



# Into the history books

**WE ARE all very aware of the 1,100-year heritage associated with the role of High Sheriff, but I can't say I expected my shrieval year to be written into the history books.**

Like many of us, I spent four years planning for the role and then saw the first national lockdown begin just days before my Declaration service.

At first, I must confess I was one of those people who thought the pandemic might all be over as quickly as it had begun – but it soon became apparent I was going to have to adapt my plans so I could still make the most of my year.

I'm so glad I took the approach of becoming a 'Virtual High Sheriff' and blending online and face-to-face meetings during times when the restrictions have been lifted, as that meant I have still been able to meet, support and work alongside a huge number of individuals and organisations across Shropshire.

I chose domestic abuse, addiction, and childhood poverty and deprivation as my three key causes – all issues which have sadly worsened during the pandemic. Projects have included domestic abuse training for businesses and teachers, setting up a welfare fund for primary schools, linking the business and voluntary/charity sectors together, and partnering with Oswestry-based fire detection firm Aico on corporate social responsibility, to support numerous causes.

While I respect the history and traditions associated with the role of High Sheriff, I also wanted to ensure the role maintains its relevance in today's society and the wider world. Being unable to conduct most of the ceremonial elements of the role has brought into focus what it's really all about: making a positive contribution to the county, and supporting and encouraging the judiciary, emergency services, crime prevention initiatives, voluntary sector, faith groups, and our two local authorities.

Past High Sheriffs of Shropshire have been through the Norman Conquest, Great Plague, and two world wars – now my name is among them as the Shropshire incumbent in the year of coronavirus! On a personal note, it has been an absolute honour and privilege to serve as Shropshire's High Sheriff – I now understand so much more about the third sector, how local government works, who is who in the county, and what Shropshire truly has to offer.



With Jane Pritchard, Aico Community Liaison

Far from being a terrible year to be High Sheriff, I feel fortunate to have had a platform to help make a positive difference. I have been warmly welcomed everywhere, my opinion valued, my input appreciated, and my contacts and connections gratefully received.

I've been able to share important information with thousands on social media each week and personally thanked our incredible essential workers (as well as so many volunteers). I hope I've encouraged a few more to get involved with these impactful and vital activities happening in Shropshire, to help those who are vulnerable, and to improve our wonderful county.

**◆ Dean Harris JP**

*High Sheriff of Shropshire 2020-21*



Above: At RAF Shawbury with station commander Gp Capt Chris Mullen. Below left: Supporting Shrewsbury food hub. Below right: At Blists Hill, Ironbridge tour with Councillor Amrik Jhawar, Mayor of Telford and Wrekin

