



## Kent 2013-14

The shrieval year began with snow on the ground when my Declaration service took place at my local church, St Mary's, Ide Hill. It was a colourful affair, with a full congregation of friends and village neighbours enjoying the Police Band and hearing a Privy Counsellor and a Resident Judge explain their roles before I made my Declaration.

During the year there have been several royal visits. The most memorable was that of Her Majesty The Queen to Canterbury, to witness the final day of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders before their amalgamation into the Royal Regiment of Scotland, a day of considerable emotion for all the soldiers and their families. We have also enjoyed visits from TRH The Prince of Wales and The Duchess of Cornwall for the Whitstable Oyster Festival, The Princess Royal to the East Malling Research Institute and the Catch 22 charity, and Prince Michael of Kent for the Battle of Britain Memorial Day at Capel-le-Ferne. Kent is justifiably proud of its association in the nation's collective memory with the Battle of Britain, and I have had the pleasure to attend numerous RAF and British Legion ceremonies, some very moving, not only at the well-known forward airfields such as Manston and Biggin Hill, but also at some more private locations.

I have spent time with the full spectrum of Kent's forces of law and order, and have enjoyed participating in court awards for bravery, and citizenship ceremonies. I have sat with the judges at our two Crown Courts at Canterbury and Maidstone, and attended the County, Magistrates and Coroners' Courts. I have spent more time than I had expected with our Probation Service, some of whose pathfinding work has been so successful that it is now being deployed by other counties. Given the concern expressed at the strike held by barristers



Battle of Britain Memorial Day 2013 – Viscount De L'Isle, Lord-Lieutenant of Kent, HRH Prince Michael of Kent, Air Chief Marshal Sir Stephen Dalton, the High Sheriff of Kent.

protesting against the reduction of Legal Aid fees, I invited all 17 Kent MPs to drinks with our Resident Judges and representatives of the Bar, the Bench and the CPS, in order that views could be exchanged on a more personal and constructive level, a successful evening that I hope my successors may consider continuing. Having served personally as a Police Special Constable many years ago, I have particularly enjoyed spending time with the police, attending and officiating at their numerous award ceremonies, visiting flood victims with them at Christmas, driving with them in squad cars and identifying unsalubrious individuals in even more unsalubrious locations.

I have also been actively involved in visiting, and presenting awards on behalf of, two of our most wide-ranging and active charities in the county, Kent Peoples' Trust and Kent Community Foundation. With two of the most beautiful cathedrals at Canterbury and Rochester, I have had huge pleasure attending a variety of religious and civic services, including the award ceremonies of our three universities. My own Justice Service took place in All Saints'

church, Maidstone, the parish church of our county town. I held my garden party in the gardens of Belmont House, now owned by a charity, where I am a trustee and where the trustees are yearly opening more of the house and its estate to the public, as a way to bring this resource more to the county's notice. I have spent much time with our splendid hard-working Mayors, whose varied backgrounds and occupations testify to the many and diverse skills that they bring to their roles.

The year has been full of humour and the unexpected, and has involved heroic diary management to ensure that I have been able to continue working at the same time as doing as many shrieval duties as I have wanted. I am conscious that on only one occasion I should have been at two different places at the same time. I am often asked about the highlights of the year. One was the grandeur of the service at Westminster Abbey to celebrate the 60th anniversary of Her Majesty The Queen's coronation. The other is to remember the numerous occasions when small charities have said how



# News from and about Members

much it meant that someone like the High Sheriff had taken the time to see them. My response has always been to say 'No, I should be thanking you for the fantastic unheralded work that you and so many wonderful volunteers do across our magnificent county'. I am also sometimes asked if there is a real contemporary role for the High Sheriff to play other than a ceremonial one, and I have no difficulty in answering that there is an extremely positive one which is continually evolving year on year.

The best advice I can offer future High Sheriffs is, first, always ask advice from your predecessors, who in my experience have been unfailingly wise and helpful, and second, take comfort from the fact that there is not always a right way to set about your year, and consequently, it is difficult to get things too badly wrong during your tenure. □

## **Lord Colgrain**

*High Sheriff of Kent 2013-14*



The Mayor of Sittingbourne (Sue Gent), the High Sheriff, Donna Lee of Riverside's English Churches Housing Group's Supported Housing at The Quays, Sittingbourne, with community chef Mike Spackman, who teaches people to cook on a budget.