

Mr Mayor, ladies and gentlemen. I am honoured to be asked to give the thanks of the council to the retiring mayor and deputy mayor. In thinking about this it put me in mind of a fairy story 'The Woodcutter and the Huntsman' – the Woodcutter our retiring Mayor, Martin Jarratt, who spends his working life among trees, cutting them down and planting them, and the Huntsman (or rather Fisherman) our retiring Deputy Mayor, Keith Greenwell, whose passion is for fishing.

Of course not all fairy tales have happy endings but anyway...

Our Huntsman has done some excellent hunting, or perhaps fishing, on our behalf. He has pursued, as quarry, a site for a new youth club and large amounts of money for the improvement and repair of our Town Hall. He has landed some good catches, some are almost safely in the keep net and some are hovering on the edge of the bank. He has pursued these with energy and great expertise and we are grateful for his hard work and determination in the cause of this town.

The Woodcutter has done a lot of things with his Woodcutter's (hard) hat on – as chair of the cemetery committee he has worked hard to make sure that the cemetery remains a pleasant and accessible place for people in times of sadness. I was with him the other week at the cemetery clear-up when he, chain saw in hand, was clearing branches from overgrown graves to make them more accessible.

In other woods he is concerned too – the William Fowler Memorial Wood – which he has worked on and overseen. And alongside that the William Fowler allotments where he has spent many hours marking out plots to make them accessible to new tenants.

Of course the Mayor is the Chair of the Council and as such he has had a hard year with some difficult situations but he has dealt with them firmly and fairly, allowed everyone to speak and even managed to finish meetings early enough for us to get to the pub.

But some of the Mayor's duties do have a fairytale aspect with dressing up, as you have seen tonight. There have been grand occasions such as the hosting of Oxfordshire's Top Brass at the unveiling of the Blue Plaque at the War Memorial, and our chance to say good bye to our retiring Lord Lieutenant Sir Hugo Brunner and thank him for all his service to us over the years. Other grand occasions too, like the civic service, the Remembrance Day parade and of course the lovely Valentines Ball at which a terrific £2000 was raised for the Citizens Advice Bureau. There are grand occasions and more mundane ones too, within and outside the town and Martin has attended these on our behalf because so many organisations feel that the presence of the mayor is an important endorsement. The last event was at our twinning visit to Magny en Vexin when Martin, complete with chain (and the Silver Band who were terrific) was able to represent us to the Mayor of Magny (and endear himself to the Silver Band by giving a mercifully short speech after the rather long ramblings of Monsieur le Maire). As in all these things Martin (and June) accomplished this with dignity and charm and I would want to thank him and our retiring Deputy Mayor Keith for their service to the council.

Now the Woodcutter I think is happy to return from the Palace and get back to his trees.