



Back to earth with a bump

MY SURPRISE at finding my wife Annabel and myself on the cover of *The High Sheriff* last summer was nothing compared to Annabel's. I had failed to mention that I had sent in a photo of the two of us in wet suits taken shortly after we had completed the Severn Mile Swim. I hadn't mentioned it because I thought that, in the unlikely event of the image being used at all, it would be the size of a postage stamp and we'd all have a bit of a laugh. With hindsight that was an error, but after a couple of nights sleeping on the sofa I was forgiven. It was not a flattering photo but it was widely agreed that I came out of it the worst (and in answer to your question, Richard in Shrewsbury – no I am not transitioning). For this edition I am only submitting pictures of us with clothes on.

I know the Sheriff's uniform doesn't really suit me either. Did I read somewhere that it was designed as court dress by Prince Albert? That seems unlikely because it was clearly inspired with Laurence Llewellyn-Bowen in mind and he wasn't alive then. I don't know whether Laurence does

good works in his county but if he does he should surely be nominated. I understand he lives in Gloucestershire.

The charity I've supported during my year has been Age UK Shropshire Telford & Wrekin. They are independent of Age UK, whose reputation was damaged by the EON electricity supply scandal. While one can't condone what Age UK did, one can understand the temptation, but the consequence is that they've made it more difficult for local Age UK branches to fundraise. The story also diverted attention away from the excellent work that Age UK does providing information, researching issues and campaigning. I will continue to retain an interest in these issues and, with dementia in the family, am encouraged by some of the new approaches that are being researched for the treatment of Alzheimer's. Having watched Angela Rippon's TV programme *How to Stay Young*, I know what to ask for when my children ask me what I want for Christmas – 'a pint of your youthful blood'.

Above: Edward Harley (Herefordshire), David and Annabel Stacey, Jonnie Turpie (West Midlands), Janet Bell Smith (Warwickshire) and Sir Anthony Winnington Bt (Worcestershire)

Opposite page: The Shropshire Legal Service in Ludlow on 6 March 2016

Most counties have their Legal Services at the start of the legal year; in Shropshire we hold them at the end of the shrieval year. In most counties outgoing High Sheriffs give a talk at the Declaration ceremonies of their successors but in Shropshire new High Sheriffs give the address on that occasion, and then, as outgoing Sheriffs, reflect on their year at the Legal Services. It does make the Legal Service a more personal event.

My father was a clergyman and I happily whiled away many youthful hours playing pulpit cricket while he was preaching. It was strange for the roles to be reversed and for me to be in the pulpit. He seemed to be paying attention but I found out later that he couldn't hear me because his hearing aid wasn't working. It was lovely that my aged parents were able to be there as they probably won't make it to Shropshire again and they much enjoyed seeing me process with my sister, a Circuit Judge in Birmingham.

We were fortunate enough to have a good turnout of the county's judges and magistracy, including some senior judiciary who have made their homes in the area, and the Queen's Remembrancer came up from London. A few 'big wigs' do add to the theatre and sense of occasion. The stall holders and shoppers looked on admiringly – at least I think they were admiring – as we threaded our way from the castle through the Ludlow Sunday market to St Laurence's Church.

Three days out of office we attended the installation of Bill Jackson as the new High Sheriff of Herefordshire. There was reserved parking for VIPs. 'Are you VIPs?'; 'Of course'; 'Well, you're not on the list.' Back to earth with a bump.

♦ David Stacey
High Sheriff of Shropshire 2015-16

