



Dyfed women make Welsh history

AS BEFITS the centenary of women's suffrage, my Declaration as High Sheriff at Cardigan Castle was also a Dyfed 'first' for a lady Lord-Lieutenant and Wales's first female bishop, the new Bishop of St Davids!

Dyfed is Wales's largest county, comprising Ceredigion, Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire so this year I have busily traversed its mountains, rivers and spectacular coast road.

Small wonder two of our three royal visitors this year came by helicopter – HRH The Prince of Wales during his summer 'Wales Week' at his Dyfed home, Llwynywermod, and subsequently to Llanelli to open the new Wales Air Ambulance Station in March; HRH The Princess Royal landed in January snow for a Motor Neurone Disease Association event in Aberystwyth. However, HRH the Earl of Wessex came by road for a Duke of Edinburgh Awards day at the National Botanic Garden of Wales in October.

During my year I was privileged to attend ceremonies at three university campuses in Aberystwyth, Lampeter and Carmarthen, perhaps the most exotic being a grand Buddhist 'Veneration of the Ancestors' ritual at Lampeter's Academy of Sinology with my chaplain Rev Canon Enid Morgan.

July saw West Wales Freemasons donating a new St John ambulance, followed by visits to the Army, HMS Pembroke in Milford Haven, and the



Royal Welsh Agricultural Show where Carmarthenshire was the host county.

My husband Denis and I attended memorable legal services in the Inner Temple and Llandaf Cathedral; also World War One commemorations and carol concerts in local chapels, as well as Remembrance Day.

The tremendous camaraderie among the Welsh Shrievalty past and present has been a real joy. With no Crown Courts in Dyfed we were most grateful to be invited by the High Sheriffs of Glamorgan to legal dinners with distinguished visiting Circuit and Appeal Court judges in Cardiff.

Visits to Dyfed's many charities were both humbling and inspirational, especially our hospices, including a moving presentation of a BEM to a patient by the Lord-Lieutenant Ms Sara Edwards.

As the NSPCC was one of my charities I had briefings by Dyfed Powys Police

Above: High Sheriff's Declaration all-women line-up (L-R) Gwen Burgess JP (witness), chaplain Revd Canon Enid Morgan, HM Lord-Lieutenant Sara Edwards, the High Sheriff Susan Balsom, the Bishop of St Davids, Rt Revd Joanna Penberthy

child protection teams and their impressive cybercrime unit. My admiration for our police and fire and rescue services is immense. They serve a vast rural area with very diverse towns and a long coastline where they are responsible for security aspects of ferries to Pembrokeshire and the UK's strategic energy supplies to our Milford Haven deep water ports, not to mention the seasonal influx of tourists. It was therefore a pleasure to attend the Dyfed Powys Police Awards with BBC newsreader Huw Edwards.

My other charity was the West Wales Sea Cadets for whom we raised funds for two new training boats, including kind donations from local societies after talks about the history of the Shrievalty.

Finally, it was an enormous honour and very salutary to preside over a number of Citizenship Ceremonies; also to serve as the returning officer for Ceredigion at the 2017 general election – despite three recounts and the final declaration at 6.30 am the next day!

♦♦ Susan Balsom

High Sheriff of Dyfed 2017-18

Below left: Naming *Sheriff*, one of two new training boats donated to Aberystwyth Sea Cadets

Below right: Visit by HRH the Earl of Wessex to Duke of Edinburgh Awards at the National Botanic Garden of Wales

