



Powys 2012-13

Powys is a large, rural county comprising the old counties of Breconshire, Montgomeryshire and Radnorshire, and stretching over 100 miles from north to south and about 60 miles from west to east. I travelled many miles during my year in office, in our beautiful and varied countryside and never once sat in a traffic jam!

Since Powys has no Crown Courts, the High Sheriff's role is very open to individual interpretation, with relatively few set-piece functions, such as entertaining High Court Judges. I chose, therefore, to concentrate on the grass roots of the judiciary and all aspects of the police, as well as the voluntary sector.

In each of our three main towns there are Magistrates' Courts where I was welcomed in every one I visited and sat in on some fascinating and varied cases. During the year, I presented long-service awards to several magistrates who had given over 30 years voluntary service to their communities.

I also sat in the Coroner's Court in Brecon and spent a very interesting morning with the Probation Service, where I appreciated their valuable work. I also spent a wet and windy autumn day at the Elan Reservoir where young men were doing community service. They told me it was not an experience they wanted to repeat, so perhaps this is a sufficient punishment to prevent reoffending.

Thanks to my neighbouring High Sheriffs in South and Mid Glamorgan, I was invited to sit in the County Court in Merthyr Tydfil and the High Court in Cardiff. We also had the pleasure of entertaining Mr Justice Wyn Williams to dinner at our home and of acting as joint hosts at the Mansion House in Cardiff for a dinner for several visiting Appeal Court Judges, a fascinating introduction into the highest realms of our legal system.



Reviewing the Gurkha troops with Major Khusiman Gurung, Officer commanding the parade and the Mayor of Brecon, Councillor Paul Ashton.

The Army plays a prominent role in the local community, especially around Brecon. One of the highlights of the shrieval year is the annual Freedom Parade of the Gurkhas, where, with the Mayor and the Brigadier commanding the Army in Wales, I took the salute and inspected the troops, a great and unforgettable honour. This has taken place in Brecon every year since 1986 when they were given this privilege by the Town Council in recognition of their service to the community. The Gurkha Company (Mandalay) was led by the Band of the Brigade of Gurkhas and the Pipes and Drums of the 2nd Battalion Gurkha Rifles, a fine spectacle on a rare hot, sunny day. I was privileged too to take part in the Welcome Home Parade in January for the Welsh Guards, back from serving in Afghanistan. It was wonderful to feel the warm reception of the crowds in Ystradgynlais.

Dyfed-Powys Police Force covers more than half of Wales and I visited their headquarters in Carmarthen several times. The police protect the harbour at

Milford Haven, where a large part of the UK's energy supplies enter the country, and the Armed Response Unit has to be ready at all times to go into action. From a rigid-hulled inflatable boat (RHIB), we watched highly trained officers, carrying heavy automatic guns and wearing full body armour, practising boarding a ferry moving at speed – a very skilled manoeuvre. I spent an evening on the beat on foot in Brecon and was impressed by the natural way the police sergeant engaged with the youngsters we met.

For my Awards in the Community I focused on the varied and innovative grass-roots work of the Police Community Support Officers throughout Powys, celebrating their extraordinary achievements. Later I witnessed the helicopter operations of the Police Air Support Unit at Pembrey, which plays a vital role in such rugged terrain as the Brecon Beacons. The tremendous power of their search cameras and heat-seeking device was demonstrated to us in a flight over the snow-capped Beacons.



News from and about Members



Setting off in the RHIB on our tour of Milford Haven harbour with officers of the Armed Response Unit, my husband Andrew and the High Sheriff of Dyfed, Professor Elan Closs Stephens.

The Brecon Mountain Rescue Team also demonstrated their vital work. These dedicated and skilled volunteers often put their own lives at risk searching for and rescuing ill-equipped walkers and Army trainees.

As were many High Sheriffs last year, we were presented to Her Majesty The

Queen and The Duke of Edinburgh on their Diamond Jubilee tour of South Wales. The wet and windy April day in no way diminished the warmth of the occasion. HRH The Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall visited Brecon Cathedral in July, the Duchess dedicating a stained-glass window to celebrate the Diamond Jubilee at

Penmaes School, Brecon's wonderful special needs school, of which I am a governor.

In the voluntary sector my main interest was to encourage those working in the field of mental health, and I raised funds for a Brecon charity which gives valuable support to vulnerable people in need of help. Sadly, it seems that so many in the hands of police and coming before the magistrates often suffer from some sort of mental health problem.

Looking back over the year, I know how lucky I was to meet so many people dedicated to service in the community. The Office of High Sheriff is both a privilege and commands respect, and by adaption it retains its relevance in today's complex world. It has been an enriching experience and I hope I managed to contribute something of lasting value to the community in Powys. □

Lady Large
High Sheriff of Powys 2012-13