

# BEDFORDSHIRE

*News from and about members*



## Back to school

**Above:** Armed Forces Day event in Bedford town centre with the Mayor Dave Hodgson, the Lord-Lieutenant of Bedfordshire Mrs Helen Nellis and Polish schoolchildren

**Right:** Attempting the Rotary Club's Wheelchair Challenge at Bedford International Athletics Stadium

**I** HAVE COME to the end of a truly memorable year as the High Sheriff of Bedfordshire. We – and I very much include my wife, Diane, in this – have enjoyed every moment of it. It has been a real partnership between us and Diane has attended all but a handful of events that she has been invited to. We have joked – and it's probably true – that we have been together more during the past year than in any other year of our 39 years together and it has certainly been helpful to me having a navigator when visiting parts of Bedfordshire that we had not been to previously.

At my installation on 3 April 2014, I mentioned that I wanted to visit as many schools as I could across the county during my year in office, reflecting Diane's interest in education as a teaching assistant for 19 years at one of our local lower schools and my involvement over a 20-year period as a governor at four of my home town's schools.





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Looking back I have undertaken some 50 visits to schools, colleges and universities, including four during my final ten days in office. I have covered the whole spectrum – private schools, free school, a school with special needs pupils, a handicapped riders school, colleges, universities, and high, upper, middle, junior, infant and lower schools across the three local authorities in Bedfordshire.

Visits have included Christmas concerts, Easter productions, plays, choral evenings, prize presentations, award evenings, opening of a new extension, a topping out ceremony, fetes or just a tour of the school, including several school dinners, together with the opening of a new school in Luton in January by HRH the Duke of Kent. Most have, however, involved talking with children particularly during assemblies, in class or at debating societies. With the younger children three questions are almost always asked – ‘Have you met The Queen?’, ‘Can you fight with the sword?’ and ‘Do you ride a horse?’ However, as the children get older the questions take on a wider range, covering the history, role, court dress and responsibilities of a High Sheriff and therefore several thousand school pupils and students will know a little more about what we do. It was really fascinating visiting my old school of some 50 years ago and the students there were just as interested to know what it was like back then as I was to learn about the school now.

I have participated in many citizenship ceremonies at the three centres in which they are held in Bedfordshire and it has been a privilege learning where our new citizens have come from, how long they have lived here and the work in which they are engaged. Our oldest new citizen was a gentleman of 87 years of age.

I have spent a lot of time across the county with the various Rotary Clubs. Like so many other organisations they do great work – all undertaken by volunteers – and I’m sure our counties would ‘grind to a halt’ without the many thousands who support the needy and vulnerable

in our communities. My involvement with the Rotary Clubs has included talks, lunches and dinners, a young persons’ music competition, an environmental project, the launch of a new bandstand project, a fundraising event for Help for Heroes, a presentation of Children of Courage awards and the Wheelchair Challenge Games at Bedford’s International Athletics Stadium – it’s not easy to steer a wheelchair as you can see.

With the commencement of World War One centenary events in August there was no time for a holiday as many events fell during that month – I had four on one day but was only able to attend two. It was therefore fitting to present a High Sheriff’s Award in March to the Royal British Legion Standard Bearers who give up their time throughout the year to attend many civic and ceremonial events.

I have had a most enjoyable year with, perhaps, just one regret – it went too quickly.

### ♣ Colin Osborne

*High Sheriff of Bedfordshire 2014-15*

**Above left:** The High Sheriff and Mrs Osborne hosting a lunch for Her Majesty’s Judges at the Luton Crown Court

**Above:** On a visit to an infant school in Luton

**Below:** The High Sheriff’s shrieval tree planting ceremony in the Marston Vale with the incoming High Sheriff, the Countess of Erroll (left)

