

First of all some thank you's.

Thank you to my fellow councilors for electing me as Mayor. Your support means a lot and will continue to help me in the year ahead. I especially thank Terry & Jeni for their kind words and for them being here today.

Thank you to Gill and Malcolm. I have really enjoyed being Deputy Mayor and watching you has helped me enormously in preparing for what will be a very hard act to follow.

Thank you to the officers of the Council. I have worked over the past few years with most of them as Chairman of various committees. I know I can count on their continued support. And thank you to the Parks Service whom I have worked very closely with in preparing the town for Henley in Bloom. The town looks wonderful but you know me. I can always find things to be done.

Thank you to the Town Clerk. Mike has been such a help in organizing this event. I very much wanted as many people as possible to witness this ceremony which has been part of the town for so long. He is very keen to support all the civic and ceremonial functions. Also getting married seems to be catching. No, it is not Richard and I. The Town Clerk will be marrying Glenda in July.

Thank you to my husband Richard who has had to put up with me being on the Council for the last 6 years and then this last year working as Deputy Mayor. It is not easy for spouses as there are many daytime and evening meetings, many functions and lots of phone calls and e-mails. We both had to think very hard about the year ahead as it is such an enormous commitment and we did not want to let you all down.

Thank you to our family. We both feel surrounded by their love. We are blessed to have such a wonderfully loving and supportive family and would not be able to undertake this task without their being here today.

Thank you to the Henley Residents Group whom I joined around 10 years ago not thinking that I would become a Councilor and eventually a Mayor.

Why did I become involved? Well we have been great friends with Barry and Carole Edwards and Allan and Gwyneth Follett and both Barry and Allan had become Councilors. Allan was Mayor over 10 years ago and Richard and I watched as he progressed through his year. When both Allan and Barry failed in regaining their seats, due in no small part to the protests against pedestrianisation in the town, I felt very strongly that Henley were missing out on very committed residents and was actually quite surprised that they were not re-elected. You obviously have to take all of this in your stride if you put yourself forward for election. It is not a forgone conclusion that if you have worked hard and are committed to the town, that you get elected. However, I then became more involved with the Group and stood as Councilor 6 years ago and was elected. I never thought about being Mayor at that time. Both Barry and Allan have been very supportive and I have given me the benefit of their experience. Allan especially over the past few years has been very patient and listened and guided me on issues that have sometimes been difficult to grapple with.

Thank you to the many organizations that Richard and I have been involved with over the past years. Many of them are here today. These are those wonderful group of people who work so hard to fund raise, give their time freely and get involved with the community of Henley.

Thank you to the members of the congregation of Greys Church whom I worship with along with choir members whom I sing with. My faith is very important to me and defines who I am and how I behave day to day. Ever since they knew that I was going to be Mayor I have received tremendous encouragement and support.

I am especially grateful to the Rector, Martyn Griffiths and to David Stoter the Minister at Greys for their support not just for today but for their promise of support in the coming year.

Choral music and belonging to choirs has also played a large part in my life. I first remember being told "what a lovely voice you have" at around the age of 9. Mum and Dad decided to send me to singing lessons with Bert Neville who was the organist at Trinity Church. He taught me a lot and encouraged me to join the choir at Trinity. At

that time there were only adult members and boys. I was the first young girl and this caused some consternation amongst the choir members and the congregation. However I stuck with it and I remember my first solo in the church was "I know that my redeemer liveth" from the Messiah. I then regularly performed and learnt a lot about church music. I have been singing off and on ever since. I was part of the Henley Singers, have sung in numerous church choirs and at present am singing with the Greys Church Choir and am very grateful to the organist there, David Butler, for introducing me to a lot of music I had not been familiar with. He also asks me to sing at events at other churches where he plays. I used to get lots of bookings for weddings but now it seems I do a lot of funerals!

When I came to Henley in 1959 with Mum and Dad and my brothers and sisters I was 8 years old and started at Trinity School which at that time was located in Greys Hill. I remember the move to the current site and how large it all seemed to me then. I also vividly remember Mum taking us to the school on our first day but we were expected to find our own way back at the end of the day. Fortunately I found a Policeman wandering along Vicarage Road who took me home! Times have changed in more ways than one. My Dad died in 1996 but Mum still lives in the same house.

From Trinity I went up to Gillotts. I was at Gillotts with many people who are still living in Henley and we bump into each other regularly. I always find that very reassuring to meet people whom you have known most of your life. It's also nice to meet your teachers – Miss Harris, who sadly died a few years ago, was particularly scary at school but actually was a very gentle lady when met in the street. I bumped into our Geography Teacher, Mr Tarry in Duke Street the other day and he said how proud he was of Terry Buckett and Chris Pye and now me. Terry and I first met at school – I think he may be younger than me – but it is lovely that I can continue to call him a friend together with Pauline and their lovely family.

In 1964 as Dad was in the RAF he got a posting to Hong Kong and we all decided to go with him. We spent 2½ years there and it is where I met Richard whose parents were also stationed there.

Hong Kong was a wonderful experience for us all and it was the first time I realized that the town of Henley was very famous worldwide. You know that reaction. Oh Henley! I did not understand it quite then but have come to understand it now.

I will not go through the whole gamit of what I did next. Many different things actually. Cook, Secretary, etc., still singing obviously. I met many interesting people and lived in London.

Richard and I have been married for almost 37 years, we have four children, Andrew, Peter, Christopher and Sarah and three lovely extra daughters in Rebecca, Laura and Clare and now two grand daughters, Alice and Tillie. They are all here today. Also my Mum and Richard's Mum and Dad and my brothers and sisters, nephew and cousins. Having a large family is hectic, exhausting but wonderful.

What do I promise you? Well actually more of the same. I have loved being involved with Henley in Bloom and through it have met some terrific people and done some wonderful things. Yes, I have been in the pouring rain on the Reading Road entrance with my Gardening Buddies, planting and digging, listening to the toots from cars as they speed past. And yes, having a manicure is a waste of time and money and yes my back does kill me. What spurs me on is the encouragement of fellow Gardening Buddies and their enthusiasm to make a difference. When people stop and tell me how wonderful the town looks. I really believe that a lot of people think I make all the baskets myself!!!

I have loved being involved with creating three new playgrounds in the town. Many people have to be involved with these sorts of projects and sometimes it takes a long time to get things done. However it has been very worthwhile. One project I would like to happen now is an adult playground. There are many examples around the country and I think it would be well received by those too old for other playgrounds. Of course there are problems with location and cost but as the Youth Worker is always telling me – there are no problems only solutions. I am also very keen to explore the possibility of a Henley Orchard. This is planting trees that actually produce food. Again finding the right location will be key.

A lot of people have asked what my theme for the year will be. That is so difficult. Over the past few years I have been very involved with projects involving young people. Knowing a great charity such as the Thamesfield Youth Association and thereby their association with NOMAD, the Eyot Centre and of course the Youth Centre. I work at the Youth Centre and intend for this to continue. There are exciting times ahead with the project Transforming Youth Work in Henley. We are planning for the future and not just for 5-10 years. We will not rush this. It needs lots of thought and with the survey that has been carried out and the production of the DVD almost ready for release will give us fresh impetus to go forward for the next 30-40 years.

I am also involved with the other end of the spectrum, the Day Centre. This is a wonderful social club for the senior citizens of our Town. Again, the members have been very supportive and have just been replanting the little flower bed and are putting up extra baskets. I walked past the other day and saw several of them loitering. They were wondering that now the Centre had been repainted and was looking lovely what else they could do to improve it. We need some extra soil they said as the plants are looking a bit sad. As it happened I had a bag of compost in my car – you would be amazed at what I carry around – you never know when you will need it. So off I went with Marg Maynard to collect the compost. Before I knew what was happening she had hoisted it onto her shoulders and marched back to the Day Centre. (I am not going to tell you how old she is but she probably won't see 70 again).

I hope to continue my involvement with the CAB also. They do vital work and it was wonderful when Princess Anne visited the Town last year and was a very proud moment for all those who had worked for the CAB over the last 30 years.

It is going to be a busy year I know. I will enjoy the functions. I will enjoy dining out which will save me cooking. I will enjoy buying new outfits, even though Richard says he wears his shirt more than once so surely I can wear the same thing twice! I love talking as most of you know so that will be no hardship!

I will wear the chain with pride and know that the office is of importance to the residents of Henley. Richard and I will not let you down and know that we can count on your support and love.