



## Cumbria 2013-14

Inspired by the training courses at Burghley House and the regional meetings, I resolved that during my year in office that I would aim to find a positive outcome from each visit and contact.

In at the deep end, my first formal occasion was to receive HRH The Prince of Wales in Kirkby Lonsdale. From this I quickly learned the importance of the uniform at such ceremonies, demonstrating that the office is much more important than the holder. Subsequent visits by Her Majesty The Queen and Their Royal Highnesses Duke and Duchess of Cambridge have demonstrated the deep affection held for the royal family.

As a magistrate, the judiciary is reasonably familiar territory to me; being High Sheriff, however, has enabled me to make contact with the Coroner's Court, the Police and Crime Commissioner, the local constabulary and the emergency services. There has been a lot of fun involved: on the visit to the fire service, I had the absorbing experience of being cut out of a wrecked car. I have also been working to expand the Victim and Witness Support Service including encouraging suitable people to volunteer. I have presented awards for outstanding bravery to those bringing evidence to court and to those giving dedicated support to victims. I have also worked with our liaison judge to bring magistrates together, hosting a supper party for magistrates and their spouses, enabling issues to be discussed.

My main theme is to promote arts and crafts in the county, in the belief that creativity is the key to a vibrant community. This has led to the staging of a major selling exhibition by the Lakeland Arts Trust at Blackwell, Windermere, to celebrate local talent. I am also establishing a network of mentors to guide young craftsmen through the process of building their



Judging a knitted rhubarb at Woolfest, Cockermouth.

careers after leaving college. A bursary fund has been established, together with funding from banks, to stage courses in business management. The design and tailoring of my uniform has been used as an active exposition of my initiative and has been made by a team of talented young craftsmen.

A casual suggestion at the beginning of my year has led me to visit the 18 groups of almshouses in Cumbria, in conjunction with a representative from

the Almshouses Association. I am told by the Association that this is the first such tour of a county. The oldest almshouse charity in Cumbria dates back to the 1650s and was founded by Lady Ann Clifford, who was the second female to be High Sheriff in the country. This is proving a most worthwhile project, especially as many of the charities' trustees have asked for help. As an almshouse trustee myself, I hosted a tea party for the two Windermere almshouse charities. Tea



# News from and about Members

was served on the same trestle tables that had originally been used at an equivalent tea party when my great-grandfather was High Sheriff in 1921.

Although I am not yet halfway through the year, I have been hugely impressed by the selfless work done across the county in a wide range of activities. □

**Diana Matthews JP**  
*High Sheriff of Cumbria 2013-14*



Echoes from the past: High Sheriff's great-grandfather George Henry Pattinson, OBE JP as High Sheriff of Westmorland at the Assizes 1921.