



Tradition in safe hands

BEING HIGH Sheriff of the West Midlands has been an intense but enjoyable year. From the onset, being involved with High Court and Circuit Judges, JPs and the judiciary in general has been most stimulating and what particularly stood out was what excellent company they all are. Very dedicated to their profession and hard working, they are under a lot of pressure but continue to press on regardless. Annual justice services in Birmingham and Wolverhampton were very well attended by the public and it became clear that there is much public appetite for tradition combined with support for the judiciary.

In Coventry on Remembrance Sunday, many thousands of people attended the service, queuing from early hours and bringing flasks of tea, and blankets; very touching indeed and indicative of the broad support that exists for the armed forces. To a great extent this experience was repeated at other ceremonies in the region.

We have been fortunate in attracting a number of royal visits during the year and it is notable that these visits are very popular and well attended. Inevitably those of TRH the Duke of Cambridge and Prince Harry and their charming partners would tend to attract most attention but the note of informality they struck was unexpected and disarming. Coventry is very much a student city and the degree to which students welcomed the royal visits there is a very good indicator for the future.



Above: School visit to the Safeside facility in Birmingham



At attention with West Bromwich Fire Cadets

Photos: Connie Hudson

We made five visits to West Midlands Fire Service HQ, Fire Cadets, and Safeside, learning centres inspiring visitors to think and act safely. High Court Judges accompanied one of the visits and left very impressed with the efforts of the service and volunteers. The Police and Crime Commissioner was helpful in explaining his office's mission and a visit to the armed response unit firearms range proved an eye-opener: a very efficient unit. I was invited to present awards at the ambulance service annual awards ceremony and a number of recipients said they were 'only doing their job', although to anyone else they were heroic in their deeds. This also applied to court award



Above: Recipients of court awards at Birmingham Magistrates' Court

recipients, where I was pleased to present awards to nine people at Birmingham Magistrates' Court.

There was a steady stream of invitations to cathedrals, churches, mosques, synagogues, temples, and the charitable sector in its broadest sense. The High Sheriff's uniform was particularly well received and therefore I wore it on as many occasions as possible as that is what people expect.

Although I attended around 200 events I also had to turn down many because of clashes, which was frustrating all round. I prioritised those events involved with my two themes – young people and social cohesion – and this proved a useful template for the year. A vast amount of voluntary effort is expended by many good people and this was a heartening aspect of the year as a whole.

It has been a great honour and privilege to have been the High Sheriff of the West Midlands and my wife Connie and I take away many happy memories and feelings of admiration for the efforts of others.

♣ **John Hudson OBE DL**
High Sheriff of the West Midlands 2017-18