



A wild reception

MY DECLARATION ceremony witnessed the arrival of not only myself as the new High Sheriff, but also a new Under Sheriff, a new Honorary Recorder and a High Court Judge who had never previously conducted a Declaration ceremony. What could possibly go wrong?

My trepidation was, of course, unfounded. Our joint lack of expertise seemed only to enhance the collective enthusiasm and enjoyment of the event, strongly felt by those of us taking part and amply reflected by all who attended. The wonderful atmosphere of that day set a memorable tone which I hope will endure throughout my year – a year that is likely to be a chapter in our lives totally unlike any other, as readers of these pages will understand.

My wife Julia suggested the Yorkshire Wildlife Park, now the fastest-growing attraction in the United Kingdom, as a venue for our summer reception. Here we could host 350 regional guests, comprising civic

Below: Residents and guests at our reception at the Yorkshire Wildlife Park

Panel (clockwise: Guests with Johnny and Vanessa Towers at their valedictory dinner

Presenting his staff of office to the new Under Sheriff'

New British Citizens from four countries at Sheffield Town Hall



leaders, judges and magistrates, prison governors, charity workers and business leaders. Such a venue was not without risk. The mean-looking four-legged occupants were supplemented by some mean-looking isobars on the weather chart. Fortunately the Park responded to the evening sunshine by putting on a stunning and informative show. It was a wonderfully convivial occasion, although one of my grandchildren was overheard remonstrating with fellow guests about the lack of penguins. Clearly you can't please all of the people all of the time!

I was very proud indeed to present Court Awards to three citizens from our county, all of whom were instrumental in helping the authorities secure arrests and convictions following violent assaults. The bravery each demonstrated, and the importance of the role they all played in such unpredictable and spontaneous moments, cannot help but make the rest of us wonder 'What would I have done?'

The citizenship ceremonies are another part of the rich tapestry of the High Sheriff's duties. They never fail to provide a regular source of immense satisfaction and frequent amusement. While it is true that difficulties within the Passport Office have resulted in reduced numbers at some of these ceremonies, the silver lining is that it affords the opportunity to learn more about each of the individuals who are rightly awarded citizenship. Each of them has a story to tell, frightening, fascinating or inspiring – usually a mixture of all three. It is a privilege as High Sheriff to hear these stories and be part of this process.

◆ John Bramah

High Sheriff South Yorkshire 2014-15

In April, we bade farewell to the indefatigable Johnny Towers. During his long 27-year tenure as Under Sheriff of South Yorkshire, Johnny, together with his wife Vanessa, has become an enthusiastic, colourful and innate part of our shrieval fabric. They were joined by past High Sheriffs at a valedictory dinner in the magnificent surroundings of the Neill Room at the Cutlers' Hall in Sheffield.

As the current High Sheriff, I had the good fortune of hosting this special evening, which Julia and I hoped would be a stylish and entertaining tribute worthy of Johnny and Vanessa's warmth

and exuberance throughout their years of service. I hope the dinner demonstrated a heartfelt appreciation of their long friendship.

As Johnny's successor we are delighted to welcome Rob Chitoriski from Penistone. Now retired, Rob has served for many years as Court Solicitor to the Magistrates in South Yorkshire. He is well known and highly regarded by the Justices and many previous High Sheriffs. His wealth of experience of court life will be of great value to all incoming High Sheriffs in South Yorkshire, myself included. We wish him good fortune in his new role.

