



Growing the future

I SPENT THE two years before becoming High Sheriff of Somerset hoping that the Queen would forget to 'prick' my name. I felt quite overawed by the thought of having to carry out so many and varied engagements. However, with the support I received from ex-High Sheriffs, notably Pat Hunt and Maureen Whitmore, I struggled towards my Legal Service in March. Having had the outfit and the hat 'built' I felt much more the part.

My 'day job' is running a stud of 25 horses, bred for dressage and eventing, so I get up early as a matter of course and listen to Farming Today most mornings. I became aware that Somerset has a great strength in Brymore – a state-run agricultural boarding school – and Cannington College, now part of Bridgwater College, which again is a beacon of excellence in farming and horticulture. I decided, in addition to my work on Somerset Crimebeat, I would like to raise funds for Travel and Training Bursaries at Cannington for students wishing to study Horticulture. This initiative was warmly welcomed by the

college and we launched the project 'Grow your own Future' thanks to the kindness of Rupert Cox and the Somerset Gardens Trust at the Royal Bath and West Show in May. Somerset is a huge county and a bursary of £500/£1000 will help a student trying to get to college from the other side of the county. I aim to help around 25 students this year. I also discovered that we have the Young Horticulturalist of the Year 2014, Jez Stamp, working

to help oil the wheels. I hope to be involved with the students when they start back at college in September.

We are fantastically lucky in Somerset to have a really active Community Foundation run by the exceptional Justin Sargent. They hold 'Under the Radar' meetings on special problems in the community, the last one focusing on adult mental health and isolation. During the second part of my year, I

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for Cameron Mackintosh and Michael le Poer Trench at Stavordale Priory and Tess Evans who is the 2015 winner and Senior Gardener at Tintinhull, so we are awash with brilliance in the county and just need a bit of money

would like to concentrate on mental health. We are lucky in having several exceptional charities working in the sector; 'Creativity Works' in Radstock encourages people with mental health problems to produce creative writing and art which has a hugely beneficial effect on their wellbeing. They kindly asked me to the launch of the first anthology produced by the participants of one of their groups, 'Writing Space'. I am hoping to work with 'Heads Up' in Wells with their 'Healing Garden' and the Balsam Centre in Wincanton which is doing such excellent work on my doorstep.

I am so fortunate to have had a new and enthusiastic Lord-Lieutenant to work with this year. Lady Gass was a very hard act to follow and her contribution to the county was monumental, but Annie Maw has been hugely encouraging and facilitating. She is an extraordinary example of fortitude, arriving for Royal visits with her wheelchair with or without her wonderful husband Richard, never tiring and always smiling.



Above: Lucy Nelson after her making her Declaration at the Legal Service at Wells Cathedral on 22 March 2015, with her husband James and the immediate past High Sheriff Richard Lloyd



♦♦ **Lucy Nelson**

High Sheriff of Somerset 2015-16