



## A 'tight' call

**Below:** The High Sheriff, the Hon Mrs Justice Theis DBE and the Lord-Lieutenant of East Sussex, Mr Peter Field at Battle Abbey on the day of the Judicial Service

**Bottom left:** At the Second World War landing commemorations with civic leaders from East Sussex and Dieppe

DESPITE THE long notice (with the caveat that nothing can be done until after the November nomination ceremony naming) I still felt somewhat unprepared as I took the oath of office.

The Declaration at the Lewes Crown Court before a former colleague of mine, Mr Justice Cranston, was a grand affair with a licence granted so that I could legally wear my sword on the street.

I was pleased that in East Sussex we have the Grissell family to thank for a historic sword passed down to the High Sheriffs for some decades. The court dress was purchased from Oxford via the magazine's advertisement page and with a few alterations looked as good as new.

I soon realised that almost everyone wants the new High Sheriff to wear the uniform so we occasionally have to rely on our engagement forms which carry the condition that 'the High Sheriff will be guided by protocol'. Having said that I think I have probably worn the uniform as often as would be respectable, maybe a score of times.

Of course the uniform is particularly interesting to young people. One lad recently asked, pointing to the ceremonial sword, 'Have you ever killed anyone with that?' 'Not yet,' I ominously replied. I hope I didn't frighten him too much!

For those who are not used to



regularly wearing stockings or tights (I appreciate around 50 per cent of the nation already do so) it has been a challenge to time the process of dressing and I would be interested to know how others succeed.

One of my recent engagements (and a very special one) was to attend the Second

World War landing commemorations in Dieppe along with council leaders, mayors and chairmen. Over a two-day period there were five separate events all solemn and moving but mostly followed by champagne and canapés (tea and biscuits are not the French style). When I arrived in Dieppe I was informed by the French driver that the first uniformed event would take place in 15 minutes. I rushed to my hotel room and re-appeared in 8.5 minutes flat. It is still my record but I would be interested to know if it is worth submitting to the Guinness Book of Records!

One of the most interesting roles is an invitation to 100th birthdays and the like and of course a small gift is appropriate. To that end I have come up with a printed sticky-backed shrieval label which, when fixed to a box of chocolates, makes a memorable and not too expensive gift.

♣ **Michael Foster DL**  
*High Sheriff of East Sussex 2016-17*

