



Fortitude in the face of adversity

'HIT THE ground running' was a clear message from Burghley and I made every effort to do just that – what good advice it was. I read past High Sheriffs' diaries, researched on the web, read local newspapers I didn't usually receive and met with as many organisations as I could. Having priorities planned was useful and I achieved many of them – such as visiting all 12 mountain rescue teams and all four lifeboat stations in Cumbria. I visited BAE Systems Nuclear Submarine building facility, was the returning officer at the general election and toured the plant that will be making the new £5 and £10 plastic bank notes. Most of those opportunities arose because as High Sheriff you can invite yourself into places you wouldn't otherwise gain access to.

Knowing in advance that this would be the 800th Anniversary of the sealing of Magna Carta allowed me to connect with Cartmel Priory, which was one of only five venues on the official trail. Cartmel Priory was founded by William Marshall, one of the barons who persuaded King John to seal Magna Carta, who became Prince Regent to Henry III on John's death. It proved to be an exceptional weekend culminating in a son-et- lumière.

Probably the most memorable event was our charity dinner to raise money for the



Cumbria Crimebeat Fund, with our guest speaker Mary Berry. What a treat for our 320 guests to listen to her; it was a fantastic evening which raised a significant amount for the charity. We also had the pleasure of hosting Mary and her husband for dinner the night before at our home, where the students from the local catering college prepared and served a four-course dinner.

The end of 2015 proved extremely challenging with the floods at the beginning of December. However, the people of Cumbria have shown enormous

fortitude in the face of adversity. I am extremely proud of how the community came together and helped each other. There was a true sense of everyone wanting to do their 'bit' no matter how small. It was also staggering that the rest of the country sensed the need in Cumbria by sending vans and lorries from all corners bringing fresh water, food, clothes, bedding, furniture – in fact, anything you could think of. There is still a great deal to do, but the recovery process is progressing well.

The Cumbria Community Foundation runs a Winter Warmth Appeal every year to provide money towards heating primarily for older people and one of the events is a sponsored 'Big Sleep' night under the stars. This was held at the end of February with night temperatures getting to around minus 3 degrees!

My wife Judy and I have had the most amazing year. It has been an honour and a privilege to serve the people in the Cumbria and we hope that in some small way we have been able to acknowledge and thank those 'unsung heroes' who work tirelessly for the good of others.

◆ Sam Rayner

High Sheriff of Cumbria 2015-16



Above: Revd Nick Devenish, Vicar for Cartmel Priory; Mrs Claire Hensman, Lord-Lieutenant of Cumbria; Mark Gill, Executive Director Magna Carta 800th Committee; Lord Cavendish of Furness and the High Sheriff.

Right: Mary Berry with Sam Rayner

