



# A fresh perspective on the county



WHERE HAS the year gone? It doesn't seem five minutes since I was making my Declaration at Eaton Park, Chester, the service led by my wonderful chaplain the Revd Stella Cole and witnessed by the Honourable Mr Justice William Davis and John Arnold the Under Sheriff. I'm not sure who was more nervous, me or John, who was presiding over the Declaration for the first time. However, we had a wonderful day that set the tone for the year ahead.

I decided to use my year to focus on volunteering; ordinary people doing extraordinary things – in many ways the glue that holds our communities together and makes them successful and sustainable.

During the year, I have criss-crossed the county, attending a variety of events, from the large and well organised to the small and intimate gatherings. I have been welcomed wherever I have been. I thought I knew Cheshire well but I have become much better acquainted with it during my year: towns such as Nantwich and the amazing volunteers who arrange an incredible variety of events that not only bring the community together but attract many visitors; Frodsham where the mayor works tirelessly to bring the community together; Winsford, busy regenerating the public realm; Middlewich with its great sense of history. The theme that runs through all the

events I've attended is the sense of pride and community.

It has been a huge honour to get to know and to attend many Scouting and Guiding events, not one of which would run without the dedicated volunteers. I've had the opportunity to sit in court and get to know the High Court Judges and many magistrates and I was particularly pleased to attend the swearing-in of new magistrates in the Crown Court in December. I have spent a great many hours in our beautiful cathedral, the work of which is at the heart of our county. The start of the Legal Year service in the cathedral in November was very well supported by the judiciary and High Sheriffs from surrounding counties.

A great joy has been working with Cheshire Crimebeat. We submitted two schemes for the National Crimebeat Awards and were delighted to have our schools' Radio Competition shortlisted – a project highlighting issues around children's sexual health and relationships. Representatives from the schools attended the finals in March in London and were thrilled to come joint second. We were also very pleased that 'Crossroads', a programme with Styal Prison, was recognised as 'Highly Commended' by the judging panel.

I met so many remarkable volunteers during my term in office that I decided to bring them together in a celebration and

**Above left:** At the High Sheriff's Awards evening; East Cheshire hospice Christmas tree collection raised over £800,000 over seven years

**Above top:** At the High Sheriff's Awards evening; members of Cheshire scouts who helped organise a trip to Japan

**Above:** At the Legal Service with fellow High Sheriffs: Colonel David Leigh TD DL (Staffordshire), Kathrine Cowell OBE DL (Cheshire), Christine Holmes JP (Shropshire), Jim O'Toole DL (Clwyd) and Lady (Joy) Smith DL (Greater Manchester)

'Thank You' as the final event of my year. I gathered 80 volunteers from across the county to supper in the delightful setting of Churchill House at Chester University. It was a very special evening where I was able to recognise the commitment and dedication of so many people who give their time and care so selflessly by presenting them with the High Sheriff's Award in recognition of great and valuable services to the community. Without them our county would be so much poorer; meeting them was both enriching and humbling. I have always thought my county a very special place but my year as High Sheriff has helped me appreciate the wonderful people who always put others before their own needs.

◆ **Kathrine Cowell OBE DL**  
*High Sheriff of Cheshire 2016-17*