



Devon 2013-14

My Declaration was witnessed by Sir Andrew MacFarlane, one of Her Majesty's Court of Appeal Judges, at my local church in front of members of the local community, who were fascinated to hear from Sir Andrew of the relevance of the office of High Sheriff in modern times.

Some traditions continue, such as meeting members of the Royal Family visiting the county, where the genuine affection in which they are held is clear. Such visits often give unsung heroes the limelight which can provide an inspiration for others to follow their example.

The South West fortunately still has a strong military presence and I have particularly enjoyed visiting several naval ships and also the chance to go down in a submarine. Not to be outdone, the Army invited me to exercises on Dartmoor and the RAF flew me across the county in a Sea King to be winched down onto a launch in Plymouth Sound as part of an exercise. Such visits reminded me how much we owe all those who serve in our armed forces, so I was pleased to



High Sheriff reviewing the ranks of Devon Army Cadets.



Assistant Chief Constable Paul Netherton, Exeter YMCA CEO Peter Stephenson and High Sheriff John Lee – The morning after sleeping rough to raise the profile of young homeless people and the work of the YMCA.

invite several injured servicemen to my garden party in June in recognition of their sacrifice. The same week the Band of HM Marines supplied trumpeters for my legal service and Sir Robert Rogers, Clerk of the House of Commons, kindly preached.

I often visited the emergency services 'out of hours', which certainly opened my eyes to the pressures and challenges they all face. Particularly informative was a nine-hour, overnight shift in an ambulance and a Saturday night was spent in the accident and emergency ward of our hospital observing their work.

The Fire and Rescue service were very hands-on, literally. I provided the ideal victim to be cut out of a car and to be rescued from a collapsed building. Hopefully neither will be necessary in future, but their skill was very reassuring!

My main focus of course was the legal system, police, courts and prisons, and

those agencies and charities that attempt to prevent reoffending.

It has been a privilege to attend on visiting High Court Judges, as well as visiting the County and Magistrates' Courts and Dartmoor, Exeter and Channings Wood Prisons, where I found their education and rehabilitation programmes particularly encouraging.

I am especially grateful to our Chief Constable who has allowed and encouraged me to visit all areas of policing, of which I previously knew little. In total there were over 30 such visits, which included night-time economy, police dogs, armed response, forensic science, child exploration, public protection, organised crime, covert operations, Force air unit and public order, as well as time patrolling the streets in our three major cities. As a result of such an insight I have been able to champion, behind the scenes, some of the key issues that have been apparent and hopefully make a small difference.



News from and about Members

My year as High Sheriff has not only been informative but deeply humbling as I have seen so many individuals and organisations attempting to improve the lives of those less fortunate and so it has been a privilege to recognise some of those individuals with High Sheriff's Awards during my year.

It has been an extraordinary year and a real privilege to have served as High Sheriff – a year I shall never forget. □

John Lee OBE

High Sheriff of Devon 2013-14



High Sheriff performing a citizenship ceremony.