

# BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

*News from and about members*



Setting off from home  
at the start of the  
sponsored bike ride



## Finding my way

**D**AWN IS breaking after a wonderful but very hectic year. As with most retiring High Sheriffs, I have a mixture of emotions – humility through what I have witnessed, pleasure in getting back to normal and, overriding it all, no regrets about having taken on the role.

Support of law and order is what High Sheriffs have as their traditional *raison d'être* and I certainly sought to play a full part in that sector. Charitable activity is part of the evolving function, but it seems to me important that wealth generation must precede it if funding of worthwhile causes is to come about. So, in addition to visiting prisons (Buckinghamshire has four), police stations, courts, the probation, fire and rescue, and ambulance services, and 74 charities (we have more charities per head than any other county), I also visited some of the county's more unusual businesses. And truly fascinating they were too. They ranged from the only remaining low-tech manufacturer of vellum and parchment in Europe to Arla's huge state-of-the-art dairy outside Aylesbury, and John Lewis's equally impressive and gigantic Milton Keynes warehouse. Click and collect has brought about vast expansion, and, being halfway between London and the Midlands, Milton Keynes is ideally placed. Perhaps most interesting of all were two high-tech manufacturers: Martin-Baker which has a dominant worldwide market share in fighter aircraft ejector seats (almost 7,500 lives saved to date) and Red Bull Racing where some 600 young engineers beaver away at refining every small detail of their F1 car.

Our county is also blessed with three universities, the largest by far being the Open University, and we also have the official country residence of the Prime Minister and that of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, all of which I visited. At the other end of the scale was the Calvert landfill site. This is a bit of an anomaly in an essentially rural county, much of it protected by the Green Belt. Calvert is a series of former brick clay pits and takes not only household waste from within the county but also trainloads of rubbish arriving each night from London, as well as spoil from Crossrail excavations.



**Below:** With our Red Bull guide, the Mayor of Milton Keynes and my wife Joanna (right) in front of the Red Bull Racing trophy cabinet. As you can see, this is vast. Since our visit, someone has smashed into the cabinet and stolen a selection of the contents. Some have been recovered, but not all.

Readers may have detected the geographer in me from my interest in the economic fabric of the county – and it must be noted that I did not use satnav to find my way around. In fact, before taking office, I had bicycled to every civil parish in the bailiwick, of which there are 216, so I had a fair grasp of my patch and it was a truly wonderful means of appreciating its diversity. It was also a good way of testing out local pubs – I clocked up 35 of those too. I continued my bicycling theme once in office with a sponsored ride from one end of the county to the other, raising money for our two community foundations. That lasted five days and en route I visited several of the wonderful charities that are supported by the foundations.

In this ramble I have deliberately omitted reference to all the awards ceremonies, court sittings, mayor makings and church services that are part of everyday shrieval life. One, however, will forever remain fresh in the memory. It was in one of High Wycombe's seven mosques where

*“The Imam went on to announce... without prior warning, that the High Sheriff was going to address the congregation*

I had been asked by the Muslim Mayor to attend his Civic Service. After a 30-minute talk the Imam went on to announce to the assembled company, and without prior warning, that the High Sheriff was going to address the congregation. Now, that did involve a bit of fast thinking. At least for the Buddhist ceremony the previous week I had been forewarned that I was expected to give a talk on world peace and harmony.

♣ **Joe Barclay**

*High Sheriff of Buckinghamshire 2014-15*

