



# No such thing as 'typical'

THE ROLE of High Sheriff offers the holder a unique and unrivalled opportunity to observe and understand the make-up of the county in which he or she serves.

There is no political bias, no need to curry favour for the next election and no need to impress in order to justify a salary.

We are given a truly privileged access to so many parts of the body that make up the county, with few doors barred and so many people prepared to speak openly about what affects their daily lives. This brings great responsibility and it is difficult not to feel constantly humbled by the efforts we observe on our many visits throughout the community in which we live.

My impressions of Cumbria have left me with a feeling of great optimism as I see how there are so many good people who are prepared to work selflessly in the service of others. It's impossible to ignore deprivation and disadvantage; however, there are so many people who want to help to solve these problems that one feels they must surely ultimately succeed in their endeavours.

So this is the experience that energises my wife Julie and me as we criss-cross the very large county of Cumbria with the beautiful Lake District fells dominating not only the landscape but also our route planning. But when one can travel two hours to the southern tip of the county to be welcomed by the isolated community of Barrow, and from there enjoy a view which encompasses the Irish sea, a distant ruined and ancient castle, and the tall sheds in which the new generation of nuclear submarines are constructed – all with a background of the stunning Lake District fells – one realises that this is a unique county of great contrast.



**Above:** The High Sheriff's Declaration at the Old Court building in Carlisle supported by his Chaplain, the immediate past High Sheriff Richard Lee, a rare combination, and presided over by His Honour Judge Peter Hughes QC

**Below:** The High Sheriff after his Declaration with his wife Julie and daughter Natasha



**Above right:** Rare sighting of a super yacht in Whitehaven docks

**Right:** Attending Mencap's garden party at its respite house in Carlisle



Perhaps our most extraordinary day so far came when we again visited the south of Cumbria to enjoy a wonderful awards ceremony where inmates at HM Prison Haverigg were acknowledged for academic work they had done with the University of Cumbria.

As we headed for home on a beautiful early evening we travelled north via the west coast, taking in Eskdale, Muncaster, Egremont and St Bees before calling into Whitehaven. Now, Whitehaven has a little-recognised but historic and beautiful harbour which that day happened to be giving shelter to a massive super yacht sitting resplendent in the evening sunshine. Apparently this fine vessel was

the property of a Russian oligarch. The reason for his visit remains unknown to me but he proved to be a major draw that evening with several hundred of the townsfolk gathering to take in the unusual scene. Visits from Russian oligarchs remain a rarity in our county and the good people of Whitehaven were not going to pass up on this chance for a good sneek, as they say up here!

I happily admit that this was not a typical High Sheriff's experience but what I have learnt so far is that the word typical is ill adapted to shrieval duties!

♣ **Alistair Wannop**  
*High Sheriff of Cumbria 2017-18*