



To serve, not to be served

EVERY HIGH Sheriff is unique and the shrieval community is strengthened and enriched by the annual handover. Our continuity is maintained by the abiding faithful service of Under Sheriffs and the support of the High Sheriffs' Association in close co-operation with the judiciary. Having served as a chaplain in the Royal Air Force for 29 years, I had followed the branch's core value of service before self. The Chaplains' branch coat of arms bears the motto, 'Ministrare Non Ministrari'; (Latin for 'to serve, not to be served'). Upon becoming High Sheriff, I felt this was a most appropriate model for my year of service. However, this assumption was quickly overwhelmed by experience. I encountered a wonderful community – or rather a collection of communities and individuals – who were giving themselves quite selflessly to the welfare of groups or individuals in their villages, towns or wider areas of activity.

Here perhaps was the key? It's not what you bring, it's what these communities bring. On appointment, there is a definite anxiety about what one can bring to the role. This is natural as the role does seem quite daunting in itself; then in addition, one's predecessors are often successful people and bring all their talent and drive to their role as High Sheriff. How do you 'follow that'?



The Association's advice is quite firm – do not try to emulate or follow your predecessor, be yourself. That is why you were asked to consider being High Sheriff!

I discovered that the secret for me was to be open to what the voluntary community could bring, not what I could achieve for them. The High Sheriff's role is not about the individual; rather it is all about the community the Sheriff is called to serve. Many doors are opened and the Sheriff is invited to share in the life of the voluntary community. Youth workers; mountain rescue volunteers; scouting; guiding; community support volunteers; those who work with those coping with addiction, PTSD, homelessness, domestic violence, criminality recovery, abuse and other related traumas. In addition, the Sheriff is there to support the judiciary and the professional policing and emergency support. High points for me were meeting keen volunteers doing what they could for others because it was the right thing to do – they did not seek reward or gain and would have been quite embarrassed to be singled out. Here was the essential quality of the Sheriff; to visit discreetly but nevertheless representing the Crown's deep commitment to voluntary duty and service to county and country. One official role that was exceptionally moving was as returning officer in Copeland, a truly historic night.

Of course, there was the honour of sitting in court and witnessing the integrity and professionalism of our judiciary – allied to the deeply committed voluntary service of magistrates; one can reflect that



despite its well-recognised challenges, the nation is well served by its judiciary and related legal office holders and court staffs.

Having been advised by the Association that I was not the first cleric to become Sheriff, Cumbria did have some firsts: the first full-time stipendiary cleric to become a High Sheriff; the first retired RAF chaplain to do so and perhaps the first Sheriff to preach at his own annual Judges' Service and certainly the first Sheriff to become his successor's chaplain!?

Over my year, I could not have achieved anything without the vital work of my Under Sheriff, Tim Cartmel, and my voluntary PA Judith Holdsworth, who enabled me to commit to the needs of others but retain control of my diary and my own wellbeing! A year of formal service to others has opened my eyes to the magnificent ongoing voluntary and professional service of others to their communities – I really need to thank them for what they have taught me.

◆ The Rev'd (Group Captain) Richard Lee

*Team Rector of Egremont
High Sheriff of Cumbria 2016-17*

Left: With young and old(er) at the Colour Run

Top left: Rachel More from Askham receiving a bravery award from the High Sheriff and His Honour Judge Peter Hughes QC for standing up to two men in a knife-point laptop theft

Photo credit: The Cumberland News

Top right: With Cameron Moralee and Riley Brown (Team Cool Kids), first in the chariot race