

Seen and heard everything...?

Stephen Bryan JP

High Sheriff of Leicestershire 2025-26

My Declaration ceremony took place on 3 April at Leicester's historic Guildhall. As a magistrate, it was a moment of deep pride, made even more special by the presence of my Bench Chair, Anne Cowan JP, who oversaw my swearing-in. Representing our remarkable county of 864 square miles and 1.3 million people – home to the most diverse city in the country – felt both humbling and inspiring.

Since that day, I have been privileged to embark on an extraordinary journey of events where I have had the pleasure of meeting so many wonderful people across my city and county, whose dedication to others strengthens our communities.

In my role I have been honoured, along with the Vice Lord-Lieutenant and other dignitaries, to receive Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal. With my chaplain, I visited HMP Gartree to open a prisoner Art Expo. I presented High Sheriff's Awards to Leicestershire Law Society; to the Leicestershire Federation of Young Farmers' Clubs in recognition of their great mental-health support network; and to the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Homelessness Alliance, who always go beyond in their support of homeless people in crisis.

I attended the VE Day and VJ Day services of remembrance and thanksgiving at the newly reopened Leicester Cathedral and visited HMP Leicester for the launch of



With Anne Vero, Diana Whitley and Sally Lane (members at the Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution) at their stand at Ashby de la Zouch Agricultural Society's



With fellow High Sheriffs at the Leicestershire Air Operations Base in support of the Air Ambulance Service and the National Children's Air Ambulance; (L-R) Richard Chesterfield (Rutland), Jeremy Sharman (Northants), Karen Lynch (Warks), Stephen Bryan (Leics), Sir Richard FitzHerbert Bt (Derby)

Photo: The Air Ambulance Service

an enterprise called Bearing Gifts (bearing-gifts.co.uk) – this is run by prisoners who believe every child deserves to feel cared for. They turn textile waste into magical patchwork teddies on a 'buy one, give one' basis. This is a story of hope and connection, where bears are donated to the children of serving prisoners, helping maintain the bond between dad and child.

I have sat with a Civil Court judge listening to representations from all sides and was in awe of the analytical judicial mind at work. With The King's Trust I was involved in 'speed dating' to establish the names, age, favourite pastime, favourite food and reason for attending the course of the other nineteen students, all in under one minute. I found musicians, sportspeople, gamers and avid readers, one of whom I had a brief discussion with on the merits of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*!

Just when I thought I had seen and heard everything, my wife and I attended a charity fundraiser for the Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution where the host brought her finest breeding bull into the yard and, putting down a bottle of wine, said, 'That is the prize for the person who is able to most closely estimate in centimetres the circumference of this bull's testicles. High Sheriff, you can go first!'

Among all these uplifting visits I held a garden party at home for over 170 guests in August. The sun shone, Oddfellows Brass entertained us and much networking occurred.



With Tony Ruddle, High Sheriff of Leicestershire, and Susannah Fish OBE QPM onboard MV Rutland Belle for the Osprey Cruise on Rutland Water in aid of Warning Zone Leicester

I have continued to support the High Sheriff's local charities: Warning Zone – hosting the idyllic Osprey Cruise together with Colonel Richard Chesterfield, High Sheriff of Rutland, on stunning Rutland Water; and Leicestershire Community Foundation. In addition, I engaged with neighbouring High Sheriffs to collectively support our local air ambulance service for Leicestershire, Derbyshire, Rutland, Northamptonshire and Warwickshire. We all came together and broke tradition by wearing yellow jabots for a special photo shoot in support of an upcoming capital fundraising programme.

All in all, I have been humbled to meet so many inspiring people who are the backbone of our Leicestershire community. It has been such an honour and privilege to wear the uniform and perform the role of High Sheriff to the best of my ability, with honour and dignity.