

# OXFORDSHIRE

*News from and about members*



## High Sheriff Challenge

**Above:** With Greg Searle and Matt Dawson at the High Sheriff Challenge Sports event, Iffley Road Sports Ground, Oxford

**Opposite page:** Oxfordshire Mock Trials – Tony Stratton with the winners, Chaney School, and Lynn Dowler, organising magistrate, Oxford Magistrates' Court

**I**N ADDITION to traditional shrieval responsibilities and activities, a focus for my year was to engage the business community, both to increase its understanding of the Shrievalty and as a source of charitable giving. To achieve this, I created the High Sheriff Challenge – a series of three events and two receptions for participating firms, in return for an agreed donation to the Oxfordshire Community Foundation.

The Foundation provided the administration and governance and also made grants to our two other charities – Access Sport and Music

for Autism. As a consequence we were able to double the money raised, a six-figure sum, through matched funding from Sport England, the Communities Fund and Oxford City Council.

Over 20 companies took part and, with the generous support of the MPs of Oxfordshire, the Challenge was launched at the Palace of Westminster in May with a drinks reception and a guided tour of the Palace (with three Oxfordshire MPs as guides) – a delightful and captivating evening.

Event one, 'The Sporting Challenge', was held at the Iffley Road Sports Stadium by kind



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permission of Oxford University. Five participants from each challenger company formed teams and competed in ten different sporting events, including swimming, running, rowing, basketball, archery and welly wanging. The weather was kind and, with sportsmen Matt Dawson and Greg Searle in attendance to support and celebrate everybody's remarkable efforts, we enjoyed a successful afternoon and evening.

Event two, 'The Musical Challenge', took place at Blenheim Palace, with four people from each challenger company arriving to be assessed for singing potential by maestro John Lubbock (newly appointed OBE) and then formed into a choir that

performed in Blenheim's wonderful Orangery for 30 minutes before dinner.

Event three, 'The Business Challenge', was a lecture on the subject of leadership and involvement in the community by Allan Leighton at the Said Business School. The School also generously provided drinks and canapés after the lecture.

Our final reception was hosted by the Chief Constable at Thames Valley Police Headquarters, providing a truly fascinating insight into Thames Valley Police, where their current focus is on how policing is changing in today's changing world.

Of course, in addition to the High Sheriff Challenge and the business community, I have much enjoyed engagement with the judiciary, the magistracy, the police and emergency services, the military, faith groups, and the voluntary and civic sectors.

The Oxfordshire High Sheriff's Awards recognised 20 individuals, chosen from a record 50-plus nominations of the most incredible standard, and I was also delighted to present the Law Lecture Essay Awards, the Young Engineers Awards, the Community Integration Awards and the Oxfordshire Community and Voluntary Action Awards.

Di and I have had a wonderful year and are thoroughly exhausted! It has been such a privilege and so eye-opening to have an insight into the talent, time, aspirations and lives of the people of Oxfordshire.

◆◆ **Tony Stratton DL**

*High Sheriff of Oxfordshire 2014-2015*

