



## Surrey 2012-13

A year may be a long time in politics, but it certainly isn't a long time in the life of a High Sheriff. 2012-13 was probably the fastest moving year in my life – extraordinarily busy, incredibly humbling and enormous fun.

Having been a forensic medical examiner (FME) for the Metropolitan and the Surrey Police, I chose drug addiction as one of the two themes for my year as High Sheriff. This meant that I visited a large number of voluntary and NHS support agencies

and the drug units in all the Surrey prisons. As a doctor, I was able, for a day, to shadow a prison doctor who specialised in drug abuse. I went to the universities and discussed their drugs' policies with them and was very impressed by the support systems that they had in place. I was asked to join a police committee attempting to close down the skunkworks outlets in Surrey and I learnt a lot more about 'legal highs' as High Sheriff than I ever did when I was an FME.

The weather, in the week before my service for the judiciary, was quite appalling and I was seriously concerned about the customary procession along Guildford High Street. However, the sun shone on the righteous (and who is more righteous than the High Sheriff and the judiciary?) and all went well. The High Sheriffs of East and West Sussex and Kent came and processed. My brother, a silk and a recorder, joined the judges in all his finery. The music in the church was superb and the choir sang absolutely magnificently Will Todd's *Call of Wisdom*, composed for The Queen's Diamond Jubilee service in St Paul's Cathedral. And my ten-year-old sword bearer comported himself with great dignity and managed NOT to slice off the heads of the watching crowd, in spite of his attempts on his sisters in the kitchen rehearsal the previous night!

My other interest this year was physical disability, a branch of medicine in which I had specialised before transferring to forensic medicine. This fitted very neatly with the Paralympic Games and I attended any number of school games both for the able and the disabled. Like the rest of the world, I marvelled at what could be achieved. Surrey has a gold medallist in Boccia and I supported the finding of 2,012 Boccia players in the county and signed up 85 at my garden party.

The High Sheriff's Men, otherwise my three sons, were determined that their mother was going to be a truly 21st-century High Sheriff and insisted that I open a Twitter account. As a result, I became the first High Sheriff in Surrey to tweet, which I did regularly to my 83 loyal followers.

I gave the annual High Sheriff's garden party at a local school on a (needless to say) rainy Sunday afternoon in July. In choosing the date, I had not realised that it was the same as the Mens' Finals at Wimbledon AND Formula 1 racing.



PHOTOGRAPH: ANDY NEWBOLD PHOTOGRAPHY

The Legal Service procession was led by the Chief Constable, Lynne Owens, and the sword bearer was Calum.



# News from and about Members

However, neither the weather nor the sporting fixtures stopped people from coming.

In Surrey, each successive High Sheriff becomes chairman of the High Sheriff Youth Awards for the year. This charity gives financial support to groups of young people who want to reduce or prevent crime and tackle anti-social behaviour in their area. The initiatives that are funded might otherwise struggle to get financial support and they are often in communities with no provision for young people. Each High Sheriff has the opportunity to visit the projects and see the results achieved with the grants. I visited 21 of these projects and every time was amazed by the enthusiasm of the young and the dedication of the staff. Towards the end of the High Sheriff's year, various projects are showcased at an evening reception sponsored by ExxonMobil. One project is chosen from each borough or district and, although the evening requires an enormous amount of organisation and preparation, it was extremely successful.

So now my year as High Sheriff is over and I return to my job as coroner for Surrey. A year that will never be forgotten, either by me or by my family, and one that has generated new interests, new friends and, I hope, new opportunities. □

**Karin Sehmer**  
High Sheriff of Surrey 2012-13



TS (Training Ship) *Ambuscade*, one of the recipients of a High Sheriff's Youth Award, performing at the annual showcase at Exxon Mobil.

PHOTOGRAPH: ANDY NEWBOLD PHOTOGRAPHY



Four High Sheriffs from adjoining counties: Andrewjohn Stephenson Clarke (West Sussex), Karin Sehmer (Surrey), David Allam (East Sussex), Michael Bax (Kent).

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