



Joint ventures in the North East

LIKE POLICE officers, fire fighters seem to be getting younger! The photograph I have submitted with this article shows the fantastic young fire fighters at Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue who extinguished flames engulfing a large house with some speed and vigour during the training demonstrations on the night of the Fire Authority's Prize Giving. The 'real' fire fighters who received awards from me were a little older!

That particular event highlighted to me how much I have enjoyed meeting and working with the young people of Tyne and Wear. In the winter edition, I talked about the strong sense of community in this county, and the last six months have simply served to reinforce that sense of community.

No better example can be given than the evening of the Tyne and Wear High Sheriff's Awards Ceremony. Some years ago, an endowment fund was established by two of my predecessors and every year these funds are used to support volunteered groups in the county working with children and young people, many of whom

face very challenging circumstances at an early stage of their lives. I have been moved by the determination, dedication and warmth of so many of these volunteers, and the fantastic ways in which these young people are learning to play such a meaningful part in their communities.

Supported by a very able fundraising team around me, including a number of former High Sheriffs, we raised £46,000 to add to the fund, and this allowed me to distribute 62 awards to these organisations – a record! I shook the hands of over 120 young people, and I didn't stop smiling all evening. A fantastic way to end an exhilarating year.

Music has featured prominently in the course of the year – from the beautiful choirs of York Minster, Durham Cathedral and St Nicholas's Cathedral in Newcastle upon Tyne when we attended the various legal services in the North East, to marching military bands, and to my favourite – listening to voices of the group that won second prize at the Award Ceremony. This was a group of young people endeavouring to overcome some

Above: Lucy Winskell with the young fire fighters of Tyne and Wear Fire Authority

challenging mental health issues, and the courage they showed in performing on stage in front of such a large audience was remarkable, as was the fact that they had written their own music and lyrics.

I'm sure that in common with all other High Sheriffs who have come to the end of their term, my husband John and I will look back on this year as one of the most rewarding and interesting times of our lives. We have been overwhelmed by support from so many and have especially enjoyed joining forces with Lucy Carroll, High Sheriff of Northumberland, on many ventures – including our attempt at poetry on National Poetry Day which coincided with our Letters Patent event.

I should like to thank everyone who has supported me over the last year – John and I have appreciated it very much.

♣ **Lucy Winskell OBE DL**
High Sheriff of Tyne and Wear 2015-16