



Ancient and modern

AS A former soldier it has been refreshing to wear court dress rather than military uniform. It is also a lot easier to maintain and put on than the military equivalent. I have worn it on public transport and found that it is a splendid way of engaging people and explaining the role. On such occasions I leave my sword at home for the obvious security reason and to make sitting down much more practical.

I was able to sign the Armed Forces Covenant with the Royal Hospital in Sunderland as one of my first engagements. This hospital has provided a large number of medical staff to the British Armed Forces in Iraq and Afghanistan in recent years.

In addition to the normal formal events I have been privileged to take High Court Judges and magistrates to see both reservists and cadets in action on evening visits. It was particularly good that two High Court Judges were able to come on board HMS *Calliope*, a shore base on the opposite bank of the River Tyne from their court. Recently renovated and now housing Royal Navy Reserves, Royal Marine Reserves and Sea Cadets the base hosted an evening for reservists and their employers on Reserves Day. This made for a splendid occasion for the judiciary to see what goes on inside the building that they have observed on many a day when attending court.

I misunderstood the headline of an invitation to attend the reliving of Heron's Pit. My imagination had me down a coal mine until I read on. I visited a research project carried out by Newcastle University at the dungeon of Newcastle Castle. The dungeon was where High Sheriff Sir William Heron incarcerated those who failed to pay their fines. This was from 1246 to 1256 when things were very different. He was an unpopular man due to the way he treated people and was thought to line his pockets with most of the fines collected. At his funeral the

people of Newcastle prayed that their wish would be fulfilled that his soul be dragged to hell. I hope that during the rest of my year in office I shall not fall into this trap but rather help rehabilitate those souls in need today. With humour anything is possible as I was reminded on visiting prison. An old lag came up to me and advised: 'Don't leave anything lying around here as this place is full of crooks'.

◆ Lt General Robin Brims
CB CBE DSO DL
High Sheriff of Tyne and Wear 2017-18



Above: High Sheriff Robin Brims unveils the display boards explaining the dungeon at Newcastle Castle under the protective eye of Newcastle University which led the project

Below: Chief Executive Ken Bremner and High Sheriff Robin Brims sign the Armed Forces Covenant in front of key staff at the Royal Hospital Sunderland

