invited the military historian and battlefield guide Jeremy Banning to talk to sixth-form pupils from across the county. They found his illustrated talk astounding, as did members of Royal British Legion, SSAFA and the Royal Sussex Regiment.

I crossed the Channel twice. In August I was a guest of the Mayor and people of Dieppe at their





annual commemorations of the 1942 Dieppe Raid. In September I drove to the small village of Priez, where a monument was unveiled to the fallen of Royal Sussex Regiment. The Mayor of Priez has been in post for over fifty years and was unimpressed that my term of office was only for one!

More distant Sussex history was entertainingly remembered when I processed with the Mayor of Lewes to welcome 'Henry III' on the bridge over the River Ouse on the eve of the 750th anniversary of the Battle of Lewes. Unfortunately the King's horse refused to behave, and he had to dismount.

An unusual event in Newhaven, jointly hosted by the Embassy of Vietnam and Newhaven Town Council, was attended by the Ambassador, HE Vu Quang Minh, as we marked Ho Chi Minh's link to the town and his 125th Birthday. The founder of the modern Socialist Republic of Vietnam once worked as a pastry chef on the cross-channel ferry. Who knew?

I will not forget the achievements of small charities, so often run on a shoestring by volunteers who make such a fundamental contribution to society. The East Sussex Community Foundation introduced me to many such charities, and it was a pleasure to give High Sheriff's Awards to Brighton's Chattri Memorial Group and to Little Gate Farm, near Hastings, a project for kids and adults with learning difficulties.

I must mention the Respond Academy in Hastings, a charity which encourages children who have had exclusion problems at school or brushes with the law to broaden their horizons. I entered them into the National Crimebeat Awards and they

came third – a fantastic achievement.

I have enjoyed visiting the emergency services. Despite financial constraints there is a determination not to let standards slip, and all I spoke to agreed there was a limit to cut-backs before standards are put at risk. Involvement with the emergency services has highlighted the enthusiasm shown by cadet training groups. I gave out Scouts awards too, and, I must say, Bear Grylls is an excellent role model!

I visited Sussex Police Advanced Driver Training team and Tactical Pursuit and Containment (TPAC) exercises on the M23 – I hope my driving has improved! My wife and I also visited Sussex Police headquarters to support those who help keep the show on the road, out of the public eye.

It was also a privilege to present Court Awards to individuals who helped secure convictions as witnesses – underlining the connection between the Shrievalty, the wider community and the judiciary.

The role of High Sheriff opens many doors. In December, I brought together two stars of the musical world in a Christmas concert at Glyndebourne. Harry Christophers and The Sixteen enthralled a packed house, and £63,000 was raised for hospices throughout Sussex at an event which was only possible thanks to the terrific Friends of Sussex Hospices, Glyndebourne and our generous sponsors. To round things off we all joined in singing carols with The Sixteen; thus over 1000 people can now say they too have sung at Glyndebourne!

❖ **Christopher Gebbie OBE**  
*High Sheriff of East Sussex 2014-15*

**Above left:** With HE Vu Quang Minh, Ambassador of Vietnam, at a celebration of the links between Newhaven and Vietnam

**Above:** With Chelsea Pensioners at the First World War Civic Commemoration at Brighton