



Somerset 2012-13

It was an amazing year criss-crossing Somerset. I started slowly, after being landed with a totally unexpected replacement hip operation in May. The Queen's Remembrancer's advice to me to 'hit the ground running' was not, alas, possible!

However, my husband, Richard, and I soon got going and here are some examples from the journey: visiting HMS *Somerset* in dry-dock; taking a military salute; roaming Taunton centre with the local Street Pastors at midnight; attending a pantomime staged by the inmates of Britain's oldest prison; attending a Court Leet (have all your readers met Ale-Tasters and/or Shamble-Keepers?); inspecting police cadets; presenting the Chief's Constable's Awards to police and members of the general public for acts of conspicuous bravery.

However, enough of engagements – experience varies so much year by year, sheriff by sheriff and county by county. The year 2012-13 was of course both Jubilee and Olympic – so we were all lucky. Instead, one or two specific points come to mind:

First, the giving of High Sheriff's Awards, whether by order of a judge or at the request of a local community, is indeed a wonderful way to emphasise the role of the Shrievalty, once one has established that the recipient(s) would



With my husband Richard, outside Wells Cathedral after my Declaration.

like a public rather than a private ceremony. One such occasion was held in the Mayor's Parlour at Weston-super-Mare, when I was present with the Mayor, the Lord Mayor of Bristol, and many newspapers and photographers.

Secondly, I was asked quite often about my 'budget' or 'expenses' – considerable surprise when I replied that there was zero expense to the taxpayer, only to myself (and my husband!). Have some politicians failed to understand fully that our role is totally unremunerated and entirely voluntary. Is the Shrievalty too shy about this aspect? I wonder.

Finally, in the south-west, co-operation with the other neighbouring High Sheriffs was both very enjoyable and helpful – we can all learn from each other, even though demanding schedules put great pressure on the opportunities for such co-operation. Certainly, the well-staged South Western Regional Conference has been a real plus and well attended – I expect it is echoed elsewhere. □

Sylvana Chandler
High Sheriff of Somerset 2012-13