

A privilege to serve

Jon Whitaker JP DL

High Sheriff of Hampshire 2024-25

Well, what a year... my predecessors said that it would be busy but rewarding. How true that proved to be! It has been a privilege to serve in the role and to attend events and meetings across our wonderful county.

I had the opportunity to spend time with many people: in the courts with High Court and Crown Court judges, magistrates, tribunal chairs, coroner, Verderers (the Court of Verderers is an ancient corporate body in the New Forest), court staff and volunteers; and also, of course, with the Police and Crime Commissioner's Office, the police, fire and ambulance services; with search and rescue and lifeboat organisations as well as a whole host of community groups.

To attend civic and religious services, award ceremonies and presentation evenings, and to spend time with our Navy, Army and RAF has been – to quote my nephew – ‘simply awesome!’

My theme for the year has been ‘youth and service’ – supporting key youth organisations – and, in addition, to champion the work of the brilliant Hampshire Police, who do the toughest of jobs under much scrutiny.

Youth organisations have always featured in my voluntary life and, to be honest, I don't think I'd have been in this role without the amazing adventures, opportunities and development I had as a youth in the sea scouts and cadets.

It is my firm belief that the youth organisations I have been supporting this year – including Police Cadets, Fire Service



With recipients of High Sheriff's Awards at the Wessex Centre, Winchester Cathedral Photo: Joe Low

Cadets, St John Ambulance, Scouts and Guides, as well as the youth commission and youth clubs – all offer huge personal development opportunities and fun. However, they also help prepare our young people for their futures as community-minded and public service citizens. I acknowledge the tremendous efforts of the adult leaders of these organisations, both volunteer and professional. I was delighted that these youth organisations were able to take part in the Law Service at Winchester Cathedral in October.

Wherever I have been, I have been honoured to meet fantastic people in our county who tirelessly serve their organisations and community. If anything it has inspired me to continue to do as much as I can and I am pleased the Lord-Lieutenant, who has been a brilliant supporter and mentor, has asked me to chair the Hampshire Youth Network so that we can share good practice across all youth organisations in the county.



At Fairisle School for one of many talks in schools – with school prefects and the youth mayor of Southampton

My thanks to all who have supported me, it has been a privilege to serve.



With representatives from St John Ambulance, Fire Service Cadets, Police Cadets, Scouts and Guides, who took part in the Law Service at Winchester Cathedral



Toasting marshmallows in the Scouts' community garden, opened with Cllr Dave Pragnell (Mayor of Eastleigh)