



# News from and about Members

## Gloucestershire 2012-13

### Seven High Sheriffs in Gloucester

On a blustery but mercifully dry day in early February at Gloucester Cathedral, there was a social gathering of the six High Sheriffs from the surrounding counties of Bristol, Herefordshire, Somerset, the West Midlands, Wiltshire and Worcestershire, organised by the High Sheriff of Gloucestershire.

The visit began with a tour of the cathedral conducted by a local resident, Dr Jeremy Barnes, himself a medical doctor but whose family had been church and cathedral architects associated with Gloucester Cathedral for over a 100 years.

Gloucester was once a Roman legionary base and fortress. The first church was built in AD679, and rebuilt finally between AD1089 and AD1120 as a Benedictine monastery. It became a cathedral only in 1541 at the time of Henry VIII's Dissolution of the Monasteries.

Apart from the massive cylindrical columns of the Norman nave, Dr Barnes showed the group a number of the cathedral's significant features including the south transept which is the earliest surviving example of perpendicular architecture; the unique carved stone 'Prentice Bracket' in the shape of a mason's square, thought to commemorate a young apprentice falling to his death in the 14th century; the Norman crypt; and the fan tracery of the Great Cloister, the earliest surviving example in the country. We also saw the effigies of Robert Curthose, the eldest son of William the Conqueror, and of Edward II who is said to have come to a gruesomely unpleasant end at nearby Berkeley Castle.

After the tour we all repaired to the Parliament Room for lunch. The Saxon, Norman and Plantagenet kings held Easter at Gloucester (William the Conqueror commissioned Domesday Book here at the Christmas Parliament of 1085) and Richard II held parliament in the building in AD1378.

The Sheriffs entertained the Dean of Gloucester, the Very Revd Stephen Lake, to lunch. He was able to pull off a news coup as he stood to welcome the Sheriffs at the beginning of lunch; his telephone rang with an urgent message and he was able to tell his audience that Pope Benedict had just announced his resignation. At the end of the meal the Dean reflected about the interaction and interdependence of the Church and the Shrievalty.

An interesting and jolly day was finished off with a visit to the Cathedral masons' yard, one of only six left in England now, to look at the carvings being prepared for the continuing work of conservation of the fabric.

The group dispersed with everyone better informed about Gloucester and extolling the Cathedral's finer points. □

### *Duncan Clegg*

*High Sheriff of Gloucestershire 2012-13*



Back row from left: Duncan Clegg (Gloucestershire), Stewart Towe (West Midlands), Charles Thwaites (Herefordshire), and Andrew Nisbet (Bristol)  
Front row from left: Sylvana Chandler (Somerset), the Dean of Gloucester, the Very Revd Stephen Lake, Laura Phillips (Wiltshire) and Penelope Lewis (Worcestershire).