



WINTER
2025

The High Sheriff

Magazine of the High Sheriffs' Association of England and Wales



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT FROM THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2025

Seminar // Nomination Ceremony // VE & VJ Day 80 // Volunteering // News from and about members

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The Editor welcomes articles and news stories
from High Sheriffs concerning their year in office.

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Front Cover: Ian Morgan (Derby 2024) passes on the county sword to Sir Richard FitzHerbert Bt
Photo: Chris Smith

From the Hon Editor

As I write this in early December delays in the justice system are headline news. Proposed changes reinforce the importance of High Sheriffs supporting judges, magistrates and all those working for the cause of justice. The role of High Sheriff predates Magna Carta by over 300 years and the importance of having an apolitical volunteer advocate working for the good of the community and not themselves cannot be overstated.

You only have to read the county articles in this issue to see the value that High Sheriffs are contributing. High Sheriffs have the ability to convene different organisations and individuals to work together for the common good. There are numerous examples in this issue and I would like to thank all those current High Sheriffs who have contributed.

I would like to draw your attention to Rob Beckwith's invaluable article on



volunteering on page 19. This includes practical ways that High Sheriffs can work with charities, businesses, councillors and statutory organisations to attract and retain volunteers. Given the importance of volunteers I commend it to you.

[If you would like a PDF copy of the High Sheriff of Somerset Charitable Trust Volunteers Event Report 2025, please email editor@highsheriffs.com. Ed.]

This year has seen the 80th anniversary of both VE and VJ days and we include a feature from across England and Wales showing just some of the many acts of remembrance and commemoration attended by High Sheriffs. There is also a rare opportunity to put the historical record straight on Brigadier Sir Philip Toosey, High Sheriff of Lancashire in 1964, a truly honourable man.

Earlier this year, a former High Sheriff emailed to ask whether the proposed changes to local government would affect

the Shrievalty. The short answer is that the Privy Council have determined that the reorganisation will not affect either the Shrievalty or the Lieutenancy.

Thank you to all those in the shrieval family who are working to support both current High Sheriffs and those in nomination. I hope this edition is a reflection of the difference you are making.

Michael Gurney, Hon Editor, Norfolk 2021

High Sheriffs have the ability to convene different organisations and individuals to work together for the common good.

From the Editor



Once again, thank you to all who contributed to this winter edition: 28 counties in all (31 including the VE and VJ Day county round-up), with a good spread across England – from Cornwall up to Northumberland – and Wales.

It may seem some distance away but looking ahead to magazine's summer edition, the invitation to write will drop

into your inbox during what will be, I'm sure, a busy final flurry of engagements during your term of office. This will be around the beginning of March with a copy deadline date of Friday 3 April.

If there is a specific event happening on or around that date that you would like to incorporate into your article, then please do get in touch (editor@highsheriffs.com) and

we'll be able to work something out.

Talking about getting in touch, suggestions for topics for the 'Focus on...' articles (Volunteering in this issue) or any other comments and questions are always welcome.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish you all a very productive and enjoyable final few months in office – and I look forward to hearing about them in the summer edition of your magazine!

Jayne Lewis, Editor



Diary of Forthcoming Events

MARCH 2026

HIGH SHERIFFS IN NOMINATION FOR 2026

MARCH

The names of the High Sheriffs on the Roll for 2026 will be 'pricked' by His Majesty The King at a private meeting of the Privy Council to be held usually at Buckingham Palace.

NATIONAL CRIMEBEAT

TUESDAY 17 MARCH

The awards ceremony will take place face to face in London. All projects to be entered must be endorsed by a High Sheriff and submitted by Monday 19 January 2026. Finalists will be announced shortly after that.

APRIL 2026

MEETING OF COORDINATORS OF REGIONAL MEETINGS

THURSDAY 9 APRIL

There will be a meeting of the coordinators (who deal with the regional meetings for High Sheriffs in nomination) with members of the Council at Boodle's, 28 St James's Street, London SW1A 1HJ at 12.30pm. Please address any queries to Simon Miesegeas at: simonm@ccs-group.co.uk.

ZOOM FOR PANEL CHAIRS AND UNDER SHERIFFS

MONDAY 20 APRIL

To discuss matters of interest for Panel Chairs and Under Sheriffs at 5.30pm for about an hour

MAY 2026

SEMINAR FOR HIGH SHERIFFS IN NOMINATION FOR THE YEARS 2027 AND 2028

TUESDAY 12 MAY

The 2026 seminar for High Sheriffs in nomination will be held at Drapers' Hall, London. Details of the programme and speakers together with an application form will be sent in March 2026 to all High Sheriffs in nomination for 2027 and 2028.

JUNE 2026

ZOOM FOR HIGH SHERIFFS IN NOMINATION FOR 2027

MONDAY 1 JUNE

To discuss matters of interest for High Sheriffs in nomination for 2027 at 5.30pm for about an hour.

SEPTEMBER 2026

ZOOM FOR CURRENT HIGH SHERIFFS

MONDAY 7 SEPTEMBER

To discuss matters of interest for High Sheriffs at 5.30pm for about an hour.

OCTOBER 2026

THE RED MASS

DATE TBC

The annual Roman Catholic Mass will be held at 9.30 am at Westminster Cathedral to celebrate the start of the legal year. Those current and past High Sheriffs and High Sheriffs in nomination who wish to join the judicial procession are invited to coffee beforehand from 8.30 am, prior to the procession lining up. There will be a ticket-only reception after the Mass; to obtain information about the tickets, please contact the Secretary of the Thomas More Society, at secretary@thomasmoresociety.org.uk. A modest charge will be requested to cover the costs to the TMS of organising the Mass.

THE LADIES' LUNCH

EARLY OCTOBER

The annual ladies' lunch will be held in London. When arranged, full details will be sent in May/June 2026 to those ladies who are in nomination.

NOVEMBER 2026

THE NOMINATION OF FUTURE HIGH SHERIFFS

THURSDAY 12 NOVEMBER

The ceremony will take place in Court 4 (the Lady Chief Justice's Court) at 2.00pm at the Royal Courts of Justice, Strand, London WC2A 2LL. At the ceremony the names of those nominated for the Office of High Sheriff for the years

2027, 2028 and 2029 will be read out in court.

The Secretary will write in September to all High Sheriffs in nomination for 2027 and 2028 inviting them to attend. It may be possible for a few 2029 nominees to attend as well but space in court is limited. The Association will not know the names of the 2029 nominees so it will be up to such nominees or their proposers to contact the Secretary should they wish to attend. After the ceremony, there will be a tea party at St Clement Danes Church in the Strand. This event provides a good opportunity for those in nomination to meet each other.

55TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND LUNCHEON

WEDNESDAY 18 NOVEMBER

The Association's 55th AGM and luncheon will be held at Drapers' Hall, London. The agenda and papers for the AGM and an application form for the luncheon will be sent to all members of the Association in September 2026.

DECEMBER 2026

ZOOM FOR HIGH SHERIFFS IN NOMINATION FOR 2027

MONDAY 7 DECEMBER

To discuss matters of interest for High Sheriffs in nomination for 2026 at 5.30pm for about an hour.

IN THE NEWS...

For news updates
on members
see page 54

Chairman's Report 2025

Good morning, everyone. It is a great pleasure to welcome you here to Drapers' Hall for this our Association's 54th AGM and luncheon. Our thanks to Patrick Beddows, Master, the Wardens, and the Assistants of the Drapers' Company for once more allowing us to use these magnificent rooms, and to Daniela Dimond and her team for putting it all together. This is the second time this year the Association has been privileged to hold an event at Drapers'. On 24 June we held our first London summer briefing here for High Sheriffs in nomination and it was a huge success.

My next thanks are to you, the members of the High Sheriffs' Association. It's lovely to see you.

Today's meeting is special as, towards the end of the AGM, we shall thank and bid farewell to Elizabeth Hunter, the Association's first female President, and shall welcome Amanda Parker as our new President.

We shall also be thanking and bidding farewell to three members of Council, Professor Dame Robina Shah, and Andy Howell and Heather Phillips, who are not with us. As well as the annual re-election of our Honorary Secretary, Deborah Hutchinson and Honorary Treasurer, Phillip Sykes, we shall be re-electing Council members Simon Miesegaes and Martin McKervey, and welcoming new Council members Rob Beckley, Henrietta Chubb, Theresa Peltier, Meurig Raymond and Richard Tilbrook.

I and my colleagues on Council are only too aware that without your continuing membership and enthusiasm, we would not be able to provide support and advice to High Sheriffs in nomination and High Sheriffs in Office with the online briefings, the annual summer briefing and our excellent magazine, so ably edited by Jayne Lewis and Honorary Editor, Michael Gurney.

Numbers are a little down today; we think this is largely because of half-



Andrew Tuggey,
Chairman,
Gwent 2015

term and perhaps slightly shorter notice. We shall remedy that and shall send out 'save-the-dates' for our 2026 events in December and follow suit in the future. Although it's the last agenda item, next year's luncheon and AGM will be here at Drapers' on Wednesday 18 November.

Today's lunch and this AGM are fine examples of the camaraderie and value of our large, diverse and inclusive shrieval family, the importance of which we stress in all our briefings and at the nine regional meetings that I, or fellow members of Council, attend across England and Wales from September through to February.

At those meetings, at the annual briefing for High Sheriffs in nomination and on the online briefings, we emphasise the importance, value and necessity of early engagement and then proper handovers between High Sheriffs in office and those in nomination. Former High Sheriffs are also encouraged to play their part in what some might now describe as the

We were able to say goodbye to Dame Robina Shah and Elizabeth Hunter in person, and to welcome Amanda Parker as the Association's new President



'on-boarding' process for High Sheriffs in nomination.

We also emphasise the importance of the Office, service to our communities and the support that High Sheriffs give to all elements of the judiciary, the police, and the prisons and probation services, support that is now even more important and valued than ever: every day we read and hear of the huge pressures that they all are under. Shrieval engagement and appreciation are hugely welcomed.

Recognising the good that is done in our communities by individuals and small organisations and thanking them for all that they do with the award of a High Sheriff's certificate, either during visits or at formal award events, are enormously important; the good that is done by so many so often goes unrecognised. Through our briefings, High Sheriffs are encouraged to engage widely across their bailiwicks with humility, gentle humour and grace: service not self.

A quick word on governance matters:

An independent member has been appointed to Council and we are delighted that Richard Tilbrook, known to all of us, a great friend of the Association and Clerk to the Privy Council, has joined us.

We have long recognised that the big metropolitan regions/cities of Bristol, Greater London, Greater Manchester, Merseyside, Tyne and Wear, and West Midlands are very different to county bailiwicks, so we are about to appoint a member from one of those six to Council to ensure they are represented.

We have established an Events committee to sit alongside the Nominations & Governance, Finance and Communications committees to coordinate and bring together all that we do.

There are some new developments in the pipeline:

On Monday this week, a company was appointed to deliver both a

new Association website and a new National Crimebeat website, which will be linked. Our website will be easy to use, secure, and informative, and will answer all questions and be at the hub of our work. Michael Gurney has been driving the project with support from Jo Hilditch, Mandy Thorn and others. It has been, and will continue to be, a huge amount of work. We plan that the site will go live in the first quarter of 2026.

Safe-guarding training is being developed for High Sheriffs in nomination.

An annual online briefing for the Chairs of County Nomination Panels and Under Sheriffs is now part of our stable of online briefings.

We shall be arranging social media training workshops akin to the very successful long-standing public-speaking workshops.

However, none of your Association's activities would happen without the tremendous commitment and hard work of my fellow members of Council, the immense work of our excellent Honorary Secretary, Deborah Hutchinson at this her first AGM and lunch, and the wonderful team from Hall-McCartney with us here today, and so ably led by Kelly; thank you all.

Finally, and on a personal note, I thank all those who have so generously supported my sleep-out at Stonehenge on Salisbury Plain on Friday 14 November to help support homeless veterans. Members have been amazing, and the total given to date is an incredible £16,605 towards my (third) target of now £18,000.

The AGM is now over. At lunch, our guest speaker is Gyles Brandreth, arranged by Jeannie France-Hayhurst. Copies of Gyles's latest book will be on sale in reception as we depart.

Andrew Tuggey



54th Annual General Meeting

29 October 2025

Deborah Hutchinson
Honorary Secretary to the High Sheriffs' Association

The 54th Annual General Meeting and lunch took place at Drapers' Hall in London on 29 October. In all there were 117 attendees including, for the first time, partners and guests. Andrew Howell, Dame Robina Shah and Heather Phillips stepped down from Council. Richard Tilbrook, Council's first independent member, Rob Beckley, Henrietta Chubb, Theresa Peltier and Meurig Raymond were elected, and Simon

Miesegaes and Martin McKervey were elected to remain on Council.

Elizabeth Hunter retired as President of the Association saying she had really enjoyed the role, working with Council as its workload had increased. She thanked her husband Ray for all his support and self-deprecatingly recounted how once a neighbour at a dinner said he could not decide whether she was 'an irritating stimulant or

Top: Andrew Tuggey (Chairman, Gwent 2015), Gyles Brandreth (guest speaker), Deborah Hutchinson (Hon Sec)

Right: Michael Gurney (Hon Ed, Council, Norfolk 2021), Iain Hill-Trevor, Kate Hill-Trevor (Clwyd 2023), Bav Shah (Beds 2024)



RECENT EVENTS



Left: Bill Jackson (Hereford 2016), Chris Holmes (Salop 2016), David Holmes



Right: Milan Shah (Notts 2023), Theresa Peltier (Council, Derby 2023), Elizabeth Fothergill (Derby 2016)



a stimulating irritant'. (Elizabeth, we have decided: you have been nothing but pure stimulation!)

Chairman Andrew Tuggey announced that Amanda Parker had been appointed President and she spoke of how much she was looking forward to rejoining Council in her new capacity.

An enjoyable lunch was followed

by an even more enjoyable listen, for our guest speaker was Gyles Brandreth who regaled us royally with anecdotes of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. We were most definitely amused and discovered that her favourite bear was Winnie the Pooh. This year happens to be the centenary of this famous bear and Gyles's biography of him and his author sold like proverbial hotcakes as we queued for our signed copies.



Far left: Susannah Fish (Rutland 2026), Kelly Sadler (Hall-McCartney), Richard Cole (Council, Rutland 2024)

Left: John Garbutt (Gtr Ldn 2025), Solangela Garbutt, Frances Cairncross (Gtr Ldn 2004), Dhruv Patel (Gtr Ldn 2026)



Right: Quenelda Avery, Richard Tilbrook (HSA Council, Clerk to the Privy Council)



Far right: 090 Tim Fooks (W Sussex 2025), Annie Brewster (Herts 2024), Mandy Pearson, Jo Pearson (Norfolk 2026)

Above: Wendy Critchlow, Christopher Critchlow (Council, Surrey 2022), Lynn Cooper (Gtr Ldn 2021)

Far left: Judith Ainscough, David Cam (US Lancs), Martin Ainscough (Gtr Man 2025)

Left: Francis Burkitt (Cambs 2026) Merleta Bryan (Notts 2026)



Nomination Ceremony

Thomas Sheppard DL

Council Member; Somerset 2021

Although reading out more than 300 names may not sound interesting, each year on 12 November this process becomes a captivating and memorable event. For over five hundred years this same ceremony has taken place to update the list of names of those in nomination to be the High Sheriff of their county.

The Lady Chief Justice's Court at the Royal Courts of Justice on the Strand in London is where the ceremony takes place. This Gothic revival building provides the backdrop as the King's Remembrancer reads out the names from the previous year and a 'new name' is added by the Lady Chief Justice, supported by senior judges.

This year's ceremony ended with an address from the Lady Chief Justice speaking with enthusiasm about the importance of High Sheriffs to the judiciary, especially those on circuit, as well as acknowledging and affirming the immense value High Sheriffs bring in the 21st century to

civil society during their year of office.

Opposite the Royal Court is the church of St Clement Danes and the peal of its bells are immortalised in the nursery rhyme 'Oranges and Lemons'. Following the ceremony at the Royal Courts of Justice the High Sheriffs' Association hosts a tea party in the church for all those who have attended. This year the tea party received strong support, with nominees attending alongside their families and friends, as well as judges and members of the Privy Council. Over 150 guests enjoyed tea, excellent sandwiches and cakes and the opportunity to renew and cement those friendships and connections which will be valuable in making the most of the year in office as High Sheriff.

This ancient ceremony is part of the rite of passage for those in nomination and an unforgettable experience for family and friends. Most nominees try and attend at least once, and the invitations to next year's event will go to all those in nomination next summer ahead of next year's ceremony on Thursday 12 November.

As a member of the Association if you have never been to this ceremony – even if your year has passed – it is an event still worth attending, so please ask if you would like to attend in the future.



Above: Over 150 guests enjoyed the tea party at St Clement Danes

Right: Andrew Tuggey (Chairman) with Dame Victoria Sharp (President of the King's Bench Division)

Left: Peter Dixon (Somerset 2026), Roberta Dixon, Mohammed Elsharif (Bristol 2027), Muna Talha, Molly Dixon

Right: The Honourable Mr Justice Bryan, Melinda Everett, HHJ Steven Everett (Cheshire 2027)

Robert Beckley (Council, Somerset 2024) and Amanda Parker (President, Lancs 2015)



Sandra Barnett-Pollock (Leics 2027), Sue Ball (Rutland 2027), Hilary Fox (Rutland 2028), Susannah Fish (Rutland 2026)



Gillian Sewell (Derby 2027), Theresa Peltier (Council, Derby 2023), Jane Marshall (S Yorks 2027), Tom Marshall, Ian Sewell



Seminar 2025

Andrew Howell MBE

South Glamorgan 2020;
Council Member

It was terrific to be at the magnificent Drapers' Hall in London on Tuesday 24 June for our 2025 annual seminar for High Sheriffs in nomination.

Originally built on the site of Thomas Cromwell's mansion, Drapers' Hall has been rebuilt multiple times due to fires, including a significant one during the Great Fire of London in 1666. The current building, incorporating elements from the 1770s, showcases a blend of architectural styles and features a lavish Victorian interior.

This historic venue provided an ideal setting for more than 130 High Sheriffs in nomination for 2026/2027 and 2027/2028 (HSIN), Under Sheriffs and speakers. This important event sets the HSIN off on the journey to their Declaration and aims to give a broad overview of the various parts of the judicial system as well as providing a quorum for the all-important Q&A session.

This was the first time the annual seminar had been at Drapers' Hall, which location also provides for the HSA AGM. Meticulous planning by Andrew French, his PA Kelly, Heather Phillips and Kelly from Hall-McCartney ensured that no stone was left unturned in making the program and day a great success.

As if Drapers' Hall was not magnificent enough, there followed an evening reception at the Old Bailey where we were all guests of the two City of London High Sheriffs – who, out of interest, are elected by the citizens of London as opposed to the formal nomination process. Wonderful hospitality, two addresses by a City High Sheriff and the Recorder of the City of London and a guided tour of Court 1 followed – a unique and privileged evening.

The seminar was opened by the HSA chairman, Andrew Tuggey, who given the extensive program was quick to introduce the first speaker, His Honour Judge Lucas KC. His Honour immediately identified the pressures facing the judicial system whether it be the

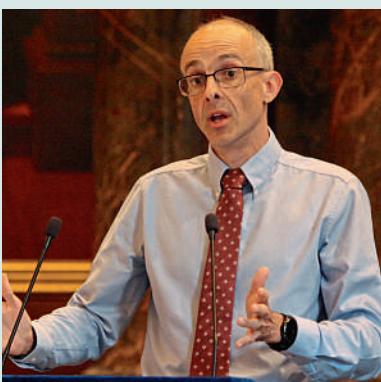


Guest speakers
Simon Shepherd
(The Butler Trust)
and Jamie Ann
Edwards (West
Mids Probation
Service)

courts, the probation services or other supporting organisations; the current backlog of court cases clearly causes significant problems to both those accused as well as the families of victims. What was of particular interest was his overt encouragement for High Sheriffs to ask to come and sit with judges in their counties, meet the backroom teams and, most importantly, take time to listen to those teams and the issues facing them. High Sheriffs are in a unique position, with their 'soft power' to be able to communicate to those they subsequently come into contact with what they have learnt with, of course, no political view. Entertaining judges is much appreciated and the most popular venue is the simple kitchen table.

Following on, the Chief Constable of Norfolk, Paul Sanford, set out his narrative on the current situation facing not only his force but all forces across the country. In particular, his main concern is what he described as 'crime behind closed doors' and the importance of communicating to the public the fundamental difference between the view of the public who want the police to stop visible crime and the reality that forces are actually needing to focus on stopping invisible crime (e.g. domestic abuse or cyber matters). High Sheriffs can also help by working with the organisations which help those who are vulnerable and potentially likely to fall into crime as well as victims of crime.

Two experienced magistrates and former High Sheriffs, namely Henrietta Chubb (Leics 2023) and



Guest speakers
(clockwise from
top left): His
Honour Judge
Lucas KC; Paul
Sanford, Chief
Constable
of Norfolk;
Jane Deamer,
The Crysalyis
Foundation; Emily
Martin, Governor
of HMP High
Down



Raji Gill (Warks 2024) spoke of their admiration for all of those who work in the courts. However, it was becoming increasingly difficult to find working people who have the time to become magistrates; in addition, recruitment and retention is difficult and so an important role of High Sheriffs is to encourage individuals whom they meet to consider becoming a magistrate.

It was then on to prisons with Emily Martin who gave an engaging talk on her life as governor of the Category C HMP High Down. You could hear a pin drop with her comment that '99.9 per cent of prisoners will become our neighbours' – getting them ready for release is therefore critical. Emily's staff are her 'hidden heroes'; her plea was for High Sheriffs to engage in thanking staff on prison visits, particularly in groups, and to help her 'lower the wall' to enable the public to understand the extraordinary work by staff in prisons.

The Probation Service remains the unsung hero and we had an interesting talk from Jamie Ann Edwards, West Midlands Regional Probation Director, who spoke of some of the challenges facing her profession as a result of the courts' backlog. Life experience is incredibly valuable in the probation service and there was a strong plea for High Sheriffs to encourage individuals who may be looking for a second career to consider probation.

The Butler Trust, founded by RA Butler, is remarkable for its focus on identifying and recognising brilliance within the prison service.



Simon Shepherd OBE reminded us of Churchill's words, namely 'a guiding principle of any government is to prevent people going to prison' – yet the UK has the highest prison population in Western Europe. Simon recognised that a High Sheriff's Award can also play a critical part in recognition of staff.

Next, a moment of reality as Jane Deamer took us back to 1991 when her best friend Isobel had been killed and Jane's journey on a career in crime prevention started, eventually manifesting itself in the creation of The Crysaly Foundation, a charity helping individuals to understand and recover from trauma. For her, High

Elizabeth Hunter (President) receives flowers from Andrew Tuggey (Chairman) in front of the panel after the Q&A session in the magnificent Drapers' Hall

Sheriffs offered a valuable sounding board for projects which her charity might be involved in as well as raising the profile of hers and other charities.

Guests were then welcomed to a drinks reception in the drawing room, where they had the unique opportunity to admire the first official commissioned portrait of His Majesty King Charles III. This was followed by a delightful lunch, offering attendees a chance to connect, exchange experiences, and engage with fellow nominees.

After lunch, Mandy Thorn gave the all-important England v India cricket score and, with England heading towards victory, conference



Mark Langshaw (Gwent 2027), Shereen Williams (Gwent 2026) and guest speaker Natalie Sandercock (Under Sheriff Gwent)



Elizabeth Storey (Berks 2027) and Ren Kapur (Berks 2026)

was uplifted and ready to hear from Mandy on the success of the 2025 National Crimebeat (NC) Awards [more on page 18. Ed.] and to sow the seeds for those in nomination to be thinking already about projects they might like to support and bring forward to the NC finals.

Then followed the all-important Q&A session – many questions had been sent in advance and our Chairman led the platform through careful and considered responses. Joining the panel was Countess Howe, Lord-Lieutenant of Buckinghamshire, who gave a very helpful summary of the importance of integrating the work of the Lieutenancy and that of the High Sheriffs: teamwork and consultation with each other are essential for mutual success.

Last on the presentation front was Natalie Sandercock, Under Sheriff of Gwent, who gave an excellent summary of the key parameters that must pervade nomination panels – her two-page summary is a valuable

Below: Harriet Hills, Phillip Sykes (Hon Treasurer, Hants 2021), Thomas Travitzky, Nigel Hartley MBE (IoW 2026)

document for any nomination panel.

Andrew Tuggey brought the seminar to a close by thanking the organisation team and the speakers, and reminding everyone that the work of the Shrievalty depends on the 'Office' not the individual and that so much good comes from High Sheriffs' work – all at no cost to the public purse.

Closing remarks came from our Association's President, Elizabeth Hunter (Hereford and Worcs 2010), who expressed her hope that the day's speakers and discussions had provided reassurance and valuable insight to all in attendance.

With Drapers' brilliant cast list and the sense of history in the Old Bailey, the HSINs now move on to their regional meetings as the next stage on the path to their Declaration.

We extend our sincere thanks to the staff at Drapers' Hall for hosting the seminar in their magnificent and historic venue. Feedback has been very positive: informative, engaging and rewarding.



Left: Sue Liburd (Lincs 2026), Mike Pollock and guest speaker Raji Gill (Warks 2024)



Right: Deborah Hutchinson (Hon Sec), Martyn Rawbone and Cheryll Rawbone (Warks 2027)



Jane John (S Glam 2026), Robert John and Jane Marshall DL (S Yorks 2026)



Venetia Fuller (Wilts 2027), Nikki Ross (Bucks 2026) and Julie Mills (Bucks 2027)



Claire Mackintosh (Norfolk 2027), Graham Mackintosh, Mandy Pearson, Jo Pearson (Norfolk 2026)



David Walker (E Sussex 2027) and Moira Darlington (Oxon 2027)



Ladies' Lunch

Professor Dame Robina Shah
DBE JP DL
Council Member; Greater
Manchester 2018

The Ladies' Lunch on 9 October 2025 at the Royal Thames Yacht Club, London, brought together current and future Lady High Sheriffs from across England and Wales, alongside members of the High Sheriffs' Association Council, reflecting the dedication and mutual support that define the shrieval community.

Dame Robina opened the event with a warm welcome, outlining the purpose of the luncheon and what guests could expect from the day. She introduced the central theme of court dress and its role in upholding the dignity of the office, providing

clarity, practical guidance and a supportive forum for questions about expectations, responsibilities and protocol.

Dame Robina then facilitated an invaluable session exploring the formal traditions of court dress in more depth. Exhibits of court uniforms curated by Jeannie France-Hayhurst and Sarah Beazley, alongside Katherine Goodison's bespoke hats, sparked engaging conversations about the history, symbolism and practicalities of shrieval attire.

Following the traditional group photograph, guests moved to luncheon and further exchanged ideas, experiences and reflections on their roles within their counties.

The afternoon's highlight was an address by Dame Geraldine Andrews KC, who shared insights



Dame Robina with
Dame Geraldine
Andrews KC

from her distinguished legal career and reflected on the importance of the shrievalty in public service. She was warm and humorous, powerfully demonstrating once again the leadership role of women within the judiciary and in wider civic life. Her remarks resonated strongly and were followed by a thoughtful Q&A exploring public duty, resilience and stewardship.

The Ladies' Lunch remains a highly regarded tradition, tailored specifically to Lady High Sheriffs and their unique contributions. It serves as a touchstone for trusted advice and a platform for building lasting professional relationships, strengthening a shared sense of purpose and preparing each Lady High Sheriff to serve with confidence, integrity and a deep sense of public service.

BIG Sleep on Salisbury Plain

Andrew Tuggey CBE DL
Chairman, Gwent 2015

As many readers of this excellent magazine will know, your Chairman participated in the BIG Sleep on Salisbury Plain at Stonehenge on Friday 14 November to raise funds for Alabaré, a charity based in Salisbury, to support its work to end the cycle of homelessness for veterans in SW England and Wales.

Through this article I give my BIG thanks to HSA members for so generously supporting me and contributing to the mammoth £18,420.00 on my JustGiving page (£21,860.00 with Gift Aid).

I am one of four Alabaré ambassadors in Wales and was joining the original venue of St Paul's Cathedral churchyard on 10 October, which later changed to Stonehenge on Salisbury Plain, much to the glee of my military chums and my three sons.

Friday 14 November was a Storm Claudia day – having driven from



Monmouthshire through all that Claudia was throwing down, the rain stopped as I arrived at Stonehenge, although it did resume later.

At the visitor centre I met the 119 other participants in The BIG Sleep, including Sir Charles Hobhouse Bt, a former High Sheriff of Wiltshire and a fellow Ambassador for Alabaré. The 119 slept on concrete under the canopy of the visitor centre. I felt duty-bound to sleep in the open with the elements. Having the right kit, I was probably more comfortable and warmer than the others.

Dawn at the stones was very special and we heard some moving stories about the work of Alabaré from the client veterans who joined us. The funds I raised will be split between the work of Alabaré in its

homes in the Southwest and in Wales.

The following demonstrates the support Alabaré gives challenged veterans. Mike joined the Army in 2007. He did a couple of tours and they were not good. Later on, he found himself homeless through addiction and was in a bad state. His sister referred him to Alabaré who provided the help he needed and a room in an Alabaré veterans' home.

Two years later, Mike is fit and healthy. 'Being in this house has helped me massively, because it helps people to get up and about. Everyone here is sort of like me. From where I was on the streets to where I am now, it's night and day. It's like it didn't happen, but it's through people donating. It's massive. It saved me, so it can't be a bad thing.'



VJ Remembered: The Colonel of Tamarkan

**Brigadier Peter Rafferty
MBE DL**
Vice Lord-Lieutenant of Lancashire

The 1957 epic war film, *The Bridge on the River Kwai*, remains a popular classic even today and, boasting seven Academy Awards, is perhaps best remembered for the anti-hero Oscar-winning portrayal of Lieutenant Colonel Nicholson by actor Sir Alec Guinness. Nevertheless, its release in 1957 was not without controversy, upsetting not only the Japanese for its ridicule of Japanese engineering ability but also, more significantly, former British prisoners of war for the gross slur against the integrity of the man who had commanded the bridge camp at Tamarkan, Lieutenant Colonel Philip Toosey, in the way Nicholson was depicted in the film.

Philip John Denton Toosey was born in 1904 in Birkenhead into a middle-class family of cotton-brokers and completed his education at Gresham's School, Norfolk. Initially employed by a Liverpool cotton merchant, he joined Barings Bank in 1929. Taking a commission in the 4th West Lancs Medium Brigade Royal Artillery (Territorial Army), by the mid-1930s the TA had become an absorbing interest for him. Mobilised in August 1939 he deployed with his battery to



The Shire Hall at Lancaster Castle contains over 650 heraldic shields from High Sheriffs of Lancashire, dating from 1162 to 2025; the Toosey shield is top row, second from the right

France. Evacuated from Dunkirk, by January 1942 he and his regiment were deployed in Malaya. Falling back to Singapore, on 13 February 1942, he refused a direct order to leave his regiment for the safety of India and wrote to his wife: Darling, I have been offered the chance of leaving here alone... I have refused. I know you will appreciate my actions. It may be hard on you... I could not possibly leave these chaps. On 15 February he, along with his regiment, went into Japanese captivity for three years, though he was awarded an immediate Distinguished Service Order (DSO) for his actions in commanding his regiment before surrender. By the end of 1942, he and his regiment occupied a jungle camp at Tamarkan at the confluence of the Khwae (Kwai) Noi and Khwae Yai rivers. In captivity, unlike the fictional Nicholson, Toosey maintained strict discipline without collaboration. He encouraged sabotage and delay to the building of the two bridges, as well as hiding the attempts at escape from the camp.



The Toosey shield is still hung in the Shire Hall in Lancaster Castle

After the war, he was awarded an OBE for his leadership in captivity, returned to Barings Bank and pursued a successful career in business. Rising to the rank of Brigadier in the TA, he was made CBE in 1955 upon retirement from the military. He became President of the National Federation of Far Eastern POWs in 1966 and was, consequently, knighted in June 1974. He died in December 1975. Toosey largely ignored the furore over the portrayal of Nicholson; indeed, he never associated himself with Alec Guinness; it never entered his head that he was being portrayed. His first public observation came 10 years after the release of the film, when he became concerned that the fictional 'Hollywood' account of life in the camp was becoming an accepted version of the truth – of the real suffering – that ex-prisoners had endured. As High Sheriff of Lancashire in 1964, Phil Toosey hung his shield in the Shire Hall of Lancaster Castle, where it remains to this day as a permanent tribute to the 'real' Colonel of Tamarkan.

Marking VE Day and VJ Day 80



Below: Clwyd: Julie Gillbanks processed with police cadet Angharad Watts, members of the Royal British Legion, clergy from across the city of Wrexham and others after a service held in St Giles Church, before laying wreaths at the memorial
Photo: Ray Jones



Left and below: Derbyshire: Sir Richard FitzHerbert had a busy VE 80 day which took him and his sister Selina (consort) from a Staveley Town Council Commemoration to a Matlock Ladies Lunch Club talk to Derby Cathedral for an impressive VE Day Service; finishing the day at the lighting of the Ashbourne Town Council Beacon with the Last Post being played by a local bugler



Left: Cheshire: Joëlle Warren in Chester Town Hall with veteran Flight Lieutenant Maurice R Everett, who flew RAF Halifax bombers, and members of 610 City of Chester Squadron Air Training Corps after a service at Chester Cathedral with the Lord-Lieutenant, Lord Mayor of Chester and other dignitaries



Below: Durham: Mike Poole attended Stanley Park Care Home in County Durham for VJ Day, which was very humbling. Dame Susan Snowdon (Lord-Lieutenant) was also in attendance together with local dignitaries and representatives from the Durham Light Infantry



Above: Buckinghamshire: Pippa Kirkbride with Cllr Nathan Thomas (Mayor of High Wycombe) and Gordon Reilly (High Wycombe Town Crier) at Tom Burt's Hill for the lighting of the beacon, where she gave a speech on behalf of the Lord-Lieutenant reflecting on the significance of VE80 and expressed gratitude for those who served



Left: Hertfordshire: Nicholas Buxton attended events across the county and here at St Albans Cathedral: with Jonathan Humbert and his team of bell ringers in the Abbey's belfry, together with Jamie Day (Mayor of St Albans); magnificent post box topper created by Sopwell Knitters in collaboration with the de Havilland Aircraft Museum



Above: Cornwall: Geraint Richards commemorated VE80 at Bodmin Keep (shown) and Priory Park War Memorial, Bodmin; and VJ80 at RBL Woodland in Nansledan (Duchy of Cornwall created woodland and community space) and at the Burma War Memorial, Portscatho

Left: Devon: Caroline Harlow attended VE and VJ80 events across Devon



Above: Lancashire: James Carter attended the VJ event at Lancaster Castle



Right: Lincolnshire: David Chambers at the VE80 celebration held at the International Bomber Command Centre, Lincoln, with Sue Liburd (Lincs 2026) and cadets



Above: Hampshire: Sue Elton attended the service of commemoration at Winchester Cathedral Photo: Winchester Cathedral; and met a former evacuee, following the Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council flag raising commemorative ceremony Photo: Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council



Left: Leicestershire: Stephen Bryan was delighted to entertain wartime 'Prime Minister Sir Winston Churchill' in Desford



Above: Essex: Julie Fosh first attended events in Colchester with Jennifer Tolhurst (Lord-Lieutenant) and later a VE Day service on Canvey Island (shown) with the Ld-Lt and (centre) Cllr Lynsey McCarthy-Calvert (Mayor of Castle Point); Colchester resident, 104-year-old Joan, relating her memories of VE Day – artist Martin Impey captured Joan's memories in a wonderful painting



Above and above right: Somerset: Janet Montgomery at the flag raising ceremony outside County Hall, Taunton, with, among others, representatives from 40 Commando; and at the Festival of Remembrance service at St Mary's Church, Wedmore, with Brig David Eccles CBE, Revd Prebendary Richard Neill, Brig Neville Holmes MBE (President of Cheddar and Wedmore RBL), Brig Nigel Beacom QVRM TD VR DL, Cadet Warrant Officer Charlotte Weeks (Ld-Lt's Cadet), Ted Allen DL (Vice LL), Mohammed Saddiq (Lord-Lieutenant) and Revd Prebendary Adrian Prior-Sankey MBE (RBL chaplain for Somerset)



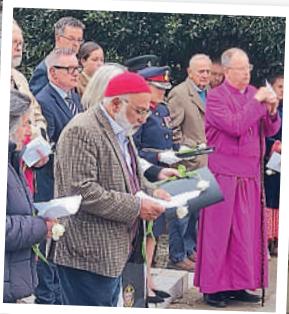
Below: Surrey: Peter Cluff attended the raising of the flag in at the Guild Hall in Guildford; enjoyed a garden party at Cedar Court care home – a celebration highlight (shown); and lit the beacon at Farnham Photo: Andy Newbold



Northumberland: George Farr attended the commemoration service at Hexham Abbey with, among others, (centre four) Cllr John Beynon (Chairman of Northumberland CC), Dr Helen Paterson (Chief Executive Northumberland CC), Dr Caroline Pryer (Lord-Lieutenant), the Rt Revd Mark Wroe (Bishop of Berwick) and (third from right) the Revd Canon David Glover (Rector of Hexham and Chaplain to The King) Photo: Helen Smith



Left and below: Oxfordshire: John May was at St Martin's Church, Bladon and Blenheim Palace, marking the beginning and end of a peace walk. Many faith leaders came together, joined by James Spencer-Churchill, 12th Duke of Marlborough (Bladon is the final resting place of Sir Winston Churchill). A reception at Blenheim Palace not only honoured the past, but also looked to the future Photos: Mark Johnson



Below: Norfolk: Patrick Lines attended the VE Day service at Norwich Cathedral with Gen Lord Dannatt, Lady Dannatt (Lord-Lieutenant) and the Very Revd Dr Andrew Braddock (Dean of Norwich Cathedral)



Right: Powys:
Sally Roberts
attended events
across Powys
thousands
of crocheted
poppies cascade
down St Mary's
Church in
Welshpool
for VE and VJ
commemorations



Left: Worcestershire: Ian Smith attended the VJ80 ceremony at the Gheluvelt Memorial in Worcester where he laid a wreath also in attendance was Mercian Regimental Mascot Pte Derby with handlers (shown)



Left and below: Tyne and Wear:
Jo Curry attended the night-time beacon lighting ceremony outside Newcastle Civic Centre where Cllr Rob Higgins (Lord Mayor) lit the beacon
Photo: Steve Brock



Right:
Warwickshire:
Karen Lynch
was in Bedworth
as 30 Signal
Regiment and
Queens Gurkha
Signals exercised
their Freedom
of Entry and
marched through
the town and
with Young High
Sheriff Sophia
Wilk attended
the VE80
wreath-laying in
Hillmorton, Rugby
(shown)



Below: West Midlands: Mark Smith attended the ceremony in front of the Hall of Memory in Birmingham having processed there with Derrick Anderson CBE (Lord-Lieutenant), Cllr Ken Wood (Lord Mayor of Birmingham), political leaders from the city council and others



Above: West Glamorgan: Diana Stroia was honoured to meet veteran Richard Pelzer at the Garrison Church (as Christ Church is known) in Swansea and attended numerous events across the county, finishing in true VE Day spirit with a street party at Neath Town Hall

National Crimebeat: A Catalyst for Change

At the 2023 National Crimebeat Awards one of the winning finalists was a small organisation based in Nottingham called Support Through Sport. This group was led by Tranai Todd, who was aged 17 at the time, and whose presentation at the 2023 awards was so impressive.

Following those 2023 awards, Tranai was approached by our then Chair, Amanda Parker, to become a trustee of National Crimebeat and we have benefitted from his insights and passion for youth work ever since.

The trustees thought that you would like to hear from Tranai just what a difference being recognised by National Crimebeat has made to him personally.



• NB The 2026 National Crimebeat Awards are now OPEN for nominations! Please go to our website national-crimebeat.org.uk for more information. Entries close on 19 January 2026 and our awards ceremony is in London on 17 March 2026.



Tranai Todd

Trustee, National Crimebeat

National Crimebeat, the charity of the High Sheriffs' Association, is far more than an annual awards ceremony celebrating incredible youth-led crime prevention projects. It is a catalyst for long-term change and sustainable impact. As a previous recipient, I've seen first-hand how the recognition goes beyond a trophy; it provides confidence, credibility and connection. These are the ingredients that allow projects to flourish and their positive impact to ripple far beyond the initial moment of celebration.

Growing up in an underserved community and navigating the complexity and adversity that often comes with it, I witnessed both the dangers of negative influences and the transformative power of sport and youth work. From participant to volunteer and eventually founding a charity at 17, this is the spark that ignited a fire which still burns fiercely today. It's a testament to how sport and youth work can change lives, leading to the inception of Support Through Sport.

In 2022, I had been running the charity for just over a year when the High Sheriff of Nottinghamshire informed us of our nomination to the National Crimebeat Awards. It

felt surreal. Attending the ceremony in London – my first time in the capital – was unforgettable. I still smile thinking about our team's final presentation rehearsals on the Tube. Unconventional... and amusing to onlookers, I'm sure – but it worked!

We won the Hugh Burnett Award for Best Presentation and placed second overall at the National Crimebeat Awards 2023. That moment brought an overwhelming sense of achievement and pride in how far we'd come in such a short time. But the impact didn't stop there. The experience opened doors to new networks, wise mentorship, stronger fundraising, and sector-wide credibility that continues to benefit us today.

I often describe National Crimebeat as a milestone in our journey, a foundation and springboard that propelled our growth. Three years on, Support Through Sport is a well-established charity, supporting over 5,000 young people annually across Nottingham, Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and Birmingham.

We're now a team of 45 staff and volunteers, united by a shared mission to uplift disadvantaged children, young people and underserved communities. Every day, we witness the power and potential of young people to achieve extraordinary things and drive real change. Sometimes, all they need is a helping hand, a positive role model, a sense of purpose and belonging, someone who believes in them – and, occasionally, a National Crimebeat Award to keep that fire burning bright!

Today, I'm proud to serve as a trustee of National Crimebeat. It's a privilege to support the next generation of young leaders and their organisations. I hope my story illustrates the profound and lasting impact of the National Crimebeat Awards. Your support, nominations and promotion of this initiative are vital, not just for the young people in your communities, but for the future we all want to build together!

supportthroughsport.org.uk/about-us/



High Sheriffs from the Isle of Wight, Lancashire, Clwyd, South Glamorgan, Warwickshire, East Sussex, Greater London, Kent and Berkshire attended the awards ceremony in 2025

Volunteering in Decline

Rob Beckley QPM

Council Member; Somerset 2024

Volunteering is not just a worthy pastime, it is the hidden infrastructure of our society. It binds neighbours together, sustains charities, supports the justice system and fills the gaps formal services cannot reach. For High Sheriffs, there is an expectation that we celebrate and encourage it, but in truth it goes deeper than that. Without volunteers, much of civic and justice life would grind to a halt. Supporting volunteering is therefore not a side duty of the Office, it is central to it.

During my year as High Sheriff of Somerset, I made volunteering my central theme, with a focus on promoting a volunteering culture among younger people. I found enormous strength but some underlying fragility in Somerset's culture of service. The county has a deep tradition of grassroots initiatives, sometimes called 'Somerset exceptionalism', yet a notable number of organisations struggle to recruit and retain volunteers. This is not unique to Somerset; it reflects a national trend.

The national statistics are sobering. A decade ago, 27 per cent of people volunteered formally at least once a month; today, just 16 per cent do so. Even annual participation has fallen. Among older adults and under-20s – the backbone and the future of volunteering – the decline is steeper still. The reasons are many: later retirement, busier working lives, childcare, blurred boundaries between home and work, and the lure of online alternatives. The result is undeniable: there is less routine volunteering than 10 years ago and this has real consequences for community safety and cohesion.

So what can a High Sheriff realistically achieve in a single year?

We can use our visibility to celebrate volunteers and encourage wider participation. Awards, civic events and community visits are powerful tools. I organised Join in Somerset, an event in Taunton where more than 90 charities and volunteer groups set up stalls in and around the Minster. The aim was to showcase the breadth of

community activity, connect potential volunteers with opportunities and celebrate civic life in action. Meeting the people behind the causes remains the best recruitment tool of all.

Recognition matters too. A word of thanks from a High Sheriff, whether in a formal presentation or a quiet conversation, can have lasting impact. We are well placed to bridge communities and institutions, ensuring unsung heroes are noticed. This is especially true in justice, where volunteers support victims, mentor offenders or assist police and courts. Their work is vital to the integrity of the system yet too often invisible.

Celebration alone is not enough. Many volunteers told me of the bureaucratic obstacles they face: repeated vetting, rigid safeguarding rules, complex onboarding. Safeguards are necessary, but they must be proportionate. For some roles, the procedures are so off-putting that volunteers walk away. In areas such as youth work or community safety, this attrition weakens the very networks that prevent crime and aid rehabilitation.

Here the High Sheriff can act as convenor. Independent of politics yet connected to the judiciary, emergency services and civil society, we are well positioned to bring people together. In Somerset the High Sheriff's Charitable Trust hosted a county-wide discussion with charities, councils, police, businesses and schools to share experiences and explore solutions. Ideas included simplifying recruitment, offering flexible roles and reaching young people through schools and colleges.

Engaging young volunteers is critical. Parents often spoke of the difficulty in finding placements for their children, even for schemes like the Duke of Edinburgh Award. Organisations were hesitant to take them on due to perceived risks or administrative burden, yet these are exactly the people we need to involve. Suggestions included a county-wide young volunteer award, integrating community service into school curricula and app-based reward schemes.



At the REACT stall for the Join in Somerset event in Taunton

Businesses, too, have a crucial role. At our February conference, Deborah Meaden of *Dragons' Den*, a Somerset resident and strong advocate of volunteering, spoke about the corporate benefits: staff wellbeing, stronger community links, enhanced reputation. High Sheriffs can encourage local businesses to offer paid volunteering leave, promote staff take-up and support community projects directly. Links between business, civic life and justice reinforce one another.

Volunteer support organisations and community foundations already connect people with opportunities, but there is scope to go further. In Somerset, one proposal was for a single digital volunteering platform – tailored locally yet spanning council boundaries – to act as a marketplace for opportunities.

None of this is to suggest that the High Sheriff can solve the challenges facing volunteering alone. But we can use our year to raise awareness, cut through red tape where possible and forge connections between people and causes. We can amplify existing efforts, encourage bolder thinking and ensure that volunteering remains visible, valued and viable.

Volunteering is not just an optional extra. It is a quiet force that binds communities, prevents isolation, supports the justice system and fills the gaps formal services cannot reach. High Sheriffs are given a rare opportunity to support and promote this spirit of service and, in a time of declining participation, that responsibility is more important than ever.

Supporting the young and promoting volunteering

Pippa Kirkbride

High Sheriff of Buckinghamshire 2025-26

As High Sheriff of Buckinghamshire, my year is shaped by two guiding themes: giving young people the best possible start in life and promoting volunteering in all its forms. These priorities have informed my work, from engagement with schools and youth organisations to recognising those who give their time in service to others. These themes sit comfortably alongside my core duties to uphold the constitution, to support the justice system and promote the Office of High Sheriff.

A highlight of my year has been the annual Justice Service for Buckinghamshire, held at St Mary's Church, Amersham. It marked the start of the new judicial year and brought together representatives from across our civic, faith and legal communities. I was honoured to welcome Dwayne Fields, Chief Scout of the UK, whose inspiring address on resilience, volunteering and opportunity for young people perfectly echoed and amplified my themes. His words were a powerful reminder of the difference that belief, encouragement and community can make to a young life and he highlighted the need for volunteers to enable the 100,000 young people waiting to join a scout group to do so.

Giving young people the best possible start has taken many forms across the county. I have visited schools and colleges including Waddesdon School, Wycombe Grammar School and Milton Keynes College, meeting students who are passionate about contributing to their



Outside St Mary's Church with Squadron Leader Jeremy Davies RAFAC, Nicholas Buxton (Herts), Sean Taylor DL (Berks), The Countess Howe (Lord-Lieutenant), John May CVO OBE DL (Oxon), Stephen Bryan JP (Leics) and Camilla King (Beds)

communities. I was delighted to join the High Sheriff's Fun Day at Woodrow High House, where fifty young people who might not normally access such opportunities enjoyed a day of outdoor challenges and teamwork. I also met Youth Voice Bucks (created by Buckinghamshire Council) and attended events with scouts, guides and police cadets, whose discipline and enthusiasm for service is inspiring.

Promoting volunteering has taken me into every corner of Buckinghamshire. Through the Heart of Bucks 25th Anniversary Tours, I have met extraordinary volunteers supporting charities such as Restore Hope and Vana Trust Farm. These organisations nurture confidence, skills and wellbeing, often changing lives in quiet but profound ways. I have also seen the work of the Youth Enquiry Service (based in High Wycombe) and Hope After Harm, whose volunteers help prevent crisis and support recovery. In Milton Keynes, the Coroners' Courts Support Service, an independent charity staffed by trained volunteers, offers free confidential, emotional support and practical help to bereaved families, witnesses and others attending an inquest. Similarly, UnityMK, whose volunteers provide a wide range of services to those experiencing homelessness.

Celebrating volunteers themselves is vital. The Festival of Young Volunteers at Penn House and the Lord-Lieutenant's garden party were joyful opportunities to



With His Honour Judge Patrick Perusko, His Honour Judge Jonathan Cooper, Regional Tribunal Judge Elizabeth McMahon (and Squadron Leader Jeremy Davies RAFAC

Photos : Marion Mason Images

recognise the people whose kindness and commitment strengthen our communities. Their stories have also been captured in the Volunteer Voices project, which I am leading in partnership with photographer Christopher James Hall. To date we have collected over 70 stories from volunteers across Buckinghamshire – including those who support the courts and judiciary. Plans are now in place for a digital presentation and public displays later in the year.

Six months into my year, I am continually inspired by the energy and compassion I encounter. Whether through the creativity of our young people or the dedication of our volunteers, Buckinghamshire continues to demonstrate the power of community. It is my privilege as High Sheriff to witness that spirit in action and to shine a light on those who make our county such a remarkable place to live and serve.



With (back row) Chief Inspector Simon Lincoln, Dwayne Fields (Chief Scout UK), Jason Hogg (Chief Constable Thames Valley Police), Matt Cumming (Cadet Leader) and (front) Angela O'Connor (Cadet Leader) and Police Cadets Zara Skidmore and Jen Skidmore

Supporting parents and families

Joëlle Warren MBE DL

High Sheriff of Cheshire 2025-26

I decided the theme of my shrieval year would be supporting parents and families, which ties in well with my ongoing role as Chair of the National Childbirth Trust (NCT). I have been visiting and supporting projects and charities that are helping parents across Cheshire through Cheshire Community Foundation, who understand the specific landscape of our community and the challenges that people here face.

We know that if children have happy and supportive families, they are more likely to succeed later on in life. So, helping struggling families helps us all and the earlier we can offer that support, the better. But the funding landscape for small local charities is challenging at the moment and I came up with the rather crazy idea that I would walk a marathon to raise funds to be distributed by the community foundation to support these vital local charities working with families. These organisations provide essential services such as mentoring, parenting support, mental health assistance and early intervention programmes which help families stay strong and resilient. Things snowballed and it turned into a community event at the iconic Chester Racecourse; families (including children, grandparents and dogs!), community groups and workplace teams signed up to walk together in support of local families facing unexpected challenges. Some joined my husband and I walking the full marathon

distance, while others signed up for a half marathon or just a few times round the beautiful course, the oldest operating racecourse in the world.

I took the theme of supporting parents and families into my interaction with the police and courts. I attended a full interactive Protecting Vulnerable People CPD training day with police constables from across Cheshire Constabulary, who primarily work on response, and area investigation teams on the front line. This gave me further understanding of how the force protects children and vulnerable people when carrying out their duties, supports victims and brings perpetrators to justice. Following this into the Magistrates' and Crown Court has been a sobering experience and I also asked to attend Family Courts across the county. Here I sat in on cases involving family breakdown – including disputes over child arrangements, financial settlements after divorce and cases where children were at risk of harm. All of which helped me understand that the need for early and practical support for families has never been greater... before small problems grow into larger crises.

This may sound like a very disciplined and focussed year, which it certainly has not always been as I've responded to requests to speak at dinners, hand out awards, open events, visit hospices, judge at shows, attend a royal visit and investiture ceremonies, serve as returning officer in a by-election, lay wreaths at memorials, lead parades, swear in new British citizens and



With Stephen Walton JP, Patricia Peters JP and District Judge John McGarva in Warrington Magistrates' Court

so many other engagements.

Halfway through the year, I've already covered 10,000 miles zig-zagging the county meeting people. At the end of the day, that's what this hugely privileged role is about: people. I've laughed and cried with people. I've celebrated and mourned with them. I've served tea and danced with them. And what will I take away: the kindness of people in our community for those around them in need. The people who give so generously of their time and talents – in many different ways and often over many years – to make life better for those in their community. Even small acts of kindness change lives.



Presenting a High Sheriff's Award to Bells Lewers in Chester



Time with the Cheshire Buddies Saturday Club in Sandbach

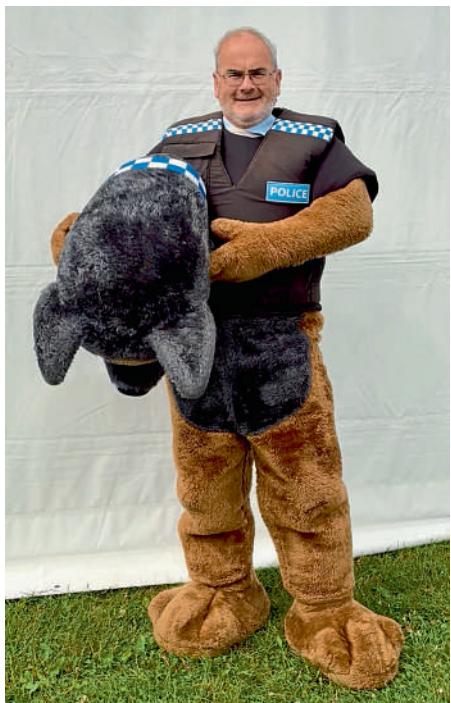
Definitely not a dog's life!

Geraint Richards OBE

High Sheriff of Cornwall 2025-26

Cornwall is an extraordinary place, steeped in Celtic culture and natural beauty; that is why it attracts so many visitors each year, drawn to this south-west tip of the mainland by the glorious sand and sea. Most of the tourists, however – and even some of the resident population – will be unaware of the many and varied social challenges that exist in this beautiful part of the UK. As High Sheriff, my eyes have been opened to these problems and I have frequently had tears in those eyes; tears of sadness because of what I am witnessing but, at the same time, tears of joy because of the truly amazing people that I am meeting, people who have made it their life's mission to improve the lives of others throughout Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.

Even before my year began I made a commitment to visit all 26 of the police stations here, a task nearly completed. Without exception, during each visit, I have been so impressed by the dedication of our police officers and the same is true of the other public servants that I have met, working in courts, prisons, probation services and for other blue light services. Supporting Devon & Cornwall Police dressed up as Bravo the police dog at the Royal Cornwall Show and being caught by



Police dog Bravo



Going underground

a real police dog during a demonstration at the Devon County Show will live long in my memory.

I have met so many incredible people working or volunteering for charities and community groups and it was wonderful to gather many of them together to thank them at my autumn gathering in September. A year ago many of these people were not known to me but now they are friends for whom I have so much admiration.

One of my first official visits in March was to West Cornwall Women's Aid where I became aware of the tragic extent and effects of domestic violence. After further visits to other related organisations, I am now working with these key partners to reduce domestic violence in Cornwall, particularly by focussing on the concept of male allyship.

Every High Sheriff's year contains key anniversaries and 2025 marks the 80th anniversary of the end of the Second World War. Having attended several VE and VJ day events, I will be planting oak trees at RAF St Mawgan and RNAS Culdrose around Remembrance Day in November – most appropriate given that I am a forester.

This year also marks both the 20th anniversary of Young & Talented Cornwall and the 40th anniversary of Cornwall Heritage Trust. To commemorate the latter, I was invited to light Sancreed Beacon on Midsummer's Day, a great honour indeed. For the former, I am helping organise a gala evening at the Hall for Cornwall, Truro, in November,



Lighting the Sancreed beacon on Midsummer's Day



With His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales at the Royal Cornwall Show

to showcase the incredible young talent that Cornwall produces and that Young & Talented Cornwall helps to flourish.

There is so much more that I will remember about this year: for instance my trip on the Newlyn lifeboat, my underground tour of a Cornish tin mine and my visit to the Isles of Scilly, in addition to several royal visits including meeting the Duke of Cornwall at the Royal Cornwall Show.

I return, however, to all those extraordinary people I have met this year who are making Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly a better place for all people and to whom, as High Sheriff of Cornwall, I am immensely grateful.

From marrows to magistrates and more...

Sir Richard FitzHerbert Bt

High Sheriff of Derbyshire 2025-26

It is just over six months since I took the oath at our village church, St Mary's in Tissington, to accept the role of High Sheriff in our great County of Derbyshire. I am the sixth member of our family to undertake the position stretching back to Francis FitzHerbert in 1602. The family history meant that I have a lot to live up to.

I promised to champion the tourism and agricultural sectors and the various charities that help farmers and rural workers at difficult times and I was truly delighted that Alan Griggs, our local agricultural chaplain, agreed to be my chaplain. I have made it my business to attend as many agricultural shows as possible and thus far have been to ten around the county ranging from sheepdog trials to ploughing matches. At these shows my duties have ranged from 'judging

the best marrow' to presenting the myriad cups and prizes. Wherever I have visited on this rural idyll I have been welcomed with warmth and generosity as well as being sumptuously fed.

As chair of the Visit Peak District & Derbyshire Tourist Board I have tried to travel all over the county and, through the position, to promote the many smaller rural businesses that make up the astounding offer in the area. Visitors to Derbyshire know well the tourism 'hotspots' of historic houses such as Chatsworth, Hardwick, Kedleston and Haddon alongside towns such as Bakewell and Buxton but it is the hospitality businesses on the fringe in areas like Chesterfield, Clay Cross and Swadlincote which appreciate a visit from an incumbent High Sheriff at tearooms, cafes and attractions – with me in court dress and sword posing with a cup of tea to help put their businesses on the map. On my travels I have discovered

some extraordinary people and parts of Derbyshire that I never knew before, with all those that I met appreciating the High Sheriff making that effort.

Promoting law and order I have attended court in both Chesterfield and Derby; invited the county's magistrates back to our home of Tissington to view our annual well dressings in May; visited both prisons in the county – to see first-hand the dedication and commitment of all the prison staff – and attended many police functions. So far I have been on the beat in Darley Abbey, a suburb of Derby; visited police headquarters at Ripley for several Long Service Award ceremonies; and viewed demonstrations of both the dog section and the drone team which guard us.

At Derby Cathedral I have attended several services for the homeless, Derbyshire carers, VE and VJ Days alongside concerts such as Sinfonia Viva (a popular East Midlands orchestra) and pop artists – I have been immensely impressed by the hard work and dedication of the Dean and his team.

But it is the unexpected invitations which bring the greatest pleasure: the opportunity to hand deliver a 60th wedding anniversary card from Their Highnesses The King and Queen to a couple from Duffield; the honour to deliver a card on his 100th birthday to D-Day veteran Albert Kier in Darley Bridge; to recognise the life-long service at a Sue Ryder shop to a lady with stage 4 cancer; and to attend the funeral of another veteran, the late Donald Rose from Ilkeston, who died at the age of 110. It was humbling to take the salute in the Market Place alongside our Lord-Lieutenant Elizabeth Fothergill CBE as over 1,000 veterans on motorcycles and on foot paid their respects to this remarkable man. Humbling – I was so very proud of our county and our country.

Throughout this time, I have been accompanied by not one but four consorts (I can be called greedy I know!) – namely, two of my sisters, Selina and Lucy, our great friend Diana and my wife Fiona. I am lucky in that they all bring their own unique experiences and thoughtfulness to the role and they are much appreciated at the differing functions that we attend. As a quintet we look forward to the myriad of events functions and opportunities which lie ahead.



At the funeral of 110-year-old veteran Donald Rose



With Edward Attenborough (Notts), Veronica Pickering (Lord-Lieutenant Notts) and Elizabeth Fothergill (Lord-Lieutenant Derbyshire) at the Crich Stand Memorial



With Timothy Gillow (Staffs) and jester at the Blithfield Horn Dance

We all cry at these events

Caroline Harlow

High Sheriff of Devon 2025-26

'I'm sorry. I'm not allowed to unlock this gate for you. We'll have to wait for a prison officer to arrive.' I was coming to the end of my Independent Monitoring Board membership before my year as High Sheriff of Devon and these, my first words to Andy, sent my year in a wholly unexpected direction. He was in prison for serious offences related to his gambling addiction and Andy had shown me something completely new. A light bulb went off in my head – the theme for my year would be to draw attention to this unrecognised evil that hides in plain sight.

Andy is now a free man working tirelessly with charities working to reduce the harm from gambling addiction. He has helped me weave this theme into so many of my marvellously varied shrieval duties. Occasionally senior people in the emergency services, armed forces and others have said, 'How interesting... not really a problem with us.' Yet a little while later these same people seek me out saying, 'You have made me think, tell me more.'

Some duties have just been fun: opening the 680th Dalwood Fair or celebrating a community-run shop – meeting people, valuing them and enjoying their success. Yet during my Declaration I promised that my year would be '...gritty not pretty'. I loved using my office to help convene a forum about the homeless in Exeter with 40 key players from the police, churches, charities, employers and those with lived experience.

I now expect the unexpected! At the D-Day Landings ceremony in Torquay they said that I would not have to do anything except be there. However, during the ceremony I was presented with the first wreath to be laid and frantically tried to remember how I had seen it done before.



In the air ambulance with a Devon Air Ambulance paramedic if space



With the Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service

The British Legion invited me to several further events, so I must have done all right! It was privilege to meet these dedicated people who remembered their comrades, honouring them still. I loved hearing their stories and seeing how much they still care. VJ Day was especially poignant for me.

This year I have seen a common theme in many of the people and organisations that I have visited and talked with. They are all in different ways either keeping us safe today or remembering those who have paid a very heavy price to keep us safe in the past. These events showed me how the role of High Sheriff matters – conferring an extra layer of meaning and dignity to many of the events I have enjoyed attending. I am so lucky to perform this role.

The Royal Marines Commando Training Centre, Lympstone – somewhere very important to us in Devon – hosted my garden party which allowed me to honour,

in a magnificent setting, unsung heroes from the prison service, charities and many others I have met.

I continue to be very interested in custody and have visited both prisons in Devon, the custody suites in courts and police stations. Seeing inside our nearest women's prison and understanding some of the very different issues from men's prisons I found unglamorous but important. I've been fascinated to witness the difficult but vital work done by Magistrates' and Crown Courts and the probation service.

Preparing for the police awards ceremony I shared my biggest worry with the senior officer coordinating the ceremony. 'When I hear these stories of people who do such amazing things, but they don't think that they have anything at all unusual, I'll just cry.' The reply? 'Don't worry, Caroline, we all cry at these events, that's what they are all about.' And they did, and so did I.



Judging the Sylvania Community Shop bake off



At the 680th Dalwood Fair with the squadron leader of the (internationally famous) Bradninch Red Barrows display team



At a citizenship ceremony in Darlington with Cllr Sonia Kane (Mayor)

Proactive not reactive

Mike Poole JP DL

High Sheriff of Durham 2025-26

I must admit, I did undertake a lot of preparation prior to attending Durham Crown Court on 28 March before His Honour Judge Francis Laird – I was aware I only had one year and wanted to use every single bit of it to promote, explain and use the role and history of the Office of High Sheriff to help and support individuals and organisations across my county.

As Vice Lord-Lieutenant I had already attended several citizenship ceremonies across the county. I wrote to all the registrars across County Durham enquiring why the High Sheriff was never invited to them – this resulted in some 40 invitations covering Hartlepool, Stockton, Darlington and Durham City. They are so special and a great opportunity to explain the role and history of the office – court dress makes such an impression and is great for lots of photographs.

I made contact at the outset with the police, fire and rescue services that cover north and south of my region as I was keen to fix up visits as opposed to awaiting invitations.

The High Sheriff's Award certificates are a great way of acknowledging and thanking individuals and organisations who do such great things within our communities. I am just into month six of my year and so far



At the Legal Service in the cathedral with the Revd Canon Dr Philip Plyming (Dean of Durham) and the Revd Mark Miller (my chaplain)

have presented just under 30 with the expectation to do at least the same in the latter half of my year.

I am a great believer that High Sheriffs should be proactive not reactive – 12 months can pass very quickly.

My legal service was held in Durham Cathedral on 13 July – a lovely day attended by my fellow High Sheriffs in adjoining counties, the judiciary, police and my personal guests. My police cadets did an excellent job guiding attendees to their seats. It was a pleasure to have the Hon Mr Justice Goss there – a great supporter of this service and his last one attending as a judge. As a magistrate I have been involved in the magistrates' mock trials competitions, mentoring a local school. I invited the teacher and several of the students as my guests on the day and was

so lucky to be able to introduce Justice Goss to them; they chatted for half an hour – I was so pleased.

On 17 April, Maundy Thursday, within a few weeks of taking office, I was personally introduced to His Majesty King Charles III after the service in Durham Cathedral – an extremely memorable occasion.

I have visited several charities. One thing that has been very surprising is the fact that a lot of the organisations are not aware of others across the county doing similar or connected activities. The role of High Sheriff has been very useful in facilitating introductions and connections – bringing people together for mutual benefit of the communities they serve.

All in all, a great start to my shrieval year – I feel so lucky to have the opportunity.



Meeting Steve Helps, Chief Fire Officer of County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service

Expanding awareness



With 17 of the London Borough Mayors at my afternoon tea party

John Garbutt JP

High Sheriff of Greater London 2025-26

When I was considering being appointed as High Sheriff of Greater London (HSGL) for the second time – the first time being in 2020-21 – I had in mind that, due to Covid, how little I had been able to get out and 'press the flesh'. In particular, having caught the virus myself, how this had restricted my visits to the numerous courts, prisons and charities to be able to present awards due to lockdowns. Through Zoom and Teams, etc., I did, however, manage to meet virtually with almost all relevant personnel, but I found this wasn't as helpful for establishing new relationships and promoting the role itself. This time it would, I hoped, be a lot easier to achieve these aims. I felt I had unfinished business. This meant I accepted my second Royal Warrant with enthusiasm!

So, since the very end of April I have been doing a lot of visiting and attending events. Particular highlights have included attending two VE day services on the same day, at Westminster Abbey and St Paul's Cathedral; the Metropolitan Police Remembrance Service at Hendon Police College; the UK Sikh Gurdwara celebration at Portcullis House; the HMCTS

London Regional Awards ceremony at the Old Bailey; my afternoon tea party at International Students House (to which over half the 32 London Borough Mayors came); and the opening of the Legal Year, again at the Abbey with a reception to follow in Westminster Hall. I have also had meetings with the Lord-Lieutenant of Greater London, the Metropolitan Police Commissioner and the Lady Chief Justice (who also presided over my Declaration at the Royal Courts of Justice). In addition, I have visited several of the nine Crown Courts, 18 Magistrates' Courts and Tribunals to help boost their morale through the presentation of Special Recognition Awards – mainly to the 'unsung heroes' in the back offices.

Coming up, I'm aiming to present yet



Wreaths were laid at the Metropolitan Police Remembrance Service

more certificates at several of the eight London prisons and young offenders' institutes, the remainder of the Crown Courts, Coroners Courts, and the Supreme Court (where I shall also be holding my Justice and Youth Award ceremonies). In addition, I have in prospect my Justice Service which will be held at Southwark Cathedral and my Judges' Dinner for all the senior judiciary in Greater London.

As part of my ambition to expand awareness of the role, I have commenced this by meeting as many of the London mayors as I can to discover what I can do to help them promote the HSGL role in their local boroughs in order to ultimately get some understanding by the 'man in the street' – quite challenging given there are almost nine million people in GL!. I also hope to help achieve this aim by visiting the numerous charities around London involved in law and order, and to see how I might assist them by supporting their objectives.

Finally, one additional specific initiative is that I'm aiming to set up a new charity in London: The HSGL's Impact Fund. This will initially focus on helping to reduce mental health issues in London prisons. At present we are 'early days', looking at suitable charity structures, possible sources of funds and how we can handle flexing the objective each year according to the aims of that particular High Sheriff if they are different. I know that some counties already have well-established funds, so all thoughts are welcome! Please contact me at: garbutt.jsimon@gmail.com.



The opening of the Legal Year at Westminster Abbey

Getting creative

Sue Elton

High Sheriff of Hampshire 2025-26

In my role as High Sheriff of Hampshire I have worked to shine a light on and encourage positively the work of the judiciary, police, fire and rescue, police and crime commissioner and the prison. I have been particularly keen to promote art to showcase how creativity can serve a broader social purpose and at my High Sheriff's summer party I curated a special exhibition titled Art with a Purpose, to show how charities are using art as a force for change to support both individuals and the judicial system.

The exhibition included a diverse and powerful collection of work from charities including BearFace Theatre, Spurgeons, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Youth Commission, Trinity Winchester, The Winchester Beacon, Monty's Community Hub, Pottery In Prison, Friends of the Family, Spud Works, Know Thyself and Southampton Forward.

Below is a collaborative poem written and performed by prisoners during BearFace Applied Theatre Project at HMP/YOI Winchester and exhibited at my summer party:

*Freedom is...
I think...
Freedom is
Seeing the potential and being able
To be comfortable within yourself
It is care
It is laughter
It is running carelessly laughing down hills
Freedom is being free from one's own
thoughts*

Display of work from Monty's Community Hub

*To own them
And adjust them
We will never reach perfection, but don't
give up, keep trying
Freedom is not having a key worker
scratching down on her clipboard
In front of me
It's a walk across the park
A walk outside to a friend's house
Watering the plants
A cup of tea in the garden first thing
Freedom is better health and finding our
calm
I think being free from addiction
Free from prison
Free from past mistakes
That is freedom
I think...
Freedom is seeing the potential in things
Seeing my potential and being able to be
comfortable within myself*

There have been many other highlights from my year so far. My Declaration took place at the Great Hall in Winchester on 26 March and since taking on the role of High Sheriff of Hampshire it has been an extremely busy year, travelling around to visit many incredible organisations and charities that make this county a better place to live and work.

I was delighted to have an opportunity to visit the inspirational Hampshire and Isle of Wight Air Ambulance (HIWAA) at their airbase in Thruxton, Andover. The team had just returned from two major call-outs and I was fortunate to have a close-up tour of the helicopter and equipment. What struck me was the level of medical care the paramedics and doctors



With some of the star guests at Winchester Prison family farm day

can administer to patients at the scene, thanks to the state-of-the-art technical equipment onboard and the vital skills of their extremely dedicated team.

I particularly enjoyed meeting with the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary's Dog Support Unit, to hear all about the intense training required to enable the dogs to locate a missing person, assist with arrests, and to detect drugs, blood and even SIM cards.

It was a pleasure to support the Big Sleep Out Event in support of Trinity, a charity addressing homelessness and vulnerability in Winchester.

After spending an eventful afternoon with the police in Basingstoke, I saw first-hand the intricacies of effective policing, involving a diverted call to respond to an incident: calm policing in action, handcuffing of suspect, review of CCTV and a visit to custody.

I also spent some time with Spurgeons at HMP Winchester to see how the charity supports families; their farm fun day was a brilliant way to bring families together.

Finished pieces from Pottery In Prison





With Ability Dogs 4 Young People, an Isle of Wight charity (started April 2012) training assistance dogs to enhance the independence of young people and children living with disabilities on the Isle of Wight

Inspiring connections for young people

Jacqueline Gazzard

High Sheriff Isle of Wight 2025/2026

'What is a High Sheriff... what do you do?' These are the questions I'm asked most often and when answering I can talk of the honour of representing law and order in my county and how I get to see the real lives and great community spirit of my home, the Isle of Wight. But how can I explain to a modern teenager the ways in which this role might make a difference? After all, we wear strange Georgian-inspired outfits with ostrich feathers and ancient lace. Here on our Island, this is enhanced by the loan of eighteenth-century crystal buckles, a First World War cloak and a unique badge of office recently created but inspired by an old Island crest.

My answer is wrapped into my aims for the year. I set out wanting to make inspiring connections for young people as they look to explore their talents and find careers that match their aspirations. There is too frequently a dearth of good information on the range of roles that can come from a love of different subjects. A drop-in for students who love history saw more than fifty young people from schools across the Island sit with archaeologists, curators, conservation scientists and archivists, as well as those interested in interpretation, heritage communications and even law – all of them sharing a love



GCSE students enjoyed a drop-in session exploring careers that can follow a love of history and heritage. It was organised with the Historical Association Isle of Wight branch. Here they are discussing 'conservation' and 'curating' with Christopher Warleigh-Lack from English Heritage

of history and keen to see what careers can fall out of that. I am now looking to stretch this to cover other subjects and (fingers crossed) develop a YouTube channel through a team of media students, who can create a bank of short clips and information on careers that come from every subject to inspire even more to go and find that elusive job for life. It will

clearly extend beyond my year in office, but has already given me a great sense of serving a community of young people we assume lack ambition, but instead often lack access to knowledge and inspiration.

Out of this project I am also working with a different community of Islanders focussed on mental health and addiction, as we look to try and create a pilot scheme to support offenders and families who suffer the consequences of petty crime due to addiction. It's a complicated brief and yet again something that will take time and many minds to make work, but as a magistrate I do hope it will make a difference if we get the green light to proceed. I already know this is the year to make connections and the real work will likely stretch beyond my twelve months.

So, what do I do? In truth, whatever I expected, this role has been so much more than I thought it would be. I was told by a veteran Islander that for one year I'd have extraordinary access and opportunity, before becoming entirely irrelevant the following April! I am sure he is quite right; he has certainly known a number of High Sheriffs in his time. I've seen and learnt more than I ever thought possible and I've a good few months to go. It is often busy and sometimes exhausting, but there is also such great joy in being able to celebrate all that we do as a small, but mighty, Island county.

Never forget the 'day job'

Jonathan Neame DL

High Sheriff of Kent 2025-26

The role of High Sheriff brings with it many privileges: the opportunity to meet many exceptional people and attend some memorable events.

The visit of His Majesty The King to the Cinque Ports of Deal and Walmer on the most glorious summer's day in July and the 85th Anniversary of Operation Dynamo, where we witnessed 66 little ships dispatched to Dunkirk – perhaps for the last time – will stand in the memory for a long time.

But, for all the wonderful occasions, one should never forget that the 'day job' is supporting all the different parts of the justice system. I have visited the Crown and Magistrates' Courts, probation service and prisons on many occasions to witness numerous hard-working and highly experienced people in action, and I have enjoyed each and every one.

I have nothing but praise and admiration for the 7,000 individuals who work for Kent Police – a great team who all seem highly committed and skilful in keeping our communities safer. To see how hard these officers work to ensure community cohesion, notably at the Vaisakhi in Gravesend, when 15,000 Sikhs process with members of the local community to the Gurdwara, is highly impressive.

One particular theme that has captured my attention is the constant battle to rehabilitate ex-offenders. I have visited all six prisons in Kent and am struck with how different their needs and challenges are. Our prisons are overcrowded; we have the highest reoffending rate anywhere and sadly sufficient time and resources do not



Carrying the Baton of Hope to raise awareness for suicide prevention in Sheerness

exist for the team to train new skills so as to reduce the chances of reoffending.

Yet, if you scratch the surface, there are some remarkable organisations helping ex-offenders find a new pathway:

- 2makeit offers rehabilitation through programmes in creative skills such as music, art and writing
- Glasshouse is a social enterprise offering second chances to women through horticultural training, with realistic prospects for employment thereafter
- Lime Bird is a company which trains and delivers qualifications for chefs
- HMP Rochester has an outstanding stonemasonry workshop
- HMP Maidstone has one of the largest textile workshops in the country.

We have been so impressed by all these activities that I showcased three of them at my garden party in July – there was some amusement at having 15 ex-offenders onsite serving senior members of the

judiciary, police and the local community.

Wherever possible, I have engaged with many different youth organisations. Two charities which tackle some of our toughest societal issues to bring positive change stand out in particular:

- The Baton of Hope is the largest ever suicide prevention campaign
- Charlie's Promise is dedicated to helping the fight against knife crime.

But, perhaps one of the most uplifting observations of the year is to see how many young people are engaging with the scouts, police and service cadets. All have waiting lists. I have attended many events and can see first-hand how these organisations develop lifelong skills of leadership, teamwork and communication, as well as building resilience and self-confidence.

It has been a highly enjoyable, stimulating and varied year... and we are only halfway through!



Joining the procession through Gravesend to celebrate the Sikh festival of Vaisakhi



Meeting His Majesty King Charles III in the Captain's Garden at Deal Castle in July

Am I enjoying myself?



At my installation with Duchy of Lancaster representatives Alastair Martin CVO (CEO and Clerk to the Council) and Sir James Leigh-Pemberton CVO (Chairman)

James Carter DL

High Sheriff of Lancashire 2025-26

I am now into the second half of my year as High Sheriff of Lancashire and, understandably, people keep asking me: 'are you enjoying yourself?' It is a simple question and in most cases is just an attempt at small talk, but I keep thinking to myself – how to answer. I suppose an honest response would be 'some of the time'. The role is so varied it can't be described as simply enjoyable.

To be High Sheriff is an honour I could not have imagined receiving coming from a relatively humble background with an ambition to just 'do my best'. In my various voluntary roles my mantra was always 'try to make a difference'. So there are two rules that I apply to events, invitations and functions. Accept those invitations where I can 1) make a difference and 2) approach them with enthusiasm so I can do my best. The role is so varied it can't simply be described as enjoyable. It would need a paragraph of adjectives to do it justice.

The splendour of the service at Lancaster Priory, followed by the ancient

ceremony of hanging my coat of arms in Lancaster Castle, must rank as the high point on the scale of enjoyment and a great occasion to share with family and friends. My best friend had travelled all the way from New Zealand to be with me.

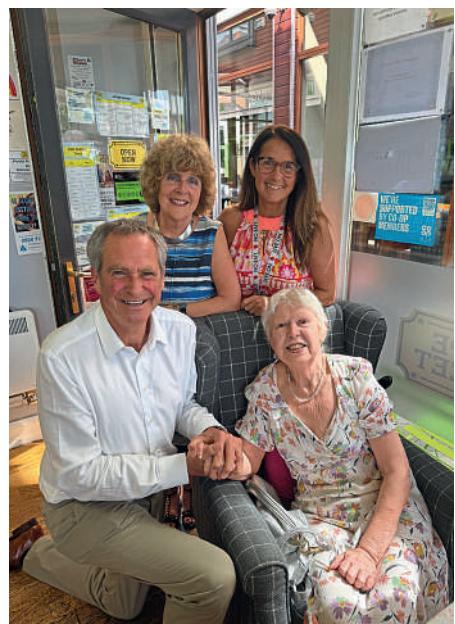
But if one does justice to the role it is so much more than the pomp and ceremony – it is the chance to make a difference to the huge number of voluntary organisations who often, quietly and unknown to many, go about their work and without whom the county would be so much the worse off. It is often humbling and sometimes upsetting to see such need among sections of our society. It is an amazing voyage of discovery. Previously held beliefs are often shattered when you are given a chance to really engage.

When asked if I would consider being put forward for the Office of High Sheriff I consulted my wife of 40 years because I wanted the year to engage us both. I could not achieve nearly as much without her by my side and her spending hours each week on administration. Many an evening we collapse with a cup of tea and ruminate on all the experiences of the day.

As I geared up to take on the role I was keen to introduce the charity Getting Court to Lancashire, particularly because much of my charitable work has been with young people. However, the more I discovered the work of the many charities already active in this area the more my ideas started take a different direction. So much good work was being undertaken but often those in need were not even aware of the help and advice that was available. Even more disappointing was the fact that some of the charities and organisations were not aware of each other and were sometimes bidding for the same scarce financial resources. So I decided that my ambition would be better served by trying to turbocharge what was already on offer. I am now working with the University of Lancashire in mapping the existing landscape with a view to producing a comprehensive database of every resource that is available in the county.

My work at Lancaster prison has also taken on much greater significance as I better understand the issues that many in our communities face and, in particular, the shortage of funding available to support vital initiatives.

To finish, I have found it to be an incredible honour, often very humbling, a near vertical learning curve and yes, of course, some very enjoyable moments.



With my wife Annabel and founder Sheila Byrne (back right) at Hope Street Café, Ormskirk – offering a safe, welcoming space for people facing mental health challenges



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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.

In good shape

David Chambers DL

High Sheriff of Lincolnshire 2025-26

Turnover, as the change of High Sheriff is known in Lincolnshire, went better than expected – but what was to be expected?

The turnover was a family affair plus official guests and the grandchildren behaved better than my wife and I had ever witnessed before, handing out sausages, delicacies, etc. with great aplomb. One of our grandchildren, aged six, summed up her feelings after the day best when she said, 'Grandad [I waited for it], I am very pleased you are High Sheriff of Lincolnshire but a little disappointed you're not Nottingham! The stuff of dreams.'

The five-year build-up to the year of being High Sheriff is seemingly a very long one. I started to wonder if I would still be alive! Perhaps three years would have suited me better.

However, to the task... spreadsheets were designed, questionnaires prepared in readiness, a process defined and understood, and a website, with all kinds of invites coming in from day one – all had to be dealt with politely and carefully. Instead of a diary, which I have used for I don't know how long, I switched to my phone's calendar, so others, looking on, could see and advise; that has worked very well, though I still long for a diary back-up when people go on holiday!

Predecessors are very polite in their advice in trying to guide us 'freshers'. How many meetings, I asked. It varies [you can do more or less and some years are more and others less. 46 in 5 months, to date, but quality...].

How many court dress events? It depends [I try and use mine as often as possible as the event organisers like it and I only have it for a year!].

Does your wife attend? Sometimes [but more than 50 per cent, which is nice].

Can you do the job with a normal job you're already doing? Well, yes and no [I have, but a good PA is essential and it helps if your business is flexible].

Do people treat you differently? Not particularly, and, if



With Sergeant David Cave, John Young (Humberfire Fire and Rescue Service) and PC Dan Mosley at the Cleethorpes 999 event



Outside Kingerby Church at my turnover with my wife Sue and my chaplain Father Robert Thacker

anything, the court dress helps define the role. Some people do think you've got money if you accept the role but it's not necessary to be very well-off.

Do you work weekends? Well, yes, that's often when events want you, though for charities it's more during the week.

Do you wine and dine the judges? Yes, at home or at a restaurant; we have that pleasure to come. The best wine will be served! In the meantime, one does attend the courts (thus far, eight times) and the prisons – all the legal duties.

Do you see other High Sheriffs? Yes, frequently and we have a good rapport and a WhatsApp group together too.

Halfway through the year, I have settled in and relaxed as and when I venture out. Good fun, good company and great things being done by lots of people, all voluntarily. I just wish the country was in such good shape as the High Sheriffs in the East Midlands are.

Spot the difference



At the Stephens and George Charitable Trust summer camp

Sharon Dixon

High Sheriff of Mid Glamorgan 2025-26

When I accepted the honour of serving as High Sheriff of Mid Glamorgan, I imagined many memorable experiences would come my way. Yet one of the most touching moments of my tenure so far came during a summer afternoon at the Dowlais Community Centre, where I joined the Stephens and George Charitable Trust for their children's summer camp.

The camp itself was a breath of fresh air – children aged between five and eleven enjoying a week together without phones or computers, simply playing, talking and learning from one another. As soon as I arrived, the room buzzed with excitement. The volunteers, who give so much of their time and energy, had created a warm and safe environment where children could simply be themselves.

It was not long before I was surrounded by curious faces. Many wanted to know what exactly a High Sheriff does. Their questions came thick and fast, full of

curiosity and innocence. I was interviewed one-on-one by Luna, an extraordinary eight-year-old with a sharp mind and a natural confidence that belied her years. She held her notepad with such determination and seriousness that I could not help but feel I was facing one of the toughest interviews of my life! Her thoughtful questions – ranging from my role in the community to why I wanted to serve – reminded me just how observant children can be when given the chance to lead the conversation.

Alongside the questions, there was a creative activity organised by one of the volunteers, Sarah. She had prepared a cartoon version of me for the children to colour in – a playful and charming likeness that brought a smile to my face. The children eagerly grabbed their crayons, keen to bring the drawing to life.

What moved me most, however, was something very small but deeply meaningful. A number of the children asked for brown crayons so that they could colour my face and hands

accurately. It may sound simple, but for me it was profound. Representation matters and in that moment I felt the children were recognising me for who I am and accepting me into their world with kindness and respect. That act of reaching for the right crayon spoke volumes.

The Stephens and George Charitable Trust deserves enormous credit for the work it does. It offers not only camps like this but also ongoing opportunities for children across the community. By making the activities affordable and accessible, they ensure that no child is excluded from taking part, regardless of background. They give young people the freedom to explore, learn and ask questions in a safe and supportive environment. Volunteers such as Sarah, Emma, Fleur and the many other young people who give their time so generously play an enormous role in making this possible and their energy and commitment are an inspiration in themselves.

For me, the afternoon was not just another engagement in the High Sheriff's diary. It was a highlight of my past six months. The camp embodied so much of what I believe in: community, curiosity, inclusivity and hope for the future. As I left the centre, I carried with me not only Luna's sharp questions and Sarah's clever cartoon, but also the memory of those brown crayons – a simple, heartfelt reminder of the importance of being seen and valued.

I am certain that the children who attended will remember their time at camp for a long time. I know I will never forget mine.



A selection of some of the cartoon versions

Finding fulfilment in unexpected places

Patrick Lines

High Sheriff of Norfolk 2025-26

I'm about six months into my year in office and it's proved to be as eye-opening and interesting as everybody said it would be. After the comprehensive training sessions provided by the High Sheriffs' Association I felt well prepared for my year and ready to hit the ground running. But of course the real learning takes place on the job and there is no substitute for just getting on with it. All the previous High Sheriffs I had spoken to in preparation for my year had emphasised that one should do it in one's own way and that indeed is the truth. Everybody has their own style and as I compare my activities with other High Sheriffs in my region I see that not only do individual High Sheriffs have subtly different ways of doing things but so do the individual counties. And long may that continue.

Of course, the areas of activity of a High Sheriff can be broadly divided into traditional justice and law and order work; civic activities; more formal set-piece occasions such as large church services and visits by members of the Royal Family; and visiting and encouraging any number of charities. In preparation for my year I gave a lot of thought to what the correct balance between these various activities



At the Norfolk Constabulary Long Service and Good Conduct Awards with Sarah Taylor (Police and Crime Commissioner) and Paul Sanford (Chief Constable of Norfolk)

the police and the courts, etc. but also the voluntary sector involved in areas such as drug rehabilitation charities, youth charities and homelessness charities. I have enjoyed all my areas of interaction immensely.

One of the surprises of my year has been that some of the events and functions I am invited to that I am perhaps most uncertain about have turned out to be the most interesting and fulfilling things that I have done. For example, I had expressed an interest in meeting a probation officer

who had been recruited by the probation service because of her 'lived experience', having herself spent time in prison. When I sat down with this individual I was not sure what to expect, but after a couple of hours of fascinating discussion, during which they were extremely open in revealing their life story, I became incredibly interested in their work and the possibilities their recruitment opened up. They now lead a successful team of a dozen or so similar people. They are able to empathise with newly released prisoners and the prisoners can relate to them in a way that perhaps they may find more difficult with a 'professional' probation officer. This team are living examples for newly released prisoners of what can be achieved and that, despite all the many and real difficulties faced by such individuals, it is possible to get back on the straight and narrow and turn your life around. I was also incredibly pleased to be able to assist in putting the probation officer in touch with a charity that could provide her with support for newly released prisoners who seemed to be falling through the cracks. A small thing but fulfilling nonetheless.

And there have been more such experiences that I would love to relate if space permitted. Suffice it to say that my year so far has been fulfilling and eye-opening. I have been welcomed with open arms by so many people and institutions. It really is a rare privilege to take on this role.



At RNLI Wells with Sarah, Countess of Leicester (Norfolk 2013) and Lady Lyons

Just a thank you



With Dr Caroline Pryer (Lord-Lieutenant), her cadet and mayors



Her Majesty The Queen greeting excited crowds at Hexham Abbey
Photo: Helen Smith

George Farr

High Sheriff of Northumberland 2025-26

Beautiful Northumberland is a massive 1,936 square miles; 405 of those are designated as Northumberland National Park. With a population of only around 320,000, it is the least densely populated county in England. Ninety-seven per cent of the area is officially classed as rural. At the other extreme, urban South East Northumberland accommodates 50 per cent of the county's population in three per cent of its land area.

So, Northumberland is beset by entirely different concerns. In the rural areas, we have issues with isolation and loneliness, compounded by an aging population. In the south-east corner – which, as it happens, is also one of the poorest areas in England – we are dealing with drug and alcohol abuse, and related crime. But for every worry, there are brilliant organisations and their outstanding volunteers and professionals counteracting the problem.

I and the more recent Northumberland High Sheriffs have focussed on supporting youth projects, mainly in South East Northumberland, on the understanding that it is much better to steer youngsters away from starting a life of crime and then channelling their considerable energy into contributing to society. We have a High Sheriff's Fund which donates to projects that focus entirely on creating the best habitats to help young people become the very best person they can be. These youth clubs help them learn things, how to interact and make great friends, and they rise to the challenge every day. But of course the Cubs, Scouts and the many facets of the armed forces and police cadets have been doing this all along and

I have been privileged to join them on many an occasion around a camp fire, on a training exercise or on a parade ground.

To help with youth engagement, I have been working with Northumberland Cricket to provide a chance for young people to learn how to coach the game. At the moment there is virtually no provision for young cricket leaders in Northumberland and I was delighted by the full-to-bursting attendance of the inaugural/pilot coaching session. So much so, that we will roll out this shrieval initiative across the county.

Another project I have been privileged to be part of is the inauguration of a new help group in one of the most rural parts of the county. We hope to help the elderly and less mobile get out and meet people, go shopping or just provide them with a more constant connection to the outside world.

To be honest, so far this shrieval year has been a delightful and extraordinary blur. I have visited HMP Northumberland and our underground RAF base; I have lined up to meet Her Majesty The Queen in Hexham Abbey; I welcomed the Coldstream Guards to receive the

freedom of Berwick upon Tweed; and I have enjoyed many an agricultural show. But what has been so incredibly humbling was the enormous effort the county made in order to make sure that all of the many well-attended VE and VJ Day commemorations ran like clockwork.

In my travels I have been so lucky to meet utterly committed and selfless volunteers who nearly always have a wonderful sense of humour. This engenders an informal camaraderie. So, often when I offer my thanks, I am met with a smile, perhaps a joke; but for most of them, that's all they want – just a thank you.



With the Northumbria branch of the Dry Stone Walling Association



One of many youth groups making the most of Northumberland National Park

Hearing the young unheard: the power of convening

John May CVO OBE DL

High Sheriff of Oxfordshire 2025-26

When I was preparing for my year as High Sheriff, I was advised to choose a theme. At first, I wondered if it might be an unnecessary extra. In fact, it has proved invaluable. With the many calls on a High Sheriff's time, having a clear theme has helped me to prioritise how I spend my days and know where I can bring most value.

My theme is Hearing the Young Unheard. Many young people in Oxfordshire are flourishing – in their families, schools, on the sports field and in creative spaces. But others are not.

Some feel invisible. Some feel silenced. Some have been told – by systems or by society – that they do not belong or do not matter.

The theme is simple in its phrasing but urgent in its intent. It is about listening – properly listening – to young people, whose voices are too often overlooked, and to the organisations working hard to support them. Most of all, it is about listening early, before difficulties harden into harm and before young people drift into negative encounters with the police or the justice system.

To put this into practice, I have convened a series of 'breakfast conversations' across the county. Each one has gathered youth workers, teachers, councillors, police officers, employers and volunteers – people who know young people well and who have taken time to consult them in advance so their voices could be brought to the table even when they themselves were not present. The format has been deliberately light: no fixed agenda, just the rare chance for people who would not normally be in the same room to meet, to listen and to spot opportunities for working together. Breakfast seems to work well – a moment of community conversation before the ordinary challenges of the day really kick in.

The themes that have surfaced are strikingly consistent. In some places, young people spoke of feeling invisible in their own town centres or of the lack of vocational routes open to them. Elsewhere, we heard about the double-edged role of technology



One of the breakfast meetings in Blackbird Leys. All images: Mark Johnson

– phones as both comfort and cage. In other conversations, the focus fell on the impact of domestic abuse, the hidden burdens of young carers, the challenges of moving from primary to secondary school or the steady decline in work experience opportunities.

For many of you reading this, much of this may feel like blinding glimpses of the obvious. With long service in the judiciary and criminal justice system, you will have seen these patterns time and again. But for me, with only the slimmest prior experience of courts or policing, the learning has been intense – at times humbling and always impactful.

Again and again, I have been reminded of the importance of early intervention. Judges, police officers and youth workers alike have told me: if we want to prevent crime, we must act sooner. Too often, the first time a young person appears on the radar is when they are already in trouble. By then, opportunities may have been lost. Safe spaces, trusted adults, vocational

training and accessible support are not luxuries. They are crime prevention in its most effective form. Listening to the unheard is not only compassionate – it is also about public safety.

Much of this work is small, local, quiet even: a hardship fund for bus fares, a Saturday club, a peer mentoring scheme, or an intercultural arts project. But taken together, these are the threads that hold a community together – and that keep young people connected to it, rather than disconnected from it.

The Office of High Sheriff gives a rare vantage point. One morning I may sit with magistrates in Oxford, the next I hear from teachers, youth workers or police officers standing alongside young people every day. The lesson is clear: prevention depends on relationships and relationships depend on listening.

In March, I will reconvene everyone who has taken part to reflect on what has been achieved and what still needs attention. My hope is that the habit of convening

– bringing unlikely allies together, listening without a script and holding ourselves accountable – will outlast my shrieval year.

For me, Hearing the Young Unheard has become more than a theme. It is a reminder that early intervention is not only compassionate it is also the most effective form of justice. If we act early enough, we can change lives – and help ensure that fewer young people find themselves in collision with the law.



Exploring issues with young people at the organisation Didcot TRAIN Youth Project

Volunteering – a huge part of everyday life

Sally Roberts

High Sheriff of Powys 2025-26

Having started my year in office with a huge amount of trepidation – thinking that the role was completely daunting and beyond me – six months into it, I cannot believe how much I am enjoying it. Someone said it 'opens so many doors to you' and that is absolutely true. The places you get invited to and the people you meet are so inspirational and interesting that every event has been different but rewarding. I feel that each visit or occasion attended gives me so much more than I can ever give back – and am always surprised how grateful people seem to be when you go to their place of work or their organisation or their charity.

This year of course has been a lot about commemoration – with the 80th anniversary events of VE and VJ Days focussing thoughts on those who gave so much for all of our futures in this country. So many moving tributes were quite rightly paid to so many exceptional people. However, my very first event, the day after my Declaration, was a commemoration of a different kind – for a church built 125 years



ago for a community who were 'cleared out' of their homesteads in mid Wales to provide water for the folk of Birmingham. It was all the more poignant to me personally

as my husband's family had gone through exactly the same situation a little further north c.20 years before when Lake Vyrnwy was created, flooding their land to provide much needed clean water for the people of Liverpool.

Travelling round the roads of Powys, especially in the wonderful spring and summer weather we have had this year, has been superb, taking me on roads and byways that I have never travelled

Resilience, The Red Dress Embroidery Project exhibition in Brecon showing the strength of (mainly) women working together – an embroidered silk gown with contributions from c.400 people in 51 countries

A new church, the Nantgwyllt Chapel of Ease, was built to replace the original St Mark's Church at Nantgwyllt when the valley was flooded to create the Elan Valley reservoirs

Photo: Gareth Thomas

before. Talking with other High Sheriffs in Wales who are more 'city based' in Cardiff or Swansea, for example, has highlighted how different regions of the country influence the role of High Sheriff. While I have on average three or four events per week, they were saying that they may have three or four in a day! But when we then take into account the geography of the counties, although I have occasionally attended three events in one day, it wouldn't physically be possible across many days.

Just going to the headquarters of some of our emergency services – which I have found fascinating – took me more than six hours of driving to get there and back. (Powys occupies a quarter of the area of Wales but only has four per cent of the population – and the HQ is not even in our county!) I particularly enjoyed the visit to the fire and rescue service headquarters and learning about all the other activities that they do besides fighting fires which accounts for only c.11 per cent of their activity. They educate all of us – if we want to be educated – on how to manage or (better still) avoid fires; check our



houses for risky situations and conditions (all free of charge); attend local shows entertaining adults but especially kids with their 'gizmos'; run their Phoenix Project to engage disenchanted individuals... and so much more. All of this and I was amazed to learn that there are no full-time firefighters anywhere in our county – instead, it is all done by volunteers! We do have full-time police in Powys – but they are very much supported by the volunteer 'Specials' or Special Constabulary. Likewise, the ambulance service is supported in Powys not only by their volunteer 'first responders' and the St John Ambulance volunteers, but again by the volunteer fire and rescue service in Powys, who now are all trained in CPR.

Volunteering is a huge part of everyday life in Powys with around one in two adults taking part – what a great county to be living in with all these magnanimous folk. I have only got to meet a fraction of these organisations as yet – but let's hope many, many more can be visited in the next six months. Maybe that will be another 6,000 miles on the car!



Left and above: Before... and after a fundraising bog snorkel in Llanwrtyd Wells

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Multum in parvo

Colonel Richard Chesterfield

High Sheriff of Rutland 2025-26

My preparation for the role of High Sheriff was broad. It introduced me to a wide network of engaging individuals and especially my wonderful fellow High Sheriffs in the East Midlands. In addition, my predecessor gave his time generously, providing advice and guidance. This was both welcome and valuable, and I am most grateful to him. In particular, it became clear that the role has great freedoms which I could use to be a force for good in the county. Hopefully, the conditions for success have been set.

Rutland is the smallest county and its motto, *Multum in parvo*, provided me with the kernel of an idea. That was to engage in the small things that improve people's lives, those which bind communities together and which make this county such a wonderful place to be.

Both my Under Sheriff and Chaplain have been a great help making suggestions, testing ideas and opening doors. They truly are an integral part of the team and role of High Sheriff. Similarly, having a close working relationship with the Lord-Lieutenant has ensured effective cooperation and prevented duplication.

Almost all my engagements have been joyous; some have been serious and all have been life-affirming. I have met amazing people working quietly in plain sight hidden by the noise of everyday life. My first engagement was with Root and Branch Out, a small community interest company, nurturing community through nature. I had several cheerful afternoons



Rutland Sailability facilitates safe sailing for people with disabilities

at their allotment chattering away with participants who enjoy the benefit of a gentler environment.

In today's society, resilience is of increasing importance and it has been a privilege to visit drop-in centres – like Peppers – which provide a calm welcoming environment to help combat loneliness and improve wellbeing. Similarly, the Rutland Man's Club provides a safe space to speak of life's challenges and to support one another in times of need. In addition, the Armed Forces Breakfast Clubs in both Oakham and HMP Stocken – as well as other clubs – serve to increase social capital in our society.

The range of charitable work in the county came as a great surprise to me. Based on Rutland Water, Rutland Sailability

facilitates safe sailing for people with disabilities across a wide range – from beginners to elite competition. It was privileged to attend the UK Challenger Championship and present prizes. It was truly uplifting as participants young and old revelled in the joy of competition, striving to overcome adversity and be the best.

As a motorcyclist I naturally took a special interest in the Longest Day Challenge which has, over the last 13 years, raised significant funds for Cancer Research UK and Leicestershire and Rutland Blood Bikers. This latter vibrant charity distributes blood products and medical supplies to the NHS and air ambulance all year round. I've also walked with a group of ladies hiking the Rutland Round to raise monies for Breast Cancer UK. So many people are doing extraordinary things for their communities.

I have also had the opportunity to visit Leicester Crown Court, the Magistrates' Court and Leicestershire Police all of which serve Rutland. The visits to the courts were eye-opening. The professionalism, dedication and diligence were of the highest order. That this was tempered with compassion and an understanding of the human condition was confidence-inspiring. Similarly, our police make a terrific contribution in protecting our communities in often difficult and challenging circumstances; I thank them for their outstanding service.

In sum, I am humbled by the number of people who serve our community and county in a myriad of ways. I wish there was more opportunity to thank them and publicise their generosity and humanity.



With the Blood Bikers who serve the Air Ambulance within the East Midlands



With Dr Sarah Furness (Lord-Lieutenant), Police Cadet Martha Barrett and my chaplain, the Venerable John Ellis CB (RAF Retd) and others for Armed Forces Week

Reflections and inspiration



So proud to attend the Somerset Police Cadets Awards for the Weston-super-Mare team which was held at police HQ in Avonmouth



Wearing my ceremonial coat Photo: Mark Pickthall

Janet Montgomery

High Sheriff of Somerset 2025-26

Reaching the halfway point of my year as High Sheriff, I've been reflecting on what this unique role really offers. It is, of course, rooted in history and tradition, but it is also forward-looking, providing a bridge between our past and the communities we serve today.

When I first put on my ceremonial coat, with its silk lining I had specially designed with a vintage map of Somerset, I knew I wanted to set a clear focus for my year: to champion children and young people with opportunities that build their self-confidence and enable them to develop the personal skills that allow them to reach their best potential. That lining reminds me each time I wear it of the breadth of our county and of the next generation who will inherit it.

Over these six months, I've seen how creativity, opportunity and care can transform young lives – whether through

inclusive sport, outdoor learning or resilience-building programmes in schools, I've been struck by the commitment of those who believe in giving every child the chance to thrive. Many of these organisations share the same principle: children flourish when they are included, supported and given space to discover their own strengths.

A particular highlight has been time spent with the police cadets in Weston-super-Mare. Their enthusiasm, discipline and willingness to serve are inspiring. The cadet leaders, many of whom have given many years of voluntary service, embody the best of community spirit, guiding young people with patience and commitment. Watching the cadets grow in confidence and responsibility has reinforced for me the importance of encouraging young people into positive pathways where they can feel proud of their contribution.

Another strong thread of the year has been recognising bravery and service. From presenting Crown Court Awards to members of the public who intervened heroically to save a life, to acknowledging the tireless work of volunteers, the theme is the same: ordinary people can do extraordinary things. These ceremonies show the depth of courage and compassion alive in our communities.

Alongside recognition, the role also offers opportunities to provide practical support. Through High Sheriff's Awards, I've been able to offer meaningful grants to charities and community groups. From inclusive circus projects to children's creative workshops, these awards highlight not only the remarkable individuals leading such initiatives, but also the value of a little funding combined with public recognition.

The role has also provided a privileged window into the work of our emergency services. Visiting control centres, fire stations and ambulance hubs has shown me the professionalism, skill and courage of those who keep us safe and, just as importantly, the volunteers who stand shoulder-to-shoulder with them. It's easy for the public to see the uniform but not the human being behind it; this role gives you the chance to meet those people, hear their stories and carry their voices back out into the county.

It has also become clear to me that the year is most rewarding when approached with openness and curiosity. The diary quickly fills with ceremonies, services and official duties, but the real richness lies in the smaller moments: conversations over coffee, the laughter at a village fete or the unexpected humour of a busker in Glastonbury striking up 'I Shot the Sheriff' as I walked past in full court dress. These encounters remind me that the High Sheriff is not a distant figure but a part of the community.

Above all, setting a clear focus has been invaluable. For me, children and young people are at the heart of everything, and by holding that as my compass, I've been able to see connections across organisations, amplify their work and celebrate their achievements more fully. It has given shape to the year and, I hope, will leave something lasting beyond it.

The role of High Sheriff is not just ceremonial. It is relational. It is about standing alongside those who serve, those who volunteer and those who strive to make our county a better place. After six months, I feel both humbled and energised, and I look forward to the next six with gratitude, curiosity and a sense of possibility.



It was an enormous pleasure to recognise Devito's Circus and Children's World with High Sheriff's Awards for the remarkable difference they continue to make to children and young people across Somerset photo: Mark Pickthall

A 'NEET' experience so far

Peter Cluff

High Sheriff of Surrey 2025-26

As other High Sheriffs will acknowledge, there is a long lead-in period to taking office which provides time to prepare, to clear the decks of other responsibilities and to settle on a shrieval theme. In my case, I had an extra year as the High Sheriff of Surrey during COVID year, Shahid Azeem, returned ahead of me to fulfil his engagements. There was, therefore, no excuse for not being primed and ready to go; and yet, being High Sheriff has to date been an absorbing voyage of surprise, humbling experience, gratitude and enlightenment far beyond any preconceptions.

In my first six months I have undertaken – in most cases with my wife Suzanne – over 160 engagements balancing the objective of upholding and lending support to the principal organs of the constitution with thanking those working in the charitable and voluntary sector for their individual and collective contributions to our community.

My shrieval theme has been to shine a light on those young people at risk of becoming 'NEET' (not in education, employment or training) encouraging earlier interventions and highlighting alternative career paths to ensure that the hearts and minds of these people are not lost with all the social and economic consequences that entails.

Prior to my Declaration, I commissioned some research from the Centre for Britain and Europe at the University of Surrey to analyse the different cohorts that make up the NEET population in Surrey, recognising that these could be very different to those found in other parts of the country. This discovery work produced insights which, following a series of conferences attended



In front of the iconic Concorde with wife Suzanne and volunteer Surrey Cadets after my summer celebration, held at Brooklands Museum in Weybridge All photos Andy Newbold

by Surrey County Council and other stakeholders in the NEET space, have led to a number of proposed actions aimed at prevention rather than cure and hopefully better opportunities for a number of young people previously at risk of becoming NEET.

The power of a High Sheriff to convene and connect should not be underestimated and the opportunity to affect change should be embraced by all High Sheriffs in nomination ahead of their year in office when considering what cause they may wish to adopt as their shrieval theme.

Highlights of my year to date have been many and varied: from the commemoration of both VE and VJ days, to visiting the largest women's prison in Western Europe, to undertaking a 22-mile walk through the Surrey hills linking five vineyards to celebrate the start of English wine week and raise money for local charities.

Holding my summer celebration at Brooklands Museum with over 250 guests

to focus on my NEET initiative was very special as a number of youth charities and vocational trainers were there to demonstrate how they help young people find alternative pathways. Another memorable event was when Suzanne and I entertained a number of our local judiciary for supper at our house, which until 1852 was Guildford's Third House of Correction, when the town still had a prison. We had reconstructed what the prison looked like on a computer model from old architectural drawings complete with treadmills, parade grounds and infirmary; and we then asked the prison rehabilitation charity, the Clink, to provide the catering.

Despite the number of engagements, time is passing very quickly and there are still so many people and organisations I am looking forward to thanking for their service to the county. I think I have another very busy, but undoubtedly memorable, humbling and rewarding six months ahead.



The High Sheriff and Friends Wine Walk 2025 – a 22-mile walk which raised just over £14,000 for two great charities (High Sheriff's Youth Awards and Guildford Philanthropy)

Left: Next Steps for Neets' conference held at the University of Surrey

Reflections at the halfway mark

Jo Curry MBE DL

High Sheriff of Tyne and Wear 2025-26

We are fed a relentless stream of news telling us how broken Britain is – headlines focussed on division, decline and despair. But so far, as High Sheriff of Tyne and Wear, what I've experienced are glimmers of hope, deep wells of kindness and an enduring spirit of community.

I was deeply honoured to be asked to take up the role but, I'll admit, I was unsure of the relevance in 2025. The answer came quickly and powerfully during a swearing-in ceremony for new magistrates. Speaking with each of them afterwards, thanking them for their commitment, I began to understand just how meaningful this role can be. There is still a need for someone to stand on behalf of the state and community and say, sincerely: thank you.

That need has echoed throughout my engagements whether at long-service awards for firefighters, at citizenship ceremonies and countless other moments where people give of themselves for the good of others. When High Sheriffs carry out these duties with integrity and authenticity, it can make a real and lasting difference.

One of the more sobering parts of my year came during a day spent in the criminal courts, where I sat through three harrowing sexual assault trials. It coincided with the release of the Leveson Review into the criminal courts. Judges were candid about the need for reform as court backlogs continue to grow, delaying justice for victims and defendants alike. I left with an even greater admiration for the judiciary, legal teams and court staff – their intellect, resilience and dedication to upholding justice deserves our deepest respect.



At my Declaration which was overseen by His Honour Judge Sloan KC (Honorary Recorder of Newcastle)



With Ray Spencer (former CEO of the Customs House theatre) at South Shields Carnival

In Tyne and Wear we have a well-established High Sheriff's Award Scheme, supported by a generous endowment with the Community Foundation. Thanks to the support of local philanthropists, we're able to make around 50 awards of £1,000 each to organisations which support young people. These projects help young people grow in confidence and purpose, learn new skills, develop friendships and feel a sense of belonging in their communities. The year ends with a joyful celebration, where we honour the volunteers who show up week in and week out.

On a personal note, I've been reflecting on the turning points in my own life. One of

those moments came when I was awarded the Bromley Scholarship during my first year studying Law at the University of Liverpool. As the first in my family to attend university and coming from a working-class background, I arrived feeling out of my depth. That award changed things. It gave me confidence, opened doors to law school and helped me secure a training contract. It shifted my aspirations and gave me the belief I could reach them. Now, as High Sheriff, I have the chance to pay that gift forward. I'm delighted to announce the creation of the High Sheriff's Award for Law – a new annual scholarship for a promising Law student from a widening participation background at Northumbria University. My hope is that it gives someone else the boost that meant so much to me.

And finally, no year in office is without its surprises. Mine came at a local mayoral installation (I'll spare the blushes by not naming the council). During a particularly animated speech from the opposition leader, in a flurry of objections and list of things that must be abolished, he inserted the High Sheriff's hat! I must confess I'm rather fond of mine. I found it in a local charity shop and glued on the ostrich feather myself. It will remain firmly on my head until the very last day of my shrieval year!



In the background are the North Sea and the lighthouses of North and South Shields



With Terry McDermott, Chair of North Shields Fishermen's Heritage Project, celebrating the 800th Anniversary of North Shields

Collaboration for positive impact

Karen Lynch MBE

High Sheriff of Warwickshire 2025-26

When I began my year as High Sheriff of Warwickshire, I knew I would have to deliver the role on limited resources and with a very focussed approach. I still needed to work part-time; I would need to do my own admin; and I was determined to show that this historic role can be modern, relevant and impactful, even with my very tight budget. I was conscious that I didn't want this year to be dominated by what I had learnt, but by what could be delivered under my theme of collaboration for positive impact.

That collaboration has taken many forms, not least the early building of my WhatsApp-enabled group, my 'offering of consorts' – friends and supporters on hand to share the driving, the catering and the ushering. Six months in, I feel both exhausted and exhilarated... and proud of what we have managed to achieve together.

Collaboration is something I believe we can all apply in different ways even if it is just a touch of mischief. One of my favourite lighter moments was joining my fellow yellow-clad supporters of the air ambulance service as we celebrated and raised awareness of Air Ambulance Week. That, too, was collaboration – people coming together for a cause that saves lives every day.

My most ambitious project so far – and the one I will never forget – has been the introduction of Warwickshire ChangeMakers, designed to build on the tradition of the High Sheriff's Award. The Warwickshire roll of honour was built collaboratively and included the exemplary individuals from all areas of the High Sheriff's remit: our professionals and also our often unsung heroes of the county,



Award recipient Ian Malins, Chair from Warwickshire Search and Rescue

whether volunteers, community leaders, business innovators or young people, who quietly change lives every day through their actions. I wanted them to all be seen and celebrated in front of their families in a way that would give their work the dignity and recognition it deserves.

From the first pitch to Warwick Castle through to the event itself took just 14 weeks. On 5 August, 500 people gathered. In an investiture-style ceremony at St Mary's, 100 ChangeMakers and their families processed through Warwick town centre in a road closure worthy of a royal occasion, before joining an early evening garden party at Warwick Castle. All 14 of our mayors were represented. It was an extraordinary display of support and collaboration. The cost to me personally? Less than £100 thanks to the combined goodwill and resources of Warwick town. The cost in time? Immense. But the return in connection and impact has been extraordinary. Feedback since has been deeply moving. For many of those recognised, it was the most special day of their lives.

My other great highlight so far has been

the expansion of the Young High Sheriff programme, now operating in each of our three regions simultaneously. This has involved local cadet and police youth teams, schools, councils and the Police and Crime Commissioner, bringing together young people across the county to design and deliver their own crime prevention projects.

One notable outcome has been the development of Project Prevent, created by students in the north of the county to tackle harassment, grooming and assault. They organised school assemblies, produced a website, distributed personal alarms and even ran self-defence training. They weren't just participants, they were leaders. Project Prevent is now being rolled out across Rugby, supported by council funding.

This is exactly what I hoped for: showing that young people are not only the leaders of tomorrow, they are leaders now and we have been able to amplify their voices and help them keep their communities safe.

So my first six months have been defined by collaboration, creativity and connection. I have not approached this role with grandeur or ceremony, but as a normal person trying to make the most of a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. My hope is that future High Sheriffs will feel encouraged to do the same: to bring people together, to champion young voices and to leave the county stronger than they found it.



The early evening garden party for ChangeMakers held at Warwick Castle



Left: With 100 Warwickshire ChangeMakers on the steps of Warwick Shire Hall before processing to Warwick Castle

From Galati to West Glamorgan: a journey of service



At Swansea mosque with Cllr Cheryl Philpott (Lord Mayor) and Shaz Abedean DL



With Shaz Abedean DL and Cllr Cheryl Philpott (Lord Mayor) at a citizenship ceremony in Swansea registry office

Diana Stroia

High Sheriff of West Glamorgan 2025-26

On the morning of my declaration at Margam Abbey, I walked up the ancient path with a crescendo of emotions: nervousness, humility, pride and a profound sense of responsibility. The abbey, with its centuries of history, seemed to hold every footprint in quiet reverence. Inside, the atmosphere was electric yet dignified. The pews were filled with distinguished guests, from Her Excellency the Ambassador of Romania to the Court of St James's, to leaders from South Wales Police, the judiciary and local councils, alongside friends and family who had travelled from across the UK, Romania and beyond.

A deeply moving moment came when a Welsh choral group, alongside the Romanians in attendance, performed the Romanian national anthem, learnt especially for this occasion. Hearing my country's anthem carried by Welsh voices was a moment that bridged histories, languages and lives – a reminder that belonging can be created across borders.

After the formalities, the sound of the pipes filled the abbey as I was led out by the renowned piper Robert Grey. The South Wales Police Halberdiers stood guard with ceremonial precision and the choir's voices soared. This was not just the close of a ceremony but the beginning of a year of service – one that will see the same choir travel to Romania this summer for two charitable concerts I have organised.

My journey began far from here in Galati, Romania, under the shadow of the communist regime. Life was defined by scarcity, but I was blessed with parents,

Brindusa and Mihai, who believed service to others was not optional but natural. Even with little, they found ways to help a neighbour or stranger in need.

My first connection with Wales came through kindness. After the fall of Communism, Welsh church volunteers travelled over 1,250 miles to bring aid to Romania. As a 12-year-old, receiving warm boots or a colourful dress from strangers felt like a gift from heaven.

In 2003, I made West Glamorgan my home. My early years were a mix of building a new life and helping other Romanians find their footing – translating, navigating forms or simply listening. Integration, I learnt, is not just about paperwork; it is about belonging.

From 2017, I served six years as Honorary Consul of Romania for Wales. In that role, I coordinated elections, mobilised humanitarian campaigns – including sending hospital beds from the Nightingale hospitals to Odessa – and worked to promote integration and representation.

Another milestone was establishing the first Romanian Orthodox Church in West Glamorgan, persuading a lay priest to move to Swansea, where he was ordained. For many, it became both a spiritual and cultural home.

I also worked with the anti-trafficking charity A21 to raise awareness of exploitation and supported efforts to tackle domestic violence. These were sobering challenges, but they proved what collaboration can achieve.

When I was asked in 2023 to consider serving as High Sheriff for 2025-26, I was astonished. I had never imagined that someone like me – a Romanian-born

woman – would hold such an ancient and prestigious role. I accepted with humility and stepped down as Honorary Consul to give it my full attention.

My theme for the year is The Future Starts with Kindness. Kindness costs nothing, yet it transforms everything. Already, I have seen how small acts of cooperation ripple out to change lives.

From the Danube walks of Galati to the green hills of West Glamorgan, my life has been shaped by the belief that service is both a duty and a privilege. I am often the last to leave a citizenship ceremony, not because of formality, but because I know my presence can send a clear message: this country welcomes you – not just in words, but in action.

We are stronger together and the future truly does start with kindness.



At my Declaration ceremony with Louise Fleet JP (Lord-Lieutenant) and Her Excellency Dr Laura Popescu, Ambassador of Romania to the Court of St James's

Engagement with the justice system

Mark Smith

High Sheriff of the West Midlands 2025-26

While the West Midlands is one of the newest counties in England and Wales, having only been formed in 1974, it is the second most populous with approximately 3.1 million residents. It is subdivided into the seven historical boroughs of Birmingham, Coventry and Solihull, together with the four boroughs that form the 'Black Country': Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton.

Given the size of the population, the county is served by the second largest police force and fire service in the UK, as well as a sizeable ambulance service which operates on a regional basis. Furthermore, there are 10 principal court buildings and a significant number of ancillary courts, with over 900 judges on the Midlands Circuit and 850 magistrates across three Benches who can sit in these courts. The probation service also has a sizeable presence across the region with nearly 2,000 members of staff.

Given the size of each of these areas of the justice system in the county of West Midlands, I have invested a significant amount of time in supporting these bodies.

Emergency Services:

My engagement with West Midlands Police has included visiting a number of the specialist units that operate in the county including Armed Response, Drones, Road Traffic, County Lines and Economic Crime. I have also supported the Chief Constable with passing out parades for new recruits and Community Engagement Awards, and



Receiving award on behalf of High Sheriffs from Professor Anthony Marsh, Chief Executive of the West Midlands Ambulance Service University NHS Foundation Trust Photo: WM Ambulance Service



With winners of Young Person of Outstanding Bravery Awards Photo: WM Ambulance Service

I and my cadets recently helped assemble Ten Second Triage Kits to be carried in every police vehicle for use at major incidents.

Similarly, I have met with the Chief Fire Officer to discuss work in relation to prevention, protection and response, and attended one of the sessions at the Safeside facility which are run for schoolchildren – teaching them how to reduce risk of accidents both inside and outside the home.

With regard to the ambulance services, I was delighted to join the chief executive to present awards to young children who have shown outstanding bravery in working with the ambulance service to save lives. I was also very pleased to accept an award from the chief executive for work done by High Sheriffs for Caring in the Community. In addition, I spent a Saturday night in Birmingham city centre with a Night-Time Economy service run by St John Ambulance to help people who fall ill or get injured.

In my role as High Sheriff, I am delighted to be supported by cadets from the police, fire service and St John Ambulance. It has been a real pleasure to involve my cadets with a number of the major civic events that have taken place in the county.

Judiciary and Probation Services:

I have very much enjoyed engaging with a variety of the courts that are located across the West Midlands including having an opportunity to sit in with the judges in three of the Crown Courts, as well as



With Simon Tuhill, Chief Fire Officer for the West Midlands Fire Service

observing proceedings in a number of the Magistrates' Courts. It has been a real pleasure to attend swearing-in ceremonies for new magistrates in both Birmingham and the Black Country and to present High Sheriff's Awards to two long-serving magistrates who have each served for well over 30 years.

It has also been very informative to engage with leaders of the probation service to better understand how they work with the police, judiciary, local authorities and other third sector bodies to help ex-offenders get their lives back on track and reduce the risk of reoffending.

The power of community: protect, care, serve



With Cllr Cathy Glynn-Davies (Mayor of Worthing) and members of the Bangladeshi community celebrating Pohela Boishakh

Dr Timothy Fooks

High Sheriff of West Sussex 2025-26

As the first medical High Sheriff of West Sussex, it is perhaps not surprising that a focus for my year has been mental health. Meeting the ever-changing and increasing mental health needs of our population presents a series of challenges which the role of High Sheriff is not designed to resolve; but what it can do is build on those elements of our society which are proven to maintain, protect and strengthen our collective and individual wellbeing. This is the power of community.

Societal and psychological studies show that strong and long-lasting communities improve health, reduce loneliness and vulnerability, and build resilience in adversity. Belonging – whether through family, faith, neighbourhood or shared purpose – is one of the most powerful determinants of wellbeing and safety.

Five years ago, my first year as High Sheriff was bedevilled by the demands of – and the barriers created by – the pandemic. Now, in very different circumstances, I have been able to be among the crowds at the 80th VE Day anniversary celebrations in Lancing or among the Pohela Boishakh celebrations in the spring.

I have visited communities based around specific needs or within our hamlets, villages and towns. There have been invitations to remarkable multi-cultural and multi-faith communities with their warmth, richness and vibrancy. Along our 90 miles of coastline, each of the three RNLI station forms its own community hub and, within the military community

of the 7th Air Defence Group on Thorney Island, there is a sense of service which exemplifies the best of community spirit.

And while each of these communities is clearly bonded together by compassion, shared interests and belonging, it is equally true that each depends on the foundational principles of justice and mercy that underpin them.

It is absolutely appropriate, therefore, that a key element of the High Sheriff's role is to support the judiciary and all who uphold the rule of law and preserve the freedoms we so easily take for granted in our society. As such, I have attended criminal, family, tribunal and coroner courts and have been deeply impressed by the dedication and humanity of judges, magistrates and court staff.

I have also spent time with police and other emergency services, attending award ceremonies, joining officers on duty and observing training. Their professionalism and compassion are deeply inspirational and impressive.



With members of the Chagosian Crawley community celebrating their history and culture through storytelling, dance and music



Standing alongside Simon Williams, Coxswain of Shoreham Harbour RNLI Lifeboat

However, I was unprepared for the extent of the mental-health burden now being carried by the blue light and RNLI services. At a recent police ceremony, 70 per cent of the awards recognised officers who had attended individuals suffering from a mental health crisis. Through their courage and skill, the police and others have saved many lives, but such interventions inevitably divert them from other duties.

In response to this mental health crisis, in my capacity as High Sheriff, I have initiated community conferences to be run in each of the seven neighbourhood areas of the county at which the elements of mental health – stigma, access and men's mental health – will be discussed along with those matters which are important to each locality. The conferences will bring together every agency involved in the provision of mental health care and support; lived experience will be heard, networks strengthened and practical solutions identified or grown.

In a neat but unintentional, alignment of dates my Judges' Service coincided with World Mental Health Day and I used the opportunity to connect the themes of justice, mercy, community and wellbeing. In a sense, these four words capture the essence of the work of a High Sheriff.

Food for thought

Martin Nye

High Sheriff of Wiltshire 2025-26

In addition to law and order, I chose food – from ‘farm to fork’ – as a focus for my shrieval year. It has turned out to be a powerful way to engage with the county, providing additional perspectives on many visits. It also meant that the food at the events I organised had to be local, seasonal and interesting. For my Declaration and garden parties, I found producers from across Wiltshire whose excellent food and drink we could showcase – including smoked trout, sausages, chutneys, ice cream, gins, wines and whisky infused with local honey.

A tradition has developed here of the High Sheriff taking a picnic lunch to share with the judges and magistrates on court visits. Although such an offering can in no way assuage the alarming levels of pressure in the justice system, providing a good spread is a tangible way to show appreciation. I have, however, learnt that my favourite folding bread knife is not a suitable object to take into a court building...

Elsewhere in the criminal justice system, I have been impressed by Swindon’s food programme, Solid Ground, which supports young people who have been affected by serious violence. It builds their confidence, develops their employability skills and helps them integrate into the community. I was also interested to see how food is a central aspect of the work-based learning provided by Fairfield, a specialist college in Westbury for young people aged 16-25 with additional needs, who are taught growing, cooking and hospitality skills in their own market garden, bakery, farm shop, café and pub. And I have seen some great examples of healthy food being served to children, inspired by the Food for Life programme run by the Soil Association (where I am a trustee).



The Big Breakfast Plus in Swindon; the charity provides a free cooked breakfast and support services



Impressive potato crop from the team at the Doorway allotment in Chippenham (Doorway is a charity drop-in centre for adults who are homeless or have complex issues which are likely to affect their tenancy)

I have taken a particular interest in food poverty and have visited a range of impressive organisations across Wiltshire providing support to the homeless and vulnerable. Being able to have a shower, use laundry facilities and enjoy a hot breakfast does not solve the underlying problems, but there is no doubt such services are greatly appreciated and help maintain personal dignity. Similarly, I have had the privilege of seeing volunteers cook and serve hot and nutritious lunches and evening meals, dispensed with real kindness, humanity and humour.

Across the county there are many community fridges and food banks to help prevent food waste and support people with short-term emergency food needs. While providing vital support, food banks do not provide a long-term solution to food poverty. A more sustainable proposition has developed in Salisbury, where organic fruit and vegetables are grown by the volunteers of the F3 Project and donated to the Salisbury Food Pantry, which

provides high-quality food at greatly reduced prices to people who are struggling to put food on the table.

‘Bags of Taste’ is a mentored home-cooking programme that helps the most vulnerable people to improve their diets for the long term. Participants are shown how to plan, buy and cook low-cost ingredients to create healthy and delicious



Mrs Peapell (head teacher) and cooks in the kitchen at Haydonleigh Primary School in Swindon



At Gablecross with the Wiltshire Police and Society Without Abuse teams who deliver the Open2Change programme

meals. It has been very successful elsewhere in the UK and I have helped introduce it into Wiltshire. The programme is on track to support 300 people this year and to continue going forward.

Food has often provided an easy conversation starter in a wide range of settings as something everyone can relate to. Recently I have had inspiring discussions with foster carers about the challenges of getting children to make healthy food choices; with a charity supporting homeless and marginalised people about the remarkable health and wellbeing benefits of growing food on their allotment; and with the chefs at one of Wiltshire’s marvellous hospices about what patients request in their final days – cottage pie is apparently very popular.

Naturally, not every meeting has been about food. One of the most impactful for me was a recent visit to the Gablecross Police Station to learn more about the innovative work being done in Swindon to break the cycle of domestic abuse offending. Since January, behaviour change workers from Society Without Abuse’s Open2Change programme have been offering individuals in custody a route to change their behaviour. The initial results are encouraging with independent assessment concluding that the interventions offer something very positive, with the potential to be developed further on a national scale. One to watch...



With some of the King's School Worcester Getting Court students



On the steps of Worcester Crown Court – the Getting Court Teachers' Day

Introducing 'Getting Court' to Worcestershire

Ian Smith

High Sheriff of Worcestershire 2025-26

I was unclear what I wanted to make the focus of my year but at the Burghley House seminars I heard about the 'Getting Court' programme and immediately thought that was what I wanted to make my 'flagship' project.

Before doing too much homework, in the year prior to my Declaration, and with the then High Sheriff's blessing, I arranged to meet with the Honorary Recorder of Worcester Crown Court and then the Police and Crime Commissioner for West Mercia. Given the strain on the court system, I was concerned to ensure the initiative would be welcomed by His Honour Judge Burbidge KC. He couldn't have been more encouraging and is now an integral part of the programme. I asked the PCC if he would support us financially if needed and again he was welcoming of the proposal.

Next, I spent some valuable time with

the people who run the very successful Gloucestershire scheme; they were incredibly helpful and invited me to one of their 'teacher days' in Gloucester Crown Court.

The Gloucestershire programme is run by ex-teachers and I realised that getting busy schools to sign up for the programme might be difficult. There would also be an amount of administration which I wouldn't be able to deal with alone. Thankfully, an old friend of mine is a retired teacher and a chat over a pub lunch whetted his appetite. When he messaged me the next day to say he'd been in touch with his old school, I knew I'd found my administrator. He said he would give the programme two years of his time and would not charge anything for doing so.

Getting Court involves taking groups of school students (14- to 18-year-olds) once a month to a live Crown Court session. We target about 12/13 students from two schools each session. This means they can travel in a minibus and avoid the expense of a coach. It is also the maximum number the court can accommodate as they sit in the body of the court not the public gallery. They receive introductions from me and the judge and then watch a morning's sentencing. In between cases, the judge chats to the students about the outcome and asks for questions.

The morning's session is rounded off by an ex-offender addressing the students. He was recommended to me by the probation team and is working for a local charity. He is very articulate and his story incredibly powerful.

Early on we ran a session for teachers from schools which hadn't yet engaged with us and received wonderful feedback.



With members of West Mercia Police's County Lines team at West Mercia Police HQ at Hindlip Hall

We now have court dates planned through to March 2026 and they are all booked out with a waiting list of schools wanting to come when new dates are released.

The programme adds real-life examples to the students' experience of PSHE studies and shows them how one or two bad decisions can ruin lives. It also helps students with career choices, as they see a variety of roles from ushers and clerks to police and probation, to barristers and the judge. The University of Worcester has an award-winning law school and together we have created a pathway for students who express an interest in any of those careers.

The High Sheriffs in nomination following me all want to continue the programme. It is likely that there will be a need to pay for a future coordinator's time and it may incur other costs. I have secured a substantial sum from a local grant-making charity as an endowment for the High Sheriff's Fund to cover these costs for several years and, with the PCC's support as well, hopefully this will be a successful long-term project.



Celebrating 40 years of Redditch being twinned with Mtwara in Tanzania with some of the Tanzanian musicians and representatives of the Tanzanian High Commissioner

High Sheriffs of England and Wales for 2025–26

England

Bedfordshire	Camilla King
Berkshire	Sean Taylor DL
Buckinghamshire	Philippa Kirkbride
Cambridgeshire	The Hon Frances Stanley DL
Cheshire	Joëlle Warren MBE DL
City of Bristol	Kalpana Woolf
Cornwall	Geraint Richards OBE
Cumbria	Dr Geoffrey Jolliffe
Derbyshire	Sir Richard FitzHerbert Bt
Devon	Caroline Harlow
Dorset	Callum Bremner JP
Durham	Mike Poole JP DL
East Riding of Yorkshire	Mike Rice
East Sussex	Annie Brown
Essex	Julie Fosh Rogers DL
Gloucestershire	Julie Kent MBE
Greater London	John Garbutt JP
Greater Manchester	Martin Ainscough CBE DL
Hampshire	Susan Elton
Herefordshire	Helen Bowden
Hertfordshire	Nicholas Buxton
Isle of Wight	Jacqueline Gazzard
Kent	Jonathan Neame DL
Lancashire	James Carter DL
Leicestershire	Stephen Bryan JP
Lincolnshire	David Chambers DL
Merseyside	Billy Hui BEM DL
Norfolk	Patrick Lines
Northamptonshire	Jeremy Sharman
Northumberland	George Farr
North Yorkshire	Sir Andrew Lawson-Tancred Bt
Nottinghamshire	Edward Attenborough DL
Oxfordshire	John May CVO OBE DL
Rutland	Colonel Richard Chesterfield
Shropshire	Jane Trowbridge
Somerset	Janet Montgomery
South Yorkshire	Giuseppe Di'lasio
Staffordshire	Timothy Gillow
Suffolk	Gulshanbir Kayembe DL
Surrey	Peter Cluff
Tyne and Wear	Joanne Curry MBE DL
Warwickshire	Karen Lynch MBE
West Midlands	Mark Smith
West Sussex	Dr Timothy Fooks
West Yorkshire	Christopher Brown
Wiltshire	Martin Nye
Worcestershire	Ian Smith

Wales

Clwyd	Julie Gillbanks
Dyfed	Ann Jones DL
Gwent	Lt Colonel Ralph Griffin
Gwynedd	Rhys Davies
Mid Glamorgan	Sharon Dixon
Powys	Sally Roberts
South Glamorgan	Janet Davies
West Glamorgan	Diana Stroia

Only honours, awards and appointments emanating from the Crown and the office of DL have been included.

New Members

Name	County	Year of Office
Dr Arnab Basu MBE	Durham	2026
Colonel Jane Carey-Harris TD DL	Kent	2028
Andrea Challis DL	Lancashire	2027
Nina Coad	Somerset	2027
Shirley Fawcett	Cumbria	2026
Billy Hui BEM DL	Merseyside	2025
Stephanie Illsley	Hampshire	2027
Lars Lemonius	Kent	2027
Chris Parkhouse DL	Cambridgeshire	2028
Andrew Phillips	Dyfed	2026
Jayne Picouto JP DL	Dyfed	2027
Nicholas Powe DL	Devon	2028
Charles Renwick	Northumberland	2027
Professor Suzanna Rose JP DL	Berkshire	2013
Meenal Sachdev	Hertfordshire	2027
Richard Tilbrook CVO	Independent Council member	
Shereen Williams MBE DL	Gwent	2026

We are pleased to announce that all Under Sheriffs have taken up the offer of free membership of the Association in recognition of the work that they do for High Sheriffs in their counties.

Deaths

The Association has learnt with regret of the deaths of the following former High Sheriffs and members:

Name	Date of death	Age	County	Year of office
Dr Margaret Appleby	13-Sep-25	83	Tyne and Wear	2005
Richard Bamford DL	6-Jun-25	87	Cambridgeshire	1998
Michael Campbell MBE DL	23-Sep-25	82	Hampshire	2008
David Davies DL	2-Oct-25	87	West Glamorgan	2001
Frank Fenton	20-Mar-25	92	West Yorkshire	2000
Dr Christina Hill Williams DL	9-Apr-25	72	Berkshire	2009
The Hon John Jolliffe	4-Nov-25	91	Somerset	1993
David Mason	5-Mar-25	73	Oxfordshire	1994
William Morris	5-Feb-24	78	Cardiganshire Former Under Sheriff	
Ian Pilkington	21-Nov-24	86	Berkshire	1982
Nicholas Sealy OBE	8-Aug-25	87	Surrey	2007
Peter Speke JP DL	30-Oct-25	90	Somerset	1982
David Thomas CBE DL	8-Mar-25	87	Mid Glamorgan	1999
Gladwyn Turbutt DL	12-Sep-25	97	Derbyshire	1998
Sylvana Glazebrook Chandler	12-Sep-25	81	Somerset	2012
Richard Youngman	10-Jul-24	64	Devon	2022

Nomination of High Sheriffs of England

County	2026/2027	2027/2028	2028/2029
Bedfordshire	Ismail Anilmis DL	Lucinda Copeman	Catherine Sylvester-Kilroy
Berkshire	Renu Kapur MBE	Elizabeth Storey	Catherine Lovell
Buckinghamshire	Nicola Ross	Dr Julie Mills OBE	Ayser Al-Jawad
Cambridgeshire	Francis Burkitt DL	Dr Jaspal Singh DL	Chris Parkhouse DL
Cheshire	Lynn Pegler DL	His Honour Judge Everett	Alan Davies
City of Bristol	Anne Nisbet DL	Mohammed Elsharif	Andrew Street
Cumbria	Shirley Fawcett	Ian Brown DL	Gareth McKeever
Derbyshire	Dr Syed Iftikhar	Gillian Sewell	Andrew Allsop DL
Devon	Mark Ansell DL	Richard Stevens MBE	Nicholas Powe DL
Dorset	Dr Helena Conibear DL	Cleeves Palmer DL	Elizabeth Willingham
Durham	Dr Arnab Basu MBE	Andrew Hayday	David Osborne
East Riding of Yorkshire	Neil Sanderson	Patricia Dalby	Judith Heaton QPM
East Sussex	Michael Bedingfield DL	Dr David Walker	Sarah Hopwood
Essex	Susannah Dutton	Amrik Sandhu DL	David Guest
Gloucestershire	Dame Fiona Reynolds DBE	Rupert Walters	Peter Lachecki
Greater London	Dhruv Patel OBE	Alexia Fetherstonhaugh JP	Professor Martin Griffiths CBE
Hampshire	William Maltby	Stephanie Illsley	Lena Samuels
Herefordshire	Tamsin Clive DL	Peter Clay	Glenn Jones
Hertfordshire	Anna Rankin	Meenal Sachdev	James Steel
Isle of Wight	Nigel Hartley MBE	Katie Davies	Shirley Robertson OBE
Kent	Martin Lukehurst	Lars Lemonius	Colonel Jane Carey-Harris TD DL
Leicestershire	Meldin Thomas QPM	Sandra Barnett-Pollock OBE	Richard Cunningham
Lincolnshire	Sue Liburd MBE DL	Camilla Carlbom Flinn DL	James Albone
Norfolk	Jonathan Pearson	Claire Mackintosh MBE	Thomas Courtauld JP
Northamptonshire	Roger Butler	TBC	Duncan Farrington MBE
Northumberland	Dr Anna Charlton	Charles Renwick	Peter de Wesselow
North Yorkshire	Nigel Corner DL	James Grierson	Pamela Cullwick
Nottinghamshire	Honorary Alderwoman Merleta Bryan-Hilton	Craig Chettle MBE	Natalie Gasson-McKinley MBE
Oxfordshire	Jawaid Malik JP	Moira Darlington DL	Julia Colegrave
Rutland	Susannah Fish OBE QPM	Sue Ball	Dr Hilary Fox
Shropshire	Katherine Tanner DL	Hugh Strickland	Sally Themans
Somerset	Peter Dixon	Nina Coad	Martin Thatcher
South Yorkshire	Sughra Begum DL	Jane Marshall DL	Karen McKay
Staffordshire	Pritpal Nagi MBE DL	Sally Newstead	John Rogers
Suffolk	Oliver Paul DL	Susan Hughes DL	Alexander Scott-Barrett
Surrey	Neelam Dharni-Devesher DL	Johanna Hamilton DL	Giles Verity
Tyne and Wear	Ammar Mirza CBE	Jeffrey Brown	Adam Serfontein
Warwickshire	Susan Rasmussen	Cheryll Rawbone	Caroline Symonds
West Midlands	Carmen Watson	Dr Ahmed Awan MBE DL	Professor Martin Levermore MBE
West Sussex	Gary Shipton DL	Julia Aisbitt JP DL	Dr Caroline Greenhalgh
West Yorkshire	Dr Ruby Bhatti OBE DL	Nicola Chance-Thompson MBE DL	Carol Dewhurst OBE
Wiltshire	Dr Alex Goodwin	Lady Fuller	Shahina Johnson MBE
Worcestershire	Maynard Burton	Fiona Charny JP DL	Christopher Mitchell

Nomination of High Sheriffs of Wales

County	2026/2027	2027/2028	2028/2029
Clwyd	David Jones OBE DL	Ann Dickinson	Christopher Owens
Dyfed	Andrew Phillips	Jayne Picouto JP DL	James Raw-Rees
Gwent	Shereen Williams MBE DL	Mark Langshaw MBE	Geoffrey Hughes
Gwynedd	Llinoes Owen	Sean Taylor	Richard Price
Mid Glamorgan	John Charles TD DL	Dr Dale Cartwright	Rhian Mannings MBE
Powys	William Watkins	Ann Mathias	Christopher Lloyd
South Glamorgan	Jane John	Spiro Borg	James Thomas
West Glamorgan	Emrys Elias OBE	Lara Capel	Karen Andrew

*Note: Names for nominees in Cornwall, Greater Manchester, Lancashire and Merseyside are only published shortly before the nominated High Sheriff assumes Office.

Only honours, awards and appointments emanating from the Crown and the office of DL have been included.



The High Sheriff's Badge

Available in two designs:
Style 1 for wearing around
the neck **£185.00**
41mm x 74mm



Ladies' Pure Silk Scarf

Navy blue, 14oz dye
printed – pure silk twill
with multiple copies of
the Association's badge
overprinted in gold. Size
140cm x 30cm (56" x 113/4")
£35.00



Chaplain's or Cadet's Badge

Single **£27.00**,
2+ **£20.00** each
(2 for preaching scarf/tippet)



Miniature Badge for High Sheriff and Spouse

Gilt for serving and retired
High Sheriffs, silver for High
Sheriffs' spouses/escorts
£19.50 each 15mm x 25mm



The High Sheriff's Badge

Available in two designs:
Style 2 on bow to wear
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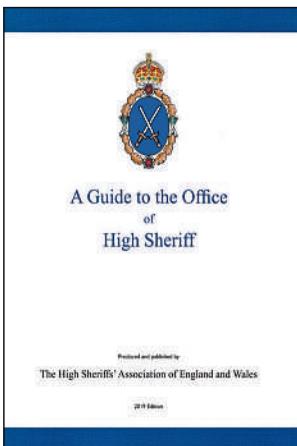
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High Sheriff's Award Certificate

As part of your Association's plans to improve support for High Sheriffs all current High Sheriffs will shortly be receiving blank certificates for their specific bailiwick. All you need to do is to type in the recipient organisation or individual; add the date; and then print off and sign. We recommend printing on a high-quality paper which can then be put in a simple frame before presentation.



Publications



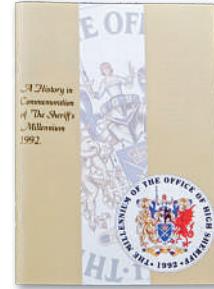
Guide to the Office of High Sheriff

This comprehensive and revised guide outlines the key elements of the role of High Sheriff in the 21st century and gives practical advice to those preparing to take Office

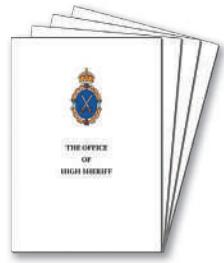
£2.80



Back issues of the Association magazine *The High Sheriff*
£2.00



A History in Commemoration of The Sheriff's Millennium (1992)
£1.00



Notes on the Office of High Sheriff
(per pack of 50 folded cards)*
£10.00

The Association reserves the right to vary prices at any time. *Available in Welsh



CONSORTS' CORNER

JANET'S SONG

My sister Janet Montgomery, High Sheriff of Somerset, has taken quite a broad view of the word 'consort'. As she lost her husband a few years ago, she invited family and friends to step into the role (as well as that of chauffeur, confidant and even lady-in-waiting!). I have been lucky enough to join her for a number of events and it's been both an honour and enormous fun.

One highlight has to be at the Mayor's Day in Glastonbury. As the official procession was making its way down the high street, a musician setting up to busk struck up with none other than 'I shot the Sheriff...' just as Janet walked past. The timing was impeccable and the look on everyone's face was priceless! Janet went over to introduce herself and after much laughter he kindly switched to another (equally brilliant) tune. Not every High Sheriff gets their own theme song, even if unintentionally!

It was a light-hearted moment and one we'll never forget. And for me it sums up what it's like to be her consort – an incredible privilege with a good dose of humour along the way.

Jill Northover, Somerset

In the news

Congratulations to Geraint Richards who was awarded an OBE for services to the forestry sector in the King's Birthday Honours. Geraint said, 'It was the most wonderful surprise and, of course, a great honour to learn that I would be receiving an OBE in The King's Birthday Honours List. Ever since I was a teenager, I wanted to be a forester and throughout my career I have endeavoured to serve the wider sector. I must acknowledge with gratitude the encouragement that both His Majesty The King and His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales have given me to do this [as Head Forester to the Duchy of Cornwall and Duchy of Lancaster].'

'Amidst all my activities, it was a particular privilege to serve, until very recently, as President of the Institute of Chartered Foresters. Our trees, woodlands and foresters deserve professional care, and I am so proud of our Institute that represents the arboriculturists and foresters who devote their careers to this.'



Dan Mason (front left, member of public who posed the simple but powerful question 'Why doesn't Cumbria have a flag?') and (front right) winning designer Ben Walker together with, among others, Phillip Tibbets (vexillologist, the Flag Institute), Chris Holmes, Alex Scott (LL), the Venerable Dean Michael Everitt (Interim Dean at Carlisle Cathedral) and Dr Geoff Jolliffe (Cumbria 2025) Photo: Stuart Walker Photography

Flying the flag... for Cumbria

In the summer edition of The High Sheriff [page 17], Chris Holmes DL (2024) wrote about a competition to create Cumbria's first community flag. At a special service at Carlisle Cathedral in September members of the 1st Wetheral Brownies presented Alex Scott, HM Lord-Lieutenant of Cumbria, with the winning design.



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Next issue

The Editor welcomes articles and news stories from High Sheriffs concerning their year in office. The next edition of *The High Sheriff* will be published in June 2026. Closing date for receipt of editorial items will be Friday 3 April 2026. Items for inclusion should be sent to: The Editor, *The High Sheriff* magazine c/o Hall-McCartney Ltd, PO Box 21 Baldock, Herts SG7 5SH Email: editor@highsheriffs.com.

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Starting as a tailor in Savile Row aged 15, I opened my own shop in 1963. Since then I have tailored for the Royal Family as well as officers of over 50 Regiments of the British Army and specialised in court dress for High Sheriffs.

In 2001 I received a royal warrant for tailoring from the Queen and in 2018 I received the Royal Victorian Order for tailoring services to the Royal Family.

I retired in 2021 but got bored and restarted at home. I do all my own measuring, cutting and

tailoring ensuring that you get a beautifully made and fitted garment at a reasonable price.

We can supply everything you need for your year as High Sheriff. If you would like a chat about your court dress I am in St Albans, Hertfordshire and please do call me.

Geoffrey Golding
01727 857746 or 07903 001773
geoffreydgolding@gmail.com

Geoffrey Golding