

# A real privilege

## Mark Hurrell DL

High Sheriff of Gloucestershire 2024-25

'You'll have a marvellous time, meet all sorts of interesting people and visit every corner of our glorious county.' If I heard this once I heard it at least half a dozen times from people who held the post before me as I prepared to take on the honour of being High Sheriff for Gloucestershire.

The welcome from people around the county has been wonderful and I have enjoyed hearing about activities that take place in small communities for the benefit of their local residents. For example, in Blockley in the north of the county, the villagers had come together to organise their 'Better Living in the Countryside' exhibition. All the community groups met in the village hall to show off what they did and encourage new people to join them.

In the city of Gloucester I was able to join in with the Polish Day in the park, where there was music, dancing and food. My most amusing event was to be part of the team of volunteers making 800 sandwiches at 5 am for primary school children for their day out to Cattle Country Farm Park in Berkeley. This annual trip is paid for by the Gloucester Rotary Club.

I have been able to support the police and other blue light services and have attended



Opening the Community Day in Blockley



Making sandwiches with the volunteers from the Cathedral Breakfast Club in the Parliament Rooms at Gloucester Cathedral

and spoken at passing out parades and their volunteer events.

I believe it is important to highlight the work of volunteers who do so much for our county. We need to remember to say 'thank you' to all those people who put 'service before self'. We have over 100,000 people who regularly volunteer, which is one in six of the population of Gloucestershire. That's one of the reasons why I asked the Dean of Gloucester Cathedral, the Very Reverend Andrew Zihni, if he would put on a special 'volunteers service' at the end of the national week of volunteering at the beginning of June. This was a new initiative and over 150 people came. The Dean was so pleased with the response that he has decided to make it a regular part of the cathedral's calendar.

Another change that I have initiated involves the 'Getting Court' programme which takes place in the Crown Court in Gloucester. Secondary school children spend a morning in court, observing what goes

on and listening to talks from our resident judge and an ex-prisoner. I did not feel that sitting with them added value to their visit. I am fortunate that my wife, Julia, is a magistrate, so we have put together a joint talk for secondary schools. I do a section on citizenship, explaining the history and roles of the Lord-Lieutenant and the High Sheriff, and Julia talks about the role of magistrates. She also illustrates her talk with examples of things that have happened over her 30 years in that role. Most of the Year 10 students haven't a clue about how our judicial system works and the sort of crimes that they might encounter. We are hoping that we will be able to continue with these talks after my year of office has ended.

Previous High Sheriffs were right. Although I'm only halfway through my shrieval year, I've already met new people and visited places around the county that I knew about but had never been to – despite living and working here for 34 years! It's a real privilege.