



## Tyne and Wear 2013-14

Having successfully made my Declaration at the Moot Hall in Newcastle upon Tyne in April, my year began and has continued at the fast pace predicted by my predecessor, Ashey Winter.

In addition to supporting Mayoral Inaugurations during May and other civic functions, I received invitations to visit all emergency services. The North East Ambulance Service not only invited me to visit its contact centre, where emergency calls are received and dealt with, but to undertake a 12-hour shift with an ambulance crew, as an observer. The experience enabled me to witness the extraordinary medical, caring and driving skills needed to undertake the role of an ambulance paramedic.

I also received invitations from voluntary emergency services, including the Sunderland RNLI Station, who staged a rescue for me to observe and Tynemouth Volunteer Life Brigade, a shore-based coastal rescue service. I attended the final inspection of 2344 (Longbenton) Squadron, ATC, following which it was voted Top Air



The High Sheriff 's visit to Hindu Nari Sangh cultural dance group.

Cadet Squadron in the UK and awarded the Lees Trophy. I also visited Hindu Nari Sangh, a Hindu cultural dancing group, and a YMCA 'Drop In' Centre in Newcastle. I was pleased that my wife has been invited to join me on each occasion.

Through our High Sheriff's Awards Scheme we have a tradition of encouraging and supporting voluntary groups which operate in the community to assist and guide young people, often in disadvantaged areas. We make annual awards to selected organisations at a special awards ceremony. Visiting these groups has been both a pleasure and an inspiration.



The High Sheriff and his wife visit Tynemouth Volunteer Life Brigade.

My wife and I have enjoyed the traditional High Sheriff's role of entertaining Her Majesty's High Court Judges and accepting their invitations to dine with them. These are memorable occasions. The opportunity to sit in court with them provides a real insight into a High Court Judge's role and the ways in which they deal with the serious cases before them and the complex issues which inevitably arise.

I decided during my year to pursue two special interests, relating to mental health problems. These interests arose from my having served as a legal member of the Mental Health Review Tribunal for over 30 years.



# News from and about Members

One relates to the work now being undertaken in a National Diversion Programme. Under this people are assessed and their needs identified as early as possible in the offender pathway (including prevention and early intervention), thus informing subsequent decisions about where an individual is best placed to receive treatment and punishment following an offence. Pilot operations are being undertaken in Tyne and Wear as part of a North East initiative entitled 'The Big Diversion Programme'. This includes assessing ways of diverting from the criminal justice system people suffering from mental health problems or

learning disorders and of providing access to appropriate support at all stages of the criminal justice pathway for those who become involved in it.

The other special interest relates to work supporting former members of our Armed Services suffering from post-combat traumatic stress disorder or other forms of mental illness. An increasing number of sufferers have been identified as a result of the number of conflicts in which our servicemen and servicewomen have participated in recent years, and it is anticipated that this number will continue to grow. I am consequently

following the progress of a pilot service launched in June 2012, and running until March 2014, named 'The Veterans Wellbeing Assessment and Liaison Service'. Its objective is to create a single point of access, for ex-service personnel and their families living in the North East, to the range of mental health support services which already exist, making it much easier for them to be directed to the right help and support. □

**George Scott**

*High Sheriff of Tyne and Wear 2013-14*



The High Sheriff making his Declaration at the Moot Hall in Newcastle upon Tyne.