

My most memorable year

Sally Scott

High Sheriff of Oxfordshire 2023-24

I began my year somewhat nervously, suffering from imposter syndrome; I'd love to say that I overcame this, but I always wondered... why me? Despite that, I have thoroughly enjoyed my year and learnt so much. I was inspired and humbled by the wonderful work being performed across the county by individuals, charities and organisations.

I chose as my focus the criminal justice system. Among the fun of police ride-alongs, days with the fire service, prisons and the judiciary, I was lucky enough to achieve a legal hat-trick involving three senior members of the judiciary.

My first, the Attorney General, the Rt Hon Victoria Prentis KC MP, gave the High Sheriff's Law Lecture at the University of Oxford Examination Schools. Over 250 students and many more members of the legal profession attended.

Second, the Court Sermon at Christ Church Cathedral was given by Baroness Hale (past President of the Supreme Court); her sermon addressed the issues arising from the dynamic between freedom of the press and freedom of religion. It was a tour de force on a highly pertinent issue.

And finally, the Court of Appeal judge, Lord Justice Peter Jackson, addressed a meeting attended by police, judiciary, probation and child services to discuss the introduction of Family Drug and Alcohol Courts (FDACs) into the county. I have started the ball rolling in Oxfordshire and my successors are keen to follow up what will be a 'slow burn' project.

I was also delighted to have been involved in an open day at the Oxford Combined Courts, the first in over 15 years. It was an enormous success. The objective was to educate the public as to the work of the criminal justice system and highlight its relevance. The police dogs sniffed, the drones flew, the cells and Serco vans were visited, and the firearms officers displayed their weaponry. This was all topped off with mock trials with members of the public acting as jurors – Dumbledore (from Harry Potter) was, to all the children's relief, found guilty of attacking Hermione.

It was not only great fun, but the feedback was overwhelmingly positive from the over 750 members of the public and the many representatives



With member of the TVP firearms unit at the Oxford Combined Courts Open Day Photo: Dr Nicholas Posner



With Katy Barrow-Grint (Assistant Chief Constable Thames Valley Police) and Marjorie Glasgow (Lord-Lieutenant) at the Oxfordshire Schools Mock Trial Competition



Seventeen High Sheriff's Awards were presented for outstanding work in the county. The youngest recipient was 11-year-old Oscar Rogers who demonstrated outstanding initiative at the scene of a motoring accident. The ceremony was attended by His Honour Patrick Eccles KC, Shrieval Remembrancer and Mrs Marjorie Glasgow BEM (Lord-Lieutenant) Photo: Cyrus Mower

of other organisations working in the criminal justice system.

For those events that I hosted, I chose to use social enterprises to do the catering. I used three charities with back-up from my local publican/entrepreneur. The three were: Waste2Taste (a charity running a café for homeless people using 'waste food' from supermarkets); The Clink (a prison-based catering charity); and Damascus Rose (a social enterprise run by women refugees). A real hit – not only was the food delicious but it was a way of giving financial support to social enterprises and to help promote them locally.

I chose not to have a summer party and instead a launch party on GivingTuesday. The launch related to 'Oxfordshire Uncovered' a report co-written by the Oxfordshire Community Foundation and academics, which I also funded.

The report highlights the issues we face in Oxfordshire and the wonderful local initiatives and charities addressing them. The evening raised around £50,000 and



The High Sheriff's Cup and the Best Defendant Cup were presented to Didcot Girls' School at the Oxfordshire Schools Mock Trial Competition

the report will continue to be used by the Oxfordshire Community Foundation for future fundraising campaigns.

The best advice I received was: be selective in your acceptances to ensure that you cover as much of the county both geographically and socially and, second: remember to enjoy the year, even when feeling out of one's comfort zone... or when suffering from imposter syndrome!