



A time of continuity and change

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE GAINED its first city during Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee. The Queen's Letters Patent conferring this grace and favour on Milton Keynes in north Buckinghamshire was prepared on vellum. As High Sheriffs, we have a historic connection to vellum, as does Milton Keynes.

The 2022-23 High Sheriffs are the last to be chosen by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, who pricked our names on the Sheriffs' vellum roll with a bodkin. Our Guide to the Office of High Sheriff tells us this practice dates back to the reign of Henry VII. Names were pricked through vellum because this hole could never be repaired, so the sometimes unwelcome honour of being Sheriff could not be avoided.

At the turn of the 20th century there were 54 businesses in Britain making vellum or parchment, a material made from the split skin of an animal (usually goat, sheep or cow).

By 1986 that number had dropped to just one: William Cowley Parchment Makers, a company founded in Newport Pagnell in 1870 (now within the City of Milton Keynes). In the West, parchment predates paper by about 1,000 years, and the survival of many ancient documents points to one of its greatest qualities: longevity. The Domesday Book of 1086 is still legible. At the Proclamation Ceremony in Aylesbury, organised by

Buckinghamshire Council, I presented mayors and chairmen from across the county with Proclamations printed on vellum to read out in their towns and the city and to keep as an enduring record of a historic event.

Earlier this summer, I presented a High Sheriff's Award to the Curtis Palmer Program for Police Personnel, prepared for me on parchment by William Cowley. The dangers and stresses of policing can cause PTSD, mental ill-health and other health-related issues. This programme offers peer support through expeditions and training. Retired officer Gary Jones says, 'We are one big family who derive great satisfaction from supporting each other.' Former officer PC Matt Midwinter, who was involved in an on-duty car crash resulting in a catastrophic brain injury, has been supported by the team to climb up Pen y Fan, the highest peak in South Wales. Serving officer, Sergeant Loz East and his family are being supported through his cancer treatment by setting him one goal after another. I met the team at Marlow on the banks of the Thames on Sergeant East's canoe trip from Devizes to Westminster, a journey of 77 locks and an arduous 125-mile paddle. A High Sheriff's Award, presented at the Thames Valley Police Chief Constable's Awards Ceremony, was received by Sergeant East on behalf of the Curtis Palmer Program.



Photo Bucks County Council

Handing over a Proclamation scroll to Cllr Arif Hussain, Mayor of High Wycombe



Milton Keynes received City status

My shrieval year coincides with the year Olney and its parish church in north Buckinghamshire celebrate the 250th anniversary of the hymn 'Amazing Grace'. This has inspired both my year and my recent Justice Service. In 1764 John Newton, former slave trader and newly ordained revd, arrived in Olney 'a wretch', and said he was saved by 'the Amazing Grace of God'. Newton felt he had been lost in a life of 'dangers, toils and snares' but 'now was found' by the power of grace bringing him home. In 1772 he wrote the hymn for his 1773 New Year's Day service. From his position in Olney and later in London, he was instrumental in slavery being abolished. Throughout the history of the Shrievalty in Buckinghamshire, Olney has never hosted a Justice Service, so it was an enormous honour to process the route to St Peter and St Paul, along with fellow High Sheriffs, members of the judiciary, and others serving law and order in the county, together with uniformed youth members.

Debbie Brock DL
High Sheriff of Buckinghamshire 2022-23



Above left: Presentation of the High Sheriff's Award to the Curtis Palmer Program received by Sergeant Loz East pictured with Thames Valley Police Chief Constable John Campbell QPM, retired officer Gary Jones, Inspector Damien Isherwood and High Sheriff's Cadet Sean Owen



Above right: At the Justice Service in Olney. Back L-R David Kelham (Marks), Mark Beard (Oxon), Sally Burton (Herts), Crispin Holborrow (Northants) Front L-R Sqn Ldr Jeremy Davies (Javelin Man), Lady Clifford (Beds), the Countess Howe (Lord-Lieutenant), Debbie Brock, Alka Kharbada (Berks), Ben Robinson (Staffs), Geoff Thompson (Rutland)

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