

Radical, simple, spiritual

Dame Ann Limb DBE DL

High Sheriff of Buckinghamshire 2023-24

I served as 789th High Sheriff of Buckinghamshire and was the first Quaker to hold the office in 800 years. I have undertaken all my engagements by putting my Quaker values into action and have been upheld by my Quaker community of thousands who acted collectively as my chaplains, as Quakers have no hierarchies, no creeds, and no priesthood.

I approached my year through the lenses of both outputs (what and how much done) and outcomes (impact). I spent 83 full days, a third of the recognised working week of 250 days, undertaking a total of 110 separate and different engagements. Fifty per cent of these were spent on upholding the Crown, the judiciary and criminal justice system; twenty per cent devoted to supporting the work of the police, probation, prison, emergency, and crime prevention services; and thirty per cent focussed on promoting charities working for the elimination of domestic and sexual violence, violence against women and girls (VAWG) and building sustainable and inclusive communities.

In terms of outcomes, I prioritised attendance at key civic, community, faith and belief events across Milton Keynes and Buckinghamshire that have enabled me to speak about, and demonstrate, the importance of values-led leadership in public life and throughout the judiciary and HM Courts and Tribunals Service. I supported the work of the police, probation, prison, emergency and crime prevention services by using my networking and advocacy skills to celebrate and showcase the diverse range of people who work at all levels in these key public services. I promoted charities working for the elimination of domestic and sexual violence, violence against women and girls and building sustainable and inclusive communities by using my convening powers to stimulate lasting collaboration between charities, leaving as a financial legacy The Harmony Fund to provide funds to carry out projects with The King's Foundation in Buckinghamshire which demonstrate 'people, places, planet – in harmony'



With my chaplains, Milton Keynes Quakers, and His Majesty King Charles III who made a private visit to the Woburn Sands Quaker Burial Ground in 2023

(www.instagram.com/kingsfdn/).

I have sought both to honour the history of the Office and to encourage evolution in the way the role of High Sheriff adapts to the realities of contemporary society. I have held to my principle of 'zero carbon zero cost' completing my year on foot, on bicycle or in my electric car. I have kept to a minimum the costs which the High Sheriff must cover personally because I have received subsidy, hospitality, and in-kind support from organisations and



businesses, and because I chose not to fund either a justice dinner or garden party, choosing instead to make a personal regular donation to MK Foodbank in lieu of providing general hospitality. Notwithstanding this, undertaking the routine activities associated with the role of High Sheriff requires those who take on the role to cover the costs entirely from their personal finances – a situation which is jarringly incongruous in the 21st-century world of equality, diversity, and inclusivity.

This is not sustainable in the long term and is a matter which I hope successive High Sheriffs will address and to which I have drawn attention in a blog on the topic (annlimb.co.uk/blog/honouring-history-encouraging-evolution-reflections-on-almost-half-a-year-of-being-high-sheriff-of-buckinghamshire).

I have received steadfast and invaluable help from others – my eight Goodwill Ambassadors, a group of innovative, inclusive, inspirational intergenerational volunteers who took the place of the conventional police cadet and my energetic and efficient Event Director, who stood in for my wife Maggie who could not serve as a traditional consort because of her age and ill health. Without all these people, it would not have been possible for me to undertake the role and to have such a full and fulfilling year.



With five of my High Sheriff's Goodwill Ambassadors pictured at Chequers, Buckinghamshire, where I hosted a thank you reception for the judiciary who were addressed by Cherie Blair CBE KC (centre)