



Home of Magna Carta

SURREY IS the home of Runnymede and we celebrated 800 years of the sealing of Magna Carta with wonderful events, including the unveiling of HM The Queen's statue by the banks of the Thames at Runnymede, and the national celebrations on 14 June attended by Her Majesty and HRH The Duke of Edinburgh, other members of the Royal Family, the Prime Minister and the Archbishop of Canterbury. I was amused to meet so many Americans at Runnymede who didn't realise the origins of their 'Sheriffs' who still maintain law and order and collect taxes in the USA! On 9 September I returned to Runnymede to celebrate the Queen's milestone as the UK's longest-reigning monarch. Surrey also hosted National Armed Forces Day in Guildford, another wonderful occasion.

My theme for the year is supporting the rehabilitation of offenders and it has been great to spend time with organisations in Surrey that help to maintain law and order. I have visited four prisons, spent time with the police, sat in our County, District and Magistrates' Courts and visited the probation service. I have also been in contact with Kent, Surrey and Sussex Community Rehabilitation Company which has won the government contract to provide rehabilitation services for prisoners with short-term sentences. Although our prisons have many work and training opportunities for prisoners, and programmes for helping

with drug addiction and mental health issues, more needs to be done. I visited the Women's Refuge Centre in Woking which does wonderful work helping women in prison and on release and I was the speaker at an art exhibition showing work by women in prison. I have watched two Keep Out workshops, sessions taken by prisoners explaining to young people 'on the edge of criminality' what being in prison is about. Very powerful stuff. I have been struck by the terrible start in life that so many of our offenders have had and I am convinced that support and rehabilitation in many cases is the right way forward so I champion it on every possible occasion. Charities such as The Clink Restaurant operating out of HMP Highdown, which provided the canapés and service for my garden party in June, have already demonstrated huge success in reducing re-offending because they have enabled prisoners to gain life skills in food preparation and restaurant service. Recently I met Andrew Selous, Prisons Minister, to discuss rehabilitation of offenders.

My weeks have been full with plenty of opportunity to travel around Surrey and see at first hand the wonderful work of our charities and voluntary organisations. I have given out many Duke of Edinburgh Awards, but I was particularly thrilled by the pupils from Limpsfield Grange School who are all special needs children – what an amazing achievement! I was



Above: The High Sheriff at Runnymede celebrating HM The Queen's milestone as the UK's longest-reigning monarch with Cllr Derek Cotty, Mayor of Runnymede and other Surrey Mayors

very impressed by the two Queen's Scouts I met, but conscious in my speeches to acknowledge the time given by parents and others for young people to achieve such awards. Watching disabled boxing, keep fit and other projects at Disability Initiative was an inspiration. Visiting High Sheriff's Youth Awards projects is equally rewarding and reinforces how lucky we are to have so many dedicated volunteers in Surrey.

◆ Elizabeth Kennedy

High Sheriff of Surrey 2015-16



Above: The High Sheriff with new Queen's Scouts, Kieran Woods and Georgie Bearman, and Surrey County Commissioner Alison Sargeant

Left: Surrey-supported employment event, where the High Sheriff gave a speech supporting vulnerable people being helped to get back in employment