



Devon 2012-13

As I look back on my year as High Sheriff of Devon, my activities seem to have fallen into four main categories – justice, ceremonial, blue lights and volunteers – with some inevitable overlap.

2012 was memorably the year of Her Majesty The Queen's Diamond Jubilee which was greeted with heartfelt celebration throughout the county. When Her Majesty and HRH The Duke of Edinburgh came to Exeter on 2 May, the atmosphere in the city was electric. It was a wonderful day in so many respects – the weather was kind, the crowds enormous, and the theme absolutely in line with what Her Majesty wanted – the celebration of the work of the 'unsung heroes' of Devon, 50 of whom were presented to Her Majesty and HRH The Duke of Edinburgh at a great reception at the University of Exeter. We have welcomed many other members of the Royal Family to the county during the year to honour groups and organisations of all sorts.

There has been ceremonial as well. National Armed Forces Day was marked in 2012 in Plymouth in the presence of HRH The Earl of Wessex. Enormous crowds cooked in the unexpected sunshine and our ancient maritime city was on spectacular display. Prince Edward returned to the county a couple of months later to receive, on behalf of Her Majesty,



YMCA Job Shop for young and vulnerable adults, Exeter. Enthusiasm unbottled.



Visit to the Forches Youth Intervention Trust garden, Barnstaple – a happy place on a filthy day.

Devon's Diamond Jubilee gift, a monumental sundial constructed in brilliant stainless steel at Roadford Reservoir.

An important part of the remit of a High Sheriff is to engage with the administration of justice in the county; thus it has been my privilege to sit in court with visiting High Court Judges. I have also visited Magistrates' Courts, and Dartmoor, Exeter and Channings Wood prisons. I attended a parole board hearing and have had close engagement with the Probation Trust and the offender management programme.

Something that really will stick in the memory is meeting so many of those who volunteer to help others less fortunate than themselves – victims of crime, perpetrators of crime trying very hard to kick the habit, the homeless, drug addicts. And there are others who work to make our towns and villages safer. This county is blessed indeed to have a hidden army of such volunteers who seek no recognition or praise, but without whose dedication and commitment, large chunks of our social fabric would quite simply disintegrate.

We owe them a huge debt, a debt we can perhaps repay by joining them – they are a very happy bunch of people! It was an honour for me to be able to recognise just a few of these volunteers by presenting them with a High Sheriff's Award at County Hall in February. It was a very special occasion for all of those present.

Through my links with the Devon Community Foundation, I was able to visit several groups working in more deprived communities. The Forches Youth Intervention Trust takes youngsters off the streets and gives them worthwhile and fun things to do; they have established their own garden in which they now grow vegetables commercially for sale, as well as gardening for elderly local residents. Street crime on the Forches estate has dropped dramatically.

Exeter YMCA provides safe accommodation for ex-offenders and vulnerable young adults. It also has a very active Job Shop, giving guidance and support to those struggling to get back to work. It is, of course, over-subscribed.



News from and about Members



High Sheriff's Awards to speakers from Devon's Learn2Live Road Safety Campaign. Each of the ladies has been visited by tragedy through road accidents, three of them losing a child or sibling. Ashley, in the wheelchair, was rendered quadriplegic through a traffic accident when he was 16.

I could, write a book about it, and in a sense I almost have, since one of the tasks requested of each High Sheriff is to keep a diary. Mine records many visits, events, occasions – all of them memorable, all of them special. It has been a truly unforgettable and humbling year. □

Robin Darlow DL
High Sheriff of Devon 2012-13