



## Speaking out

SINCE TAKING over on Maundy Thursday with my Declaration at Bury St Edmunds 12th-century Guildhall, life has been a flurry of activity ranging from ceremonial to caring.

With all the news and concern about the migrant situation across Europe at the moment, I have enjoyed presiding over citizenship ceremonies across Suffolk. Some people are refugees and have had 'quite a journey' to get to this point; it means so much to them as they look forward to being able to play a proper part in their new communities.

I paid a rather sad farewell visit to the RAF's 22 Squadron Search and Rescue upon its disbanding. My grandfather commanded 22 Squadron during the war when they flew Beaufort bombers. I was pleased that aircrew from Wattisham dropped in to attend my High Sheriff's reception and I was able to thank them publicly for the great service they have provided to the east coast over the 20 years they had been based there. Helicopters became rather a theme as I also hosted a fundraiser for the East Anglian Air Ambulance

which raised over £10,000 and recruited some more benefactors. Their new helicopter flew in just before the end of the evening causing one neighbour to ring up solicitously the next morning to see if we were still alive.

It is already clear to me that the voluntary sector is having to pick up the slack in the system as never before and, without people who give their time as volunteers and/or money as charitable donors, many of the positive activities that make a real difference to people's lives simply wouldn't happen. It underlines the importance of my role in cheerleading the voluntary sector, community groups and charities that do so much, and I have been preaching 'philanthropy' whenever I've been given a platform. I should like to mention how much I valued Sue Warner's brilliant 'Speak Up, Speak Out!' public speaking workshop for High Sheriffs in nomination from which I (and I hope my audiences) have benefited greatly.

Magistrates are the ultimate volunteers and it was a pleasure to host a social event for the

**Above:** Declaration in the historic Bury St Edmunds Guildhall with Under Sheriff Neil Walmsley; Nicholas Wingfield Digby LVO DL, immediate past High Sheriff; His Honour Judge Goodin; myself; my Chaplain Canon Matthew Vernon; Sue Hughes JP, Chairman of the Suffolk Bench



## News from and about members

combined Suffolk Bench at our home in August. However, they had just received the news that the Ministry of Justice is proposing to close two of our remaining three Magistrates' Courts leaving our large, rural county of 1,500 square miles with just one in the south-east corner. Historically, a Sheriff might raise a hue and cry in pursuit of a suspected criminal; nowadays I think that can be translated into causing a public clamour of protest alerting people to an issue, so I have been campaigning alongside magistrates, lawyers, the police and crime commissioner and others to try and prevent this. For people living in North Suffolk and rural West Suffolk this move will represent a serious threat to their right to access to local justice.

I have had great support from the Suffolk Community Foundation in managing the High Sheriff's fund, grants and awards, as well as pointing me in the right direction on charity and social enterprise visits. As a former chairman of an arts organisation I am a great believer in the 'power of the arts for change' and this has been my other theme. We celebrated my halfway point with a command performance in our lovely historic Theatre Royal with a cast of professional ballet, opera and drama stars alongside community groups launching a much needed new Arts and Culture Fund. The full house raised £40,000 which will help outreach arts projects across the county. I



**Above:** Citizenship ceremony at Elm Studios, Ipswich

shamelessly exploited the finale – 'Do You Hear the People Sing' from Les Miserables – to make the point about court closures with a 'Justice for Suffolk' banner!

My next six months will feature many more visits, the High Sheriff's Awards and Justice Service, both at the tail end of my year in March. I am looking forward to a very busy second half.

♣ **Judith Shallow**  
*High Sheriff of Suffolk 2015-16*

**Below:** Curtain call of my command performance at the Theatre Royal, Bury St Edmunds: cast and ensemble members with Mara Galleazzi and Gary Avis (Royal Ballet), myself and Timothy West

