

Installation

My Lord Lieutenant, Blessed to give than to receive (797)
Ex-tillated High Sheriff (thanks for that wonderful word Robert)
Your Honours,
My Lords,
Your Worships,
Chair of Surrey County Council,
Commissioner,
Chief Constable,
Vice-Chancellors,
Chairs and leaders of charities and local business,
Fellow Members of the Westcott Community,
Family and friends.

I must begin by paying tribute to our outgoing High Sheriff, Robert and his brilliant consort, Patricia, who are the leading powers behind this evening's event. To say that they have enjoyed an enormously successful and impactful year is an understatement. What many of you will not know, however, is that, in spite of their hectic dairies, they have taken considerable time to coach and counsel me, and indeed Cath, throughout that year. We cannot thank you both enough - you really have made all the difference! Robert, you modestly suggested that it was for others to decide whether you have earned the honour of being High Sheriff - well, let me speak for everyone here this evening; We have decided, you have earned the honour, and you have our grateful thanks! Please raise your glasses to Robert and Patricia.

On a related theme, sincere thanks also to our veritable posse (Penny Keith's description) of Past High Sheriffs, all of whom have been most generous with their excellent advice and guidance.

It is an honour, privilege and pleasure to become your High Sheriff. To say that we were surprised that such an honour falls to a renegade Geordie is putting it mildly, but perhaps speaks volumes for diversity in Surrey, particularly as I attempt to follow in the footsteps of our exceptional flying Scotsman, and with Bridget, our High Sheriff in Nomination, also with us this evening.

Bridget, I will do my very best, but I know that I can never live up to the exceptional induction we have received from both Robert and Patricia. However, we take great comfort in knowing that, in Bill, you already have substantial practical knowledge of the Shrievalty close at hand.

The reason for my appointment can only be in recognition of the magnificent efforts of everyone at the University of Surrey. I have had the enormous pleasure of working with them over the past 6 years, and am delighted to see so many of them here this evening; Vice-Chancellor, members of the Executive Board and of course representatives of our exceptional students. Thank you from the County for your successes to date, and from me personally for all of the wonderful support you have already provided, and have so willingly offered for the rest of my year.

Now, Expressing my sincere thanks for all of the help, support and guidance we have received in preparation for this evening could go on forever, so, if not individually mentioned, please be assured that my words are heartfelt and for all of you personally.

Of course, there are some who must receive special mention and without whom this Installation would not have happened. Indeed, without the first, this evening would not have been legal, as we must be in the presence of a Justice of Her Majesty's High Court, so our sincerest thanks to His Honour Mr. Justice Edis, Senior Presiding Judge of the South Eastern Circuit, for his kind support - thank you Sir Andrew.

Secondly, may I echo Robert's thanks to Dean Dianna, Canon Paul and all involved with the Cathedral, our thanks for allowing us to enjoy our ceremony in such a magnificent location.

And the third mention has to be for Cath. I really cannot miss this unique opportunity, so please bear with me, and, in time honoured tradition of football supporters everywhere, for those who do not wish to know the score, please look away now; Cath - thanks are wholly inadequate: without your love, strength, support and wisdom over so many years, I would certainly not be standing here.

Sincere thanks also to my Under Sheriff, Caroline Breckell, who as you heard has signed her life away by so kindly agreeing to continue to serve during my year. Caroline is the true keeper in the County of all knowledge in terms of matters Shrieval! And thanks too to Gill, my PA, and Andy, my communications expert, who in spite of completing exciting and exhausting years with Robert, have both agreed to remain with me for the duration.

As we heard during the ceremony, another critical role within the High Sheriff's team is that of High Sheriff's Chaplain, and I am very proud that our local vicar, Alan Jonas, readily agreed to support me in that capacity. Alan and Jenny mean so much to everyone living in Westcott, and are true pillars of our community, so you may all be assured that your High Sheriff could not possibly have better guides!

Finally, as we heard, through the determined efforts of Robert, the Chief Constable and the PCC, we have a new role here in Surrey - the High Sheriff's Police Cadet, and this evening is his first official duty. I look forward to Naeel's support at many special events during my year. I am well aware that without Naeel's father, Mo's support, such a presence would not be possible, so my sincere thanks to you also Mo!

I am aware that the powers of the High Sheriff can be summed up by the two words 'convene' and 'connect'.

My theme for the year is therefore to use such powers enthusiastically, and doubtless in comparison somewhat clumsily, in following in Robert's footsteps by supporting the many excellent charities, organisations and professionals working hard to address the complex issue of permanent exclusions of pupils from schools across Surrey.

Access to education in the broadest sense completely changed my life: Cath's life and those of countless other young people of our generation: all from loving families, but with very little, if indeed any, other assets. We enjoyed options, opportunities and access to worlds which would normally have been well beyond our reach.

I believe that it is a duty for us all to do everything we possibly can to continue to provide such inspirational opportunities for young people from all backgrounds across our County.

We have some wonderful leaders, teachers, students and pupils working to further this cause, often unseen and even it may appear unappreciated, in our schools, colleges and universities across Surrey.

We have wonderful charities, supported by caring and generous businesses, many represented here this evening, undertaking considerable efforts in this cause.

You are the true champions, and I will do all I can to support your efforts, in the sure and grateful knowledge that you will be supporting me.

Through our collective determination and actions, if we can change the situation for the better for just one pupil in our County, then I will consider my time to have been well spent.

If we can effect the lives of dozens now, and more in the future, then I will be able to claim that my year will have been a success.

I know that I can rely on all of your support, so in thanking you all in advance, I will end by simply repeating that memorable line in my declaration - I will well and truly behave myself!