



## A roaring year in Staffordshire

STAFFORDSHIRE IS an extremely busy county, with two combined courts, Stafford and Stoke-on-Trent, and no less than eight prisons, all of which I visited during my year in office. The prison service desperately needs our support at this time. Yet more pressure on the legal system this year was the closing of Burton Magistrates' Court.

I was privileged to attend the majority of the Queen's Award ceremonies and was hugely impressed by the industry and innovation of businesses throughout the county, not to mention the incredible dedication of the voluntary sector, without which the whole country would almost certainly grind to a halt. One such example is Manna House, a Baptist church in Hanley, which provides a hot meal for up to one hundred homeless people every Thursday evening. My wife Lucy and I returned to help one evening and to chat with some of the visitors.

We are very lucky to have the National Memorial Arboretum on our doorstep at Alrewas, a must for any visitor to the county. I attended numerous events there throughout the year, most notably the Annual Service of Remembrance of COPS (Care of Police Survivors: an amazing charity dedicated to helping the families of police officers who have lost their lives on duty), the Armistice Day Service with HRH Prince Harry and the official opening of the magnificent new Remembrance Centre by HRH the Duke of Cambridge.

As I am chairman of Staffordshire Clubs for Young People and having spent 28 years in the Territorial Army, I decided my charitable focus would be the youth of the county, including the Reserves and Cadets. Since the demise of the county's Youth Services it has become critical to look to the voluntary sector to provide activities for young people, especially those in deprived areas who might otherwise be led astray or find themselves branded as trouble-makers because they are bored and have nothing on which to focus their energy (ASB = Anti-Social Boredom!). This sat nicely with the role of looking after the judiciary, by keeping some youngsters actively engaged and out of trouble! I was very pleased to have a cadet from one of my former TA centres: Corporal now Sergeant Slade.

A vintage car enthusiast, I was fascinated to learn from a friend, Edward Bolton, that his grandfather, Francis Bolton, who founded a copper works in Oakamoor, was also an avid motorist and had organised a hill climb in Oakamoor in the early 1900s. A few telephone calls, reces and meetings and we were on our way to organising a hill climb revival to raise money for Staffordshire Clubs for Young People. Deemed a success, we are organising a bigger, better event this year on Saturday 15 July 2017!

Sir Kenneth Parker was the only High Court Judge to come to Stafford during my year. It was fascinating to sit with him and my wife Lucy and I were delighted to invite him and Lady Parker to a dinner party at home. Nonetheless, feeling somewhat bereft of High Court Judges, I wondered what else I might do to look after the

**Right:** A roaring start to my charity fundraiser in Staffordshire

**Opposite page:** Armistice Day – The High Sheriff presents Harriet Baldwin MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary at the Ministry of Defence to HRH Prince Harry





## News from and about members



judiciary and organised what was described by the Recorder of Stafford, His Honour Judge Michael Chambers QC, as a pop-party for staff members at Stafford Combined Court before Christmas, and another at Stoke-on-Trent before Easter. The latter was also an opportunity to present three Court Awards. Regrettably the recipients decided to keep a low profile but their actions demonstrated remarkable bravery and integrity and it was humbling to learn about their exploits. They truly are unsung heroes.

Finally, I would like to offer my most sincere thanks to my Under Sheriff and his Secretary, Paul Slater and Pat Chilton at Hand Morgan & Owen. Both have been extremely supportive throughout my year and the firm has provided Under Sheriffs of Staffordshire for many decades. Long may they continue to do so!

♣ **Colonel David Leigh TD DL**  
*High Sheriff of Staffordshire 2016-17*

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