



# An active year

**Above:** Peter Lee presents High Sheriff Youth Awards certificate to Sam Beak and the team of Longmeadz Kickn

WHEN SUBMITTING my piece for the High Sheriffs' Association website at the start of my year, I anticipated a busy and challenging year ahead. I was right! It is also proving to be interesting, enlightening, humbling, rewarding and great fun. I am pleased that due in no small part to the work of my predecessors, there is a tremendous amount of goodwill for the office of High Sheriff.

My main theme during the year is getting young people active. This generation of young people is probably the least active in human history, and obesity levels in the young in Surrey (and indeed across the country) are on the increase. A staggering one in four young people are overweight or obese and it is getting worse. We are fortunate in Surrey to have Active Surrey, the lead development agency for promoting sport and physical activity in Surrey, which works with a number of partnerships committed to making Surrey a more active and successful sporting county. We are lucky to have some excellent sporting facilities in the county, including Surrey

Sports Park in Guildford. I was pleased to attend the P&G Surrey Youth Games and the P&G Surrey School Games held at Surrey Sports Park which involve teams from all eleven boroughs and districts in the county competing in a range of sporting disciplines.

I am trying to lead by example and, on 21 September, I participated in the YMCA Downslink Tour de Y Challenge, a cycle route of some 40 miles from the North Downs Way to the South Downs Way. As I crossed the county boundary at the halfway point, I was greeted by the High Sheriff of West Sussex, Jonathan Lucas, in full court dress!

Engaging young people through sport also cuts crime and antisocial behaviour. I believe Surrey is unique in having the High Sheriff Youth Awards, a charity which funds projects for young people that help to reduce or prevent crime. The HSYA is proud to have supported Longmeadz Kickn and Liquid Connection Total Football. Both these charities use football to engage targeted young people and give them opportunities to complete accreditations and

qualifications. Working in partnership with Surrey Police and the County Council, they aim (and succeed) in addressing antisocial behaviour while providing positive opportunities for disadvantaged young people in the area.

2014 has of course seen the commemoration of the centenary of the start of the First World War. On 4 August I attended a Vigil Service at Guildford Cathedral attended by Their Royal Highnesses the Earl and Countess of Wessex. It was an appropriately contemplative occasion, respectful, solemn and very moving.

Surrey is a county with a proud military history. It has military establishments at RLC Deepcut, Keogh Barracks and Pirbright, as well as the renowned rehabilitation centre at Headley Court. It is also home to Brookwood Military Cemetery which is the largest Commonwealth war cemetery in the UK. There are strong county contingents of Reserves and army cadets which provide support to charity events around the county. Guildford itself is very much a military town. I sit on the

Surrey Military Appeals Committee and I have been very much involved in military events throughout the county. I was pleased to lend my support to Guildford's bid to host National Armed Forces Day 2015 and I am delighted that our bid was successful. It is a wonderful achievement for Guildford and for the county.

But that is for my successor to enjoy. So too are the celebrations of the 800th anniversary of the sealing of Magna Carta at Runnymede on 15 June 1215. It serves as a reminder of the traditions of this great office. I am told that fourteen past and present sheriffs were present at Runnymede and played a prominent part in drafting the Charter. It is humbling to think that 800 years later the High Sheriff of Surrey will be present for the commemorations of this momentous event.

When I was approached four years ago about being High Sheriff of Surrey, I asked myself 'is the office of High Sheriff still relevant today?' I believed then that it was and, after a little over six months in office, I am even more convinced that it remains so. We may not be as powerful or influential as the sheriffs who attended at Runnymede on 15 June 1215, but we can and do still contribute positively to the counties we represent, I believe for the better.

**♦ Peter Lee**  
High Sheriff of Surrey 2014-15

**Below:** Peter Lee (right) and Jonathan Lucas (left) at the county boundary on the YMCA Downslink cycle ride

