

Palaces to prisons and courts to cathedrals

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High Sheriff of South Yorkshire 2023-24

The advice to have an evenly paced diary of engagements proved really useful in planning the year. The striking feature is the variety of engagements leading from palaces to prisons and courts to cathedrals. Events linked to the judiciary, police, fire and ambulance services, armed forces, cadets, veterans, volunteers, charities and faith across a large county provide a broad array of opportunities to thank individuals and organisations for their selfless contributions to wider society.

My theme is to support youth and promote translational research and innovation with a focus on job creation. Reducing health inequalities was another area and this is in line with my job as a full-time NHS academic consultant surgeon. The University of Sheffield was therefore a fitting venue for the summer reception with the theme of 'Building a better future together'. The Lord-Lieutenant, Sheriff of London, neighbouring High Sheriffs, mayors, judges, and representatives from the emergency services mingled with cadets, trainee doctors, academics, volunteers and charity workers. Several individuals and organisations were recognised with a High Sheriff's Award. The Royal Yorkshire Regimental Band and the South Yorkshire Police Band raised the roof of the historic Firth Hall with their fabulous music.

Memorable events have included 'mayor making' ceremonies; university graduations; the traditional Cutlers' Feast at the 400-year-old Cutlers' Hall; 250 years of the Sheffield



Celebrating Yorkshire Day at Wentworth Woodhouse and in Rotherham

Assay Office; the Yorkshire Day celebrations in Rotherham attended by over 30 regional mayors; Doncaster City declarations with the Coldstream Guards parade on Armed Forces Day; the Great Yorkshire Show; and the North East Legal Service in York Minster.

I am privileged to have an excellent band of civic mayors in Sheffield, Doncaster, Rotherham, Barnsley and elected mayors in South Yorkshire whom I regularly meet in circuit. My wife and I enjoy meeting so many wonderful people and making new friends.

The local judges and magistrates are wonderful hosts at the courts. Hosting the visiting High Court judges at home creates special occasions to socialise over good food and wine. A reciprocal invitation to the Old Bailey and lunch with the judges was very interesting. Sheffield Town Hall and the Old Bailey were designed by the same architect, Edward Mountford, and share many external characteristics. Sitting in with the judges



and magistrates on a variety of cases highlighted complex societal issues and the challenges faced by the judiciary and the law enforcement agencies. Prison visits to HMP Lindholme, Hatfield and Marshgate (Doncaster) also demonstrated the logistical challenges for the prison services.

Visits to museums, theatres, faith services and sporting events create an interesting mix of experiences. The Under Sheriff and I found ourselves attending a noisy national cage fighting competition; attending the International Snooker Championship in Sheffield was much quieter!

Royal visits to the county are great for recognising organisations. It is most fulfilling to join the Lord-Lieutenant in welcoming a member of the royal family to the county as this demonstrates the royal links to this ancient office. One recent visit by The Princess Royal to the Ethel Trust Community Barge Project (providing day and residential canal and river experiences for the most disadvantaged groups in South Yorkshire) was wonderful.

As I mark the halfway point in my shrieval year, it is proving to be an unparalleled and phenomenal experience that is most humbling and impossible to describe fully. Future nominees still in full-time employment can be reassured that the role of High Sheriff fits well with a regular job. I even managed to address an international congress as an invited speaker.

The support provided by the Lord-Lieutenant, Under Sheriff, PA, consort and the wider circle of friends and family is crucial in doing the job well and simultaneously having a 'jolly good time'.

**Below left: With Cllr Duncan Anderson (Civic Mayor) with the Declaration for Doncaster City status
Below: Attending the Cutlers' Feast
Below right: Attending graduation day at the South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue**

