

RUTLAND

News from and about members



Running in Rutland

'HIT THE ground running' is the advice before becoming a High Sheriff. No one told me that I would not stop! Between September and December is supposed to be even busier... I have yet to see!

Recognition of the role of High Sheriff beyond my own age group and friends is important. There is a misleading stereotype of the High Sheriff as a posh person giving a garden party for civic dignitaries and posh people, and turning up condescendingly to view a few 'good works'. This must be avoided. Advice from our Chief Constable, Simon Cole, suggested using Twitter and Facebook to reach a wider audience which I am doing. I decided that instead of having one grand and expensive reception I would have a number of accessible events which entertained people from a cross section of society.

Oakham Castle was the stunning setting for my Declaration – I entertained 110 friends, family and dignitaries at a buffet lunch in the castle afterwards and a week later I held a Community Service in our village church for 300 (it is big!). I invited as many representatives of charities and public bodies as I could.

By far my biggest (3,000 people attended) and most novel event, and the toughest to organise, was my 'Hue and Cry'. Races chasing 'criminals' for charity gained public recognition for the Sheriff, raised money, reached a wide demographic and provided family fun. We closed Oakham High Street, there was a carnival atmosphere and the races are now planned as an annual event. Two days later I held a commemoration for the Battle of Jutland at the nearest Rutland has to the sea, Rutland Water. Two sponsored charity walks across the Leicestershire-Rutland borders with the High Sheriff of Leicestershire have symbolised co-operation between the two counties and raised a good amount.

Before I go from 'cocked hat to feather duster' next April I have planned another four events. I am glad these were prepared in advance because there is so much else to do. No amount of planning prepares for how your view of society changes when making the visits that form a High Sheriff's life. The media bombard us with bad news. Our High Sheriffs' brief is to represent Her Majesty in supporting law and order. I expected to be made more aware of the ills of society but not to be inspired by the amount of good.

I now know how hard the army is working in 40 different countries, preventing threats to the UK by providing advice, understanding cultures and working alongside governments. I have seen members of the police, ambulance and fire services working together to embed themselves in a community – helping turn that community away from using 80 per cent of resources while comprising only one per cent of the

Above left: Casting red roses into Rutland Water commemorating Battle of Jutland
Above: Rutland apprehended villain at the Hue and Cry
Below: Rutland Morris Men at the Hue and Cry





“ I have seen members of the police, ambulance and fire services working together to embed themselves in a community

area for which the services were responsible – great stuff Braunstone Blues!* Ninety-seven per cent of trial cases start in the Magistrates’ Court. Magistrates are highly trained, experienced volunteers.

Big charities make the news but there are many small local ones relying on voluntary activity, quietly transforming lives with little media coverage. Examples abound from a cancer research charity, Hope Against Cancer, which has helped turn the Leicester University Hospitals into a centre of excellence, to hospices and advice providers. For me a particularly striking example of transforming lives has been the Sustainable Land Trust. It takes secondary school boys facing expulsion and weans them off their computers by getting them working outside on the land. They arrive barely speaking to anyone and leave looking others in the eye, often with a career outside in mind.

A troubling issue that has arisen repeatedly in meetings with school heads, the police, the coroner, magistrates, prison governors and charities is the way childhood has changed because of the internet. The mental pressure from constant communication cannot be underestimated. A child can be cyber bullied 24/7. Research and mental resilience training is being pioneered in Rutland through Health Watch Rutland, staffed by volunteers. Warning Zone, a charity also largely staffed by volunteers, serves both Leicestershire and Rutland. It includes all 10-year-olds and warns them about the dangers of modern life including the internet.

The work of the public sector and the altruism of the voluntary sector underpin the stable society in which we live. The High Sheriff’s role can bring recognition and celebrate the ‘glue’ which provides our society’s stability, allowing it to meet human needs and rights. It is such an honour to hold the role – the best way to hit 60!

◆ **Dr Sarah Furness**
High Sheriff of Rutland 2016-17