

A reminder how lucky we are

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High Sheriff of Gloucestershire 2024-25

How do you assess your year as High Sheriff? It's not like school when someone writes a report on how you have done. So the questions are – what did I hope to achieve and did I manage to do it? I was keen to be active in all three key areas of the role – with the police, the judiciary and volunteers. As I think back over the year I feel confident that I've achieved that.

The role covers the old County of Gloucestershire (including what is now South Gloucestershire) and I've had the pleasure of meeting officers, staff and cadets from both the Gloucestershire and Avon and Somerset constabularies. They do so much for us, often with little thanks and appreciation. It has been an honour to be present at their passing out parades, as well as their long service awards, recognising the contribution of both the new and the experienced staff. We're lucky to have a large cadre of cadets and to hear the reasons why they signed up is heart-warming.

I was particularly pleased that the Gloucestershire cadets received a Commendation in the National Crimebeat Awards – the first time they've submitted a project for some years.

As explained in previous editions of this magazine the 'Getting Court' initiative started in Gloucestershire and over many years teenagers have visited Gloucester Crown Court to see justice in action. I took the initiative to go to secondary schools and talk about citizenship and the roles of the Lord-



With Senior Cadet Piero Naselli and Deputy Section Officer Sophie Fudge of Gloucestershire Police Cadets

Lieutenant and the High Sheriff. My wife, Julia, who has been a magistrate for over 30 years, spoke to them about what magistrates do and the consequences of actions. We have spoken to hundreds of students and hope this will provide them with a greater understanding of our justice system.

It's virtually impossible to recall all the things that I have done and the places I've been to. However, it's amazing that, although I've lived here for 35 years, I've been to parts of the county for the first time and met loads of committed people who make Gloucestershire a wonderful county to live in. We have over 100,000 volunteers in a county with a population of approximately 630,000! As far as volunteers are concerned I'd pick out one – let's call her Kathy – who has been a volunteer at the Samaritans

for 54 years. Amazing... her dedication is typical of so many people who put 'service before self'. It's been a very reassuring element of my year – that things aren't quite as bad as some would have us believe.

I cannot miss out one of the most important events for volunteers of my year as High Sheriff. The cathedral staff agreed to our idea – I have to include my wife Julia in this as she played a crucial role in the planning – of a 'Celebration of Gloucestershire' during the February half-term. We organised a unique photographic exhibition of Gloucestershire in the cloisters with eight local camera clubs. On the Friday night, there was a big free concert with over 150 performers from across the county. All these performers had been supported, taught and encouraged by volunteers. It was a way of bringing people together to remember all the positives in our lives and to have fun. And what a fun night it was with over 600 people in the cathedral.

My memories include the Chipping Camden Morris Men dancing and the faces of the youngsters from the Cheltenham Children's Choir – loving every second and singing their hearts out with the Stroud Symphony Orchestra and the Lydney Town Brass Band. We all had such fun and the joy reminded all of us how lucky we are to live in this wonderful county. It was truly memorable.

It has been a real privilege and an enduring honour that the Gloucestershire Shrieval Committee thought I had the qualities to carry out the role with dignity and enthusiasm – I hope they agree as the curtain falls on my year!



The Chipping Camden Morris Men in Gloucester Cathedral for the 'Celebration of Gloucestershire'