

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

News from and for members



An illuminating year

Above: VPC Eve Corbett certificate presentation at Legal Service

'NOT MANY people know that,' as Michael Caine once famously remarked. The *that* in this case is the north Nottinghamshire origin of many of the Pilgrim Fathers. But it all started with Martin Luther in 1517 with his 95 theses nailed to the door of Wittenberg Church and the beginning of Protestantism, an event celebrated in this county with a service at Attenborough St Mary's Church at which the preacher was the local Lutheran Pastor Paulina Hlawiczka. Two months later my wife and I attended the 'Illuminate' Service at St Swithun's Church, Retford, a town near the Pilgrim Father villages. Students from the local secondary

school performed a series of tableaux about the 54 women, or 'Pilgrim Mothers', who sailed on the Mayflower, most of whom did not survive to see the first Thanksgiving. After the service we formed the numeral 500 armed with tea lights.

Meanwhile in October, I joined over 100 others on the side of the pitch at the ground of Notts County Football Club at the CEO Sleepout to raise money for local homelessness charities, including the Friary, a community funded drop-in centre that provides food, cooked meals, shower facilities, GP services and IT support for benefit claimants. I was joined on the grass by the Bishop of Sherwood,



Tony Porter, and Rabbi Tanya Sakhnovich of Nottingham Liberal Synagogue, who had earlier sparred with Marcellus Baz. He runs a boxing club for young people and won the Unsung Hero award at the 2016 BBC *Sports Personality of the Year*. I returned to the Friary on Christmas Day to ‘help’ the Mayor of Rushcliffe carve the turkey and meet the volunteers who were giving up their time to serve up to 60 Christmas meals.

The second half of my year included several prison visits. In October I presented community awards to 10 prison officers who had prevented a wing being wrecked, in circumstances where not being involved had been a legitimate choice. Their courage would not otherwise have received wider recognition. In November we made a formal visit to Lowdham Grange, a Category B prison, to be briefed by the director (it’s a SERCO prison) and to give awards to 19 prisoners who had completed a Sycamore Tree restorative justice course. In December we visited Whatton Prison, home to over 800 sex offenders, a solid middle-class cohort who do not give the governor any trouble. Shockingly, a few residents, as they are called there, are so dangerous that they cannot be released and will die in prison. During our tour of the site, the



Above: CEO Sleepout at Notts County FC with Bishop Tony Porter and Rabbi Tanya Sakhnovich
Below: Luther 500 service with Pastor Paulina Hlawiczka

governor introduced me to the editor of the prison magazine *Whatt’ on Earth!* as the High Sheriff; he promptly replied, ‘Hi! Sheriff’. In March I talked to around 20 Whatton residents about a novel I had published on Amazon in 2015. I apologised for leaving slightly early because it would take me a little while ‘to get out of here’; one wag replied, ‘not half as long as it will take us!’ Finally, with the help of my neighbour and friend the High Sheriff of Derbyshire, Annie Hall, we visited the women’s prison at Foston Hall with Halima Khaled, the first Muslim Mayor of Broxtowe, who is interested in helping Muslim women who end up in the criminal justice system.

It has been a wonderful year in which I have had amazing support from my wife, Under Sheriff Deborah Hutchinson, and many others, including my Chaplain, the Revd Chris Rattenberry, who came out of retirement to officiate at my March Legal Service. I managed an ecumenical and inter-faith event that saw an inspiring sermon by the Bishop of Southwell and Nottingham, the Rt Revd Paul Williams, secular texts read by the Imam Chaplain at Rampton Hospital, Farooq Mulla, and a performance of a song to words by the Christian Martyr, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, sung by Pastor Paulina and accompanied at the piano by Rabbi Tanya. After the service I presented a certificate of service to one of my two High Sheriff’s Volunteer Police Cadets, Eva Corbett, who had loyally supported me during my year.

David Sneath TD DL
High Sheriff of Nottinghamshire 2017-18

