



Clwyd 2013-14

The last 12 months have been exhilarating and exhausting: fast-paced, full-on and fun. From the outset, when we had to hire a snowplough so my declaration ceremony could happen, I, Nick (my husband) and our two children have learnt to be prepared – and to be prepared for the unexpected.

My year in office was a real team effort. We made the most of our resources and learnt new skills while minimising the shrieval payroll; we drew on the goodwill of family, friends and neighbours, all of whom were delighted to help.

With no commitments outside the home, I could devote time and energy to being High Sheriff. Nick worked full-time, joined me occasionally and provided background support. Our children, having dove-tailed hospitality jobs with university, were useful cooks/waiters/event managers. So were their friends and cousins.

I am computer-literate and well-organised, so managed correspondence without external help. My satnav, smartphone, dressmaking skills and flower-arranging experience were useful too.

The role can, clearly, be done in several ways. That is what is so liberating. Some activities were beyond my control but much was driven by me.

There were troops to inspect (NB worth researching military insignia), citizenship ceremonies (Red Letter days for new citizens), dinners, receptions and awards presentations, plus informal visits to small local organisations. I was warmly welcomed everywhere. And I feel privileged to have been part of special days in people's lives.

I learnt something new every day. I soon found that the Speakers' Trust course had been really worthwhile; that my uniform and distinctive hat ensured



Celia and Nick Jenkins at a fundraising event in February 2014.

I was instantly recognisable; and planning journeys when accepting engagements meant I arrived on time.

As High Sheriff, I had access to every organisation, and their leaders, in the county. Beyond gratifying my curiosity about their activities, what could I do for them? It was soon evident that simply taking an interest boosted staff and client morale. There were also occasions when, from an independent and helicopter-viewpoint, my fresh pair of eyes saw matters in a thought-provokingly different light.

As a lady sheriff, I really enjoyed wearing my outfit whenever possible. Nick loved it too – probably because there was no choice about what to wear and it took just three minutes to get ready. I set myself arguably my biggest challenge before the year even started by making my coat myself – tricky but not impossible.

Some entertaining was clearly necessary. Enjoying the hands-on approach, we tackled events as a family team, supplemented by student friends and neighbours. We hope that a warm

welcome compensated for a less-formal atmosphere and believe our guests enjoyed themselves.

A set of catering tablecloths from Ebay, some unusual serving plates and creative presentation made staging events relatively easy. A good relationship with a local independent school meant I could borrow glasses, crockery and cutlery as necessary.

I was unashamed to adopt ideas from other counties. One was a lunch for previous High Sheriffs when Nick and I invited 21 'formers', and their spouses, with great success. We made good use of a marquee in the garden, holding the lunch the same week as a drinks reception for 250 and our son's 21st birthday party.

After hosting 12 dinners at home for judges, garnering support for a fundraiser in February was fairly straightforward. Clwyd sheriffs do not, traditionally, raise large sums and we felt any event should be as inclusive as possible. Partly to maximise profits, we organised a Picnic Dinner. Denbighshire County Council donated



News from and about Members

the use of the local theatre, while friends, and many former sheriffs, sold tables and brought picnics and drinks. We provided a champagne-and-canapés reception for 250 and post-dinner entertainment. With a low ticket price, we received some generous donations. The Community Foundation in Wales part-match-funded our profits too. The three charities were delighted – as were we with the effort:reward ratio.

The final event was an awards evening for volunteers. This built on ceremonies in previous years to celebrate Crimebeat projects, and an event which my predecessor had developed with the local Voluntary Service Councils. The VSCs generated nominations and did the administration; North Wales Police produced certificates; Glyndwr University Wrexham supplied the venue free while my catering team made a simple buffet and served drinks. The joint effort was much appreciated by dozens of people and organisations whose contributions we recognised; it also gave me an opportunity to return earlier hospitality and was a great way to end the year. □

Celia Jenkins
High Sheriff of Clwyd 2013-14



Former High Sheriffs of Clwyd lunch, September 2013.



Visiting the RNL1 Flint Lifeboat station.