

DEVON

News from and about members



Picnics for the judges

Above: High Sheriff's Award presented to the Wright family in recognition of valuable services to the local community

I AM full of warm memories of my remarkable year as High Sheriff.

Supporting law and order is central to our role and I sought to ensure I took an active part, first, by joining on their bench many times the three High Court Judges on circuit, feeding them and their clerks with picnic lunches in an assortment of court offices and entertaining them at home. I was most fortunate to have dined with the Lord Chief Justice, Lord Burnett, and discussed the way forward for the judiciary and probation services. Additionally, I sat with several Circuit Judges in Devon's two Crown Courts and with our local magistrates, who play such an important role in

the criminal system without any payment at all. Visiting prisons was a challenge, spending time in the three in Devon and one on the Isle of Wight. Despite undeniable financial challenges, the governors, officers and staff dedicate themselves to improving life skills and future prospects for offenders, with the ultimate benefit of reducing re-offending. Visiting charities that support day-release prisoners and former offenders was very much part of this. I have witnessed the operations of those who keep us safe and secure: the probation, police, ambulance, and fire and rescue services.

Another great privilege was presenting five Sheriff's court awards to members of the public



who had demonstrated unusual bravery and integrity in assisting the police so leading to an arrest. I presented my own High Sheriff's certificates to those who merited special recognition. I was invited to other award ceremonies, including two Devon Lieutenancy investitures for recipients of the British Empire Medal and the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service and the annual Lord-Lieutenant's awards for the County of Devon.

Tradition in Devon is for the High Sheriff to be assisted by a police cadet. Each cadet who applies is subject to a rigorous selection process before reaching the finals. My cadet, Charlotte Dicks, accompanied me on many occasions and invited me to her group meeting in Exeter, where I witnessed an enthusiastic youth organisation providing life skills and friendships. I watched their parade drill training – all very slick and professional. The cadets regularly parade at formal civic occasions and in processions. My cadet was appointed head cadet that evening much to my delight. The volunteer leaders do a most excellent job.

I also much enjoyed visiting the numerous remarkable community hubs, feeding, clothing and supporting the vulnerable in crisis, including addicts, the homeless, rough sleepers and the unemployed. In this area, the highlight of 2018 was hosting and sharing the launch of Operation Encompass in Devon and Cornwall with the High Sheriff of Cornwall, Sarah Coryton, and the Chief Constable, Shaun Sawyer. This initiative between the police and head teachers of our schools is the obvious way forward to support children with early intervention following domestic abuse. The prison authorities quoted that 80 per cent of offenders had witnessed or suffered domestic abuse as children.

As my year drew to a close, I attended the three legal services for the counties of Wiltshire,



“I witnessed an enthusiastic youth organisation providing life skills and friendships”

Above: Air ambulance crew with centre (L-R) High Sheriff, Councillor Lesley Robson Lord Mayor of Exeter, and Grania Phillips High Sheriff in nomination

Gloucestershire and Dorset, held in beautiful but quite contrasting cathedrals. The pageantry of the processions, the beauty of the services and music, and the support of the judiciary will be unforgettable.

I thank all those who welcomed me and opened my eyes to the extraordinary variety of community support within Devon, the core strength being so much human kindness and compassion. I shall remain forever honoured to have held this appointment.

♦♦ **Heleen Lindsay-Fynn**
High Sheriff of Devon 2017-18

Below left: Launch of Operation Encompass, Pentillie Castle, with my police cadet Charlotte Dicks

Below: Queen's Award for Voluntary Service presented by the Lord-Lieutenant, David Fursdon, to the volunteer stewards of Devon County Show, of which the High Sheriff was a recipient as chief steward

