

GLOUCESTERSHIRE

News from and about members



Every day was special

ON 2 APRIL I handed over as High Sheriff of Gloucestershire to Lt Colonel Andrew Tabor and I did so with enormous pride. The county is amazing in its diversity, its inclusiveness, its variety and its generosity.

One of the wonderful things about accepting the role of High Sheriff is you can do as little, or as much, as you like – in your own style, and either at break-neck speed or at a gentler pace. I deliberately chose the former – a year sounds like a long time, but it rattles by at an alarming rate and I had so much I wanted to achieve.

Throughout my year I attended the commemoration of the death of one monarch (King John at Worcester Cathedral), witnessed the coronation of another (Henry III at Gloucester Cathedral), both events happening 800 years ago, and of course we celebrated Her Majesty The Queen's 90th birthday.

I sat with judges of all levels; I oversaw a historic election of Her Majesty's Verderer to the spectacular Forest of Dean; I flew owls and sat in the cockpit of Concorde; I entered the boxing ring; I launched lifeboats – and crewed them; I named a building and planted trees; I danced with gay abandon – and I visited a huge number of wonderful charities and projects that inspired me. I also presented handsome awards to so many deserving members of our communities. The list is quite literally endless and it's impossible

to choose a highlight, because every day was special.

When I became High Sheriff, there were several things I wanted to achieve and I'm extremely privileged to have had the opportunity to do so.

Her Majesty's prison for women, HMP Eastwood Park, now has an active book club where the ladies regularly engage with literature and all it has to offer; there is now a branch of the Women's Institute in the same prison and to have helped facilitate it with money from the High Sheriff's Fund gives me enormous pride. In addition this spring students from the Royal Agricultural University in Cirencester volunteered to start a market garden project within Eastwood Park, giving the prisoners the opportunity to grow their own produce and benefit not only from the nutrition that will provide, but also to learn about where our food comes from.

My other wish was to raise the profile of the role of the High Sheriff, to reflect on its relevance and reassure people of this in today's modern world. I should like to think this has been reasonably successful, most evident since I have been asked less and less the eternal question: 'What does a High Sheriff actually DO?'

And finally, I wanted to acknowledge and celebrate the work of our police officers and staff. I have been privileged to spend a great deal of time with the Gloucestershire Constabulary, on

Top left: Accompanied by senior officers of Gloucestershire Constabulary, the High Sheriff presents certificates of Commendation to Special Officers

Top right: The High Sheriff joined a delivery run with volunteers from Age Concern's Meal On Wheels delivery team in the Forest of Dean

Above: The High Sheriff and her husband the Earl Bathurst (in wheelchair) taken at a royal visit to Salters Hill Charity where she is president

every level, and have been consistently impressed by the commitment and dedication shown by every section of policing in our county. All too often the police are unappreciated, for whatever reason, and it slightly frustrates me they're only shown the respect they fully deserve when a tragedy such as the recent Westminster attack brings home to the whole country just how often they put their lives on the line to keep us safe.

And so now, after over 420 engagements and 27,000 miles on the clock, I have handed over to my successor and I know he too will have an amazing year in this our home county of wonderful Gloucestershire.

◆◆ **The Countess Bathurst**
High Sheriff of Gloucestershire 2016-17