

News from and about Members



West Midlands 2012-13

When I entered office I wanted to do a number of things differently and do a number of different things.

I was keen to bring together our regional mayors, knitting their geographies together to address the mutual challenges they face. High points in civic life were our two judicial services in Birmingham and Wolverhampton as well as the Civic Mass at Birmingham's St Chad's Cathedral. My own High Sheriff's Awards, where two lord mayors and five mayors congregated to see every part of the county of the West Midlands recognise outstanding individuals from the voluntary and community sectors, were also memorable.

I also especially wanted to engage effectively and extensively with community groups representing all ages and all sectors of society, hoping to bring my business experience to provide aspiration, particularly for young people.

Recently I had the honour of welcoming HRH The Earl of Wessex to



Staff and students at ACE Academy with HRH The Earl Of Wessex.

open officially the ACE Academy in Tipton. I chair the governing body of this educational centre, where 11-18 year-olds are learning to find their way in the world. Their innate exuberance and belief in following their dreams, despite the economic challenges they face, is an inspiration to us all.

I also presented High Sheriff's Awards in the Crown Court to many local citizens, each of whom stood up, took responsibility and brought criminals to justice because of their brave actions - extraordinary differences made by far from ordinary people.

I firmly believe that the privilege of office has provided me with the opportunity to work towards all these aims, and that I have been able to build a platform for the High Sheriffs in the future, one founded on collaboration between the numerous able and inspiring individuals we have within society.

Throughout my year I have been very fortunate to have experienced at close quarters the work of our judges. They are a formidable and exceptional group of people to whom we all owe a great debt for their impartiality, integrity and unerring sense of balance in applying the law. Time spent in court with two High Court Judges, presiding over two separate murder trials, was especially illuminating in understanding their high calibre and why our legal system is entrusted to very safe hands.



His Honour Judge William Davis QC (Recorder of Birmingham), Anthony Simpson and Stewart Towe CBE (High Sheriff of the West Midlands).



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On a visit to HMS *Diamond*, a type 45 destroyer returning from a six-month tour of duty in the Gulf, I was equally reminded of the professionalism and unique stature of our armed forces; men and women who never fail to display selfless courage in the toughest of times.

The breadth of the role of High Sheriff is very important and I was invited to

speak to the Rotary Club in Birmingham and Smethwick '41 Club' to explain this in greater detail to local business people, and to emphasise how they can provide the lifeblood of opportunity to future generations. Their interest in the office and support for works being done was very rewarding. Therefore, as I pass the honour of serving as High Sheriff to Dame

Christine Braddock, with my heartfelt best wishes, I know that she will take the office in new directions. However I will take with me countless memories and rich experiences that I will treasure forever. □

Stewart Towe CBE DL

High Sheriff of the West Midlands 2012-13