



Wonderful West Midlands

WELL, MY shrieval year has concluded! After spending the first six months learning the royal, mayoral and judicial protocols I began to relax into the role. My apprentice PA Jimi and my partner Marian equally got to know the ropes and the diary became manageable and the changing arrangements all began to go smoothly.

My focus on arts, creativity and young people enabled me to support a wide range of talent and organisations. Our garden party was a great success with our seven mayors nominating young people for awards in recognition of their voluntary contributions. It was supported by the public and private sector with Birmingham City Council launching its Creative Future strategy and Selfridges seeking to support new talent.

This public/private creative theme continued over my year as I met and celebrated youth and creativity across the county from Coventry in the south to Wolverhampton in the north. A memorable day was when HRH the Duke of Cambridge travelled by helicopter to central Birmingham. Prince William unveiled commemorative stones recalling the valiant deeds of ten winners of the Victoria Cross who fell in the Second World War. Later we travelled to east Birmingham where the predominantly Muslim community was hosting a Football for Peace event of which the



With young filmmakers and Media Eye Films

Prince is patron. Also in attendance was United Nations Special Ambassador Wilfried Lemke. Later in the year we were honoured to welcome Her Majesty The Queen to open the redeveloped New Street Station incorporating Grand Central shopping area. A very special day for the county.

I decided to end the year with an exhibition of young people's work in the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery and requested arts and creative organisations to nominate outstanding young people who have achieved beyond their expectations. It was a wonderful night and we made 11 awards including the Court Award presented by the Recorder of Birmingham His Honour Judge Melbourne Inman QC to Dean Partridge for his courage. It was also an opportunity for guests to donate to the Koestler and John Feeney charities for

which I am hugely grateful. I ran a young people's 10-second film competition in conjunction with the Year of Arts & Young People – YAY – and Grand Central where the films were screened on the immense media eyes!

I was pleased to award Nansen Primary School the Selfridges Sustainability Globe Award for winning a competition promoting recycling. Adam Hockney, general manager of Selfridges, presented the award to the teachers and children. I also arranged to visit the school and give an assembly the following week. It was a great occasion followed by a Q&A session where the first question from a young boy was: 'Can I be a High Sheriff?' To which of course I replied 'Yes – if you work hard'. A few questions later a young British Asian girl asked: 'Can girls be Sheriffs?' I said 'yes' and pointed out that of the last four West Midlands Sheriffs, two were women. Now one last question please – a young girl popped her hand in the air and asked: 'Sir, what is it like to wear tights?' An abiding memory of a wonderful year.

◆ **Jonnie Turpie MBE**
High Sheriff of the West Midlands 2015-16

- See the High Sheriff's blog which is a unique record of the year: <https://highsheriffwm15.uk>

Below: Nansen School, recipient of the High Sheriff's Award. Below right: HM The Queen opens Grand Central

